

Gold Coast Chamber 19th's season: a story of collaboration

By Sophie Braccini



Last year's concert at the Lafayette Library Community Hall.

Photo Alicia Gholami

The Gold Coast Chamber ensemble and its artistic director Pamela Freund-Striplen are an integral part of the new wave of chamber music companies that present powerful public programs incorporating different sets of musicians coming from a larger pool of professionals. Freund-Striplen has created the 2018-19 season in collaboration with several different groups, curating the programs with them and bringing to Lafayette world-class performances.

The first of the seven season recitals is called "Chamber Players Coast to Coast," featuring the Manhattan Chamber Players for a mostly 19th century European classic music program, with the addition of a commissioned creation by a local composer. It will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 29 at the Lafayette Community Hall. Another performance will be offered in Piedmont in the afternoon the fol-

lowing day.

The relationship between Gold Coast and the Manhattan Chamber Players started one and a half years ago. Having heard of each other, the groups reached out and Freund-Striplen began a discussion with Luke Fleming, the group's artistic director and fellow viola player. Freund-Striplen said that their vision was very similar and together they decided on a program that juxtapositions three European composers known for creating unique nationalistic music.

The concert will include Ernest Chausson's "Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet" – a piece Freund-Striplen describes as very romantic, adding that it was the starting point for Fleming and her as they structured that concert. Chausson was a promoter of French music and his style evolved to more dramatic tones, while maintaining the reserve that was the mark of the

French music of that century.

The opening piece will be by Spanish composer Joaquin Torina. Freund-Striplen said that people are going to be transported by the warm, rich and evocative "Scene Andalouse for Piano Sextet, Op. 7" that will be played that night. Torina, who studied in France, was a great admirer of Spanish composer Isaac Albenitz, who drew his inspiration from folk Andalusian music.

The third nationalistic composer is British; Vaughan Williams' "Phantasy Quintet" will contrast with the other two composers as he is known for his wide range of moods, but also for his inspiration drawn from ancient English music, such as English madrigals. Freund-Striplen also noted that she loved the meditative quality of the work and the beautiful use of the viola.

The three pieces are also characterized by their featuring of soloists, piano, violin or viola. Freund-Striplen explains that the concert will be a hybrid between soloistic and chamber music.

The fourth element of the concert is the creation of a piece commissioned to local composer Mary Bianco for this evening. Freund-Striplen explains that Bianco is a patron of the Manhattan Chamber Players and she created a short trio just for that night. Freund-Striplen was excited to announce that Bianco would be present at the concert

and would answer a few questions about her light, uplifting piece.

The season's other concerts will also feature partnerships with diverse groups and musicians, sometimes the new generation of chamber musicians that Freund-Striplen is proud to see come forth to carry the torch. The season will also include the now traditional free family holiday concert in December.

Last year, several concerts sold out, so it is recommended to get tickets in advance. For more information, visit www.gcplayers.org.

Volunteer visits help seniors stay in their homes



Lafayette volunteer Leonara Holmes, left, enjoys time with Iris Timmerman. Photo provided

Iris Timmerman, a former nurse, has difficulty hearing, so socializing in groups is too difficult, but thanks to a program offered through John Muir Health, Lafayette volunteer Leonora Holmes, age 63, has been making a difference in Timmerman's life for nearly a year now.

Holmes signed up as a Caring Hands volunteer last October and says she gets as much out of the program than she puts into it – maybe more – noting how the 93-year-old Timmerman was teaching her painting and crafts.

"Iris taught me to paint today," Holmes wrote to the Caring Hands Volunteer Coordinator Stacy Appel after one visit. "She had smocks, paint and canvas all ready to go."

The Caring Hands Volunteer Caregivers Program serves seniors in Central, East, and South Contra Costa County, including all of Lamorinda. The program is a collaborative community outreach program which offers finely-tuned one-on-one matches between neighbors, always free of charge, to help aging adults in Contra Costa County remain independent in their own homes as long as safely possible.

A collaboration between John Muir Health, social service agencies, faith communities and the community-at-large, the program helps break the cycle of isolation and despair that may make health problems worse.

Volunteers provide life-enhancing services such as friendly visits and companionship, social outings, transportation and escort to medical appointments, help with shopping and errands, assist care to give a break to a family caregiver, reading

mail and letter-writing, but do not provide cleaning, bill-paying services, personal or medical care.

Services are generally provided once a week, for one to three hours to meet a senior's ongoing need, and are scheduled on the times and days that work best for the volunteer. Matches are created between volunteers and people over 60 years old who may be frail, isolated, or disabled. By providing free non-medical assistance, Caring Hands help seniors stay in their homes and remain independent as long as safely possible.

A former teacher, Holmes heard about Caring Hands through her church, and while her previous experience had been with children, not seniors, Leonora couldn't wait to begin the training.

"An attentive friend like Leonora has been an ongoing delight for both volunteer and care receiver," said Appel.

"Thank you for making her my match," Holmes wrote to Appel after a recent visit. "It has been an immense blessing! Today we went to the Ruth Bancroft Garden, lunch, and stopped at Ace Hardware to pick up a few art supplies for Iris. She is a lot of fun to be with and very appreciative each time I am there."

More volunteers are needed and the next training will be held Sept. 28 at the John Muir Health Medical Center in Walnut Creek. To learn more, or to apply for the next training, contact Appel at Stacy.Appel@johnmuirhealth.com or (925) 952-2999, or visit the Caring Hands website at johnmuirhealth.com/caringhands.

— J. Wake

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First 20 people to RSVP and attend will receive a copy of Kathy's book "Mom's Losing Her Memory; I'm Losing My Mind" at the event.

Event is free to attend. Refreshments will be provided.

Please RSVP to 925-297-6760 or to Molly.Gleason-Kodama@aegisliving.com

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