

GCCP presents ¡Caliente! March 19



Photo provided

Submitted by Pamela Freund-Striplen

The Gold Coast Chamber Players present ¡Caliente!, the third of a five concert series, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March

19 at the Don Tatzin Community Hall at the Lafayette Library. The live concert will be recorded and all ticket holders will have the option for unlimited online viewing from March 21 to July 1. Proof of vaccination is required and N95 masks will be provided.

¡Caliente! features leading Bay Area musicians including Spanish clarinetist and composer, José González Granero, who has held the position of Principal Clarinet with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra since 2010. Mr. Granero has garnered many prizes for his compositions and recently was awarded first prize for

the Villiers Quartet New Works Composition Competition in London. He will be performing his own works and chamber music transcriptions. Joining Mr. Granero is California Symphony Concertmaster Jennifer Cho who also performs with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. Other members of San Francisco Opera Orchestra, violinist Dian Zhang and cellist Peter Myers join violist Pamela Freund-Striplen and pianist Julie Nishimura.

The program offers a sizzling exploration of the dynamic range of leading Spanish composers. Granero's

haunting Paisajes for clarinet and strings and virtuosic Canto y Danza for solo clarinet are juxtaposed with the passionate Piano Quartet op. 67 by Joaquin Turina and the Piano Quintet by Enrique Granados. Granero's arrangement of Manuel DeFalla's Seven Spanish Popular Songs and Kreisler's arrangement of Granados' Spanish Dance No. 5 "Andaluza" for violin and piano round out this appealing program.

Tickets: \$15-45 tickets online or by phone: (925) 283-3728; www.gccpmusic.com

'Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom' a gem from high altitude

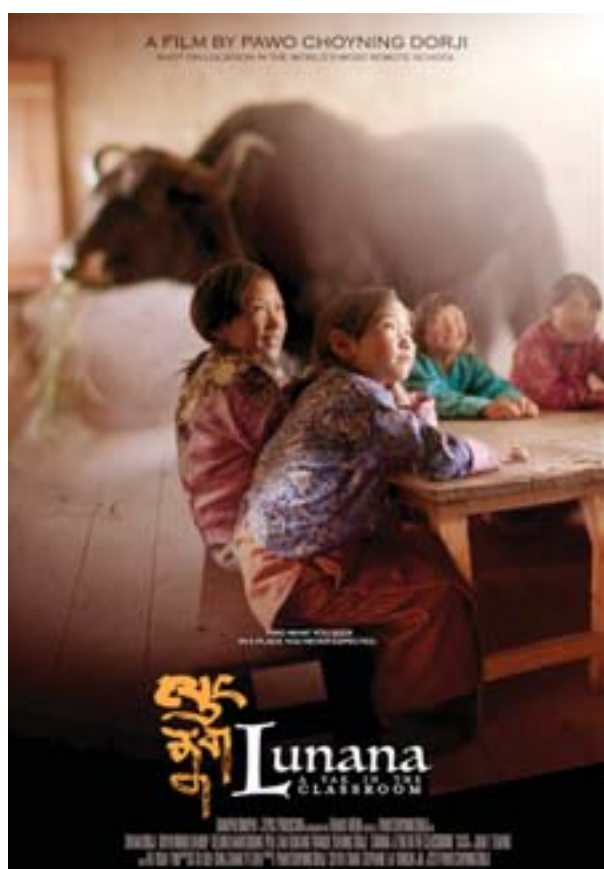


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By Sophie Braccini

It is the first time that Orinda's International Film Showcase presents a film from Bhutan. The small country known for measuring its people's happiness rather than its GDP was not known for its movie

production. This is changing with the emergence of this lovely gem, "Lunana" – almost a docu-drama, set in the most remote school in the world. We follow the main character, Ugyen, in his discovery of a most beautiful place on earth, steeped in natural beauty and in simple yet profound spirituality. He will discover himself and his true nature as he let himself gradually be immersed in the purity of the place. What he will do with this discovery may be left as a mystery.

Ugyen is a spirited and impatient young Bhutanese man who wants to become a singer. His plan is drawn out: a visa for Australia is on its way; he just has to complete a last assignment as a teacher to extinguish his obligation toward his government. This time, he is sent to Lunana, a Himalayan village of a few hundred people sitting at 11,200 feet above sea level. It is said to be the most remote classroom in the world. Ugyen reluctantly leaves for a long bus voyage followed by a five-day hike in the mountains. When he arrives in the village with no electricity, no internet and extremely rudimentary accommodations, his first reaction is to tell the welcoming villagers that he cannot stay. In an interview with IMDb, first-time director Pawo Choyning Dorji explained that Ugyen personifies the youth of Bhutan. He said that thousands of young people are leaving the country for the U.S., Australia, or London. As a Bhutanese, he is wondering where a country that is losing its educated and capable people is going. He wanted to take his main character in the opposite direction, to the most remote place.

There is something of a miracle about this movie. Filmed on a shoestring in Lunana, a real place that does not have electricity, with a cast and crew of first-timers, some of whom had never seen a movie, the film is now an Oscar contender.

All along the feel of authenticity is overwhelm-

ing. This is what Dorji wanted. He wanted the crew and cast to go through this experience and live the life of the highlander. He also incorporated into the script elements of the lives of his actors, so the script was constantly evolving. He decided to shoot in a linear fashion so that the actors could grow with their characters. The result is both endearing and moving. Ugyen's spiritual journey as he meets and connects with different villagers is also well depicted. From a disrespectful non-believer, he starts to question and reconnect with the ancient belief system that has shaped Bhutan as a Buddhist nation deeply respectful of all living creatures.

Bhutan is a very small country with a population of only 700,000, landlocked in the Himalayas between China and India. In 1971 it decided to measure its progress in terms of Gross National Happiness (GNH), not in terms of Gross National Product (GNP). The four pillars of national happiness when creating legislation are good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of culture, and environmental consideration. It is said to be the only country in the world with a negative carbon footprint.

Bhutan was isolated for centuries. Dorji explains that his country looked at Tibet gone to China and Sikkim gone to India, saw that countries like theirs lost their independence and as a result closed up to protect their way of life. It was only in 2000 that television and internet entered Bhutan. The impact of globalization was drastic and overnight. This movie is about that, the transition from traditional to modern and the question of keeping one's belonging and meaning.

"Lunana" is a nominee for Best International Feature Film at the 94th Academy Awards. It opens for one week on March 25 at the Orinda Theatre. For tickets, visit orindamovies.com.

White Pony Express launches Ukraine relief program; Earth Day donations matched

By Sora O'Doherty

In addition to its Food Rescue Program that connects surplus food to those who need it most, nonprofit White Pony Express (WPE) has undertaken a project to aid Ukrainian refugees. WPE is collecting medical supplies, hygiene products and toiletries, over-the-counter medications, non-perishable food items, high-quality new clothing, undergarments, shoes, and diapers. WPE is receiving information directly from Poland about what is most needed by the refugees, and is working with several other nonprofits out of Los Angeles to transport the items to the Polish relief agencies for use among the

Ukrainian refugees. WPE is shipping these items to trusted organizations serving the over two million refugees who have fled Ukraine.

White Pony Express was recently cited in California legislation aimed to reduce food waste and improve the environment. A generous donor has offered to match all donations up to \$250,000 made by Earth Day, April 22. Donors are invited to support WPE's mission to fight climate change, protect the environment and invest in the earth for generations to come. In its current campaign, WPE invites people to celebrate Earth Day by supporting its efforts to reduce climate change emissions by rescuing high-quality food and delivering it to hungry neighbors.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, food waste pollutes the air to the same extent as global road transport emissions. The U.S. discards more food than any other country in the world: almost 40 million tons each year and 40% of the food produced in the U.S. is thrown away. Food that is produced but never consumed wastes the water and energy required to produce it and creates massive amounts of methane.

This solution not only prevents the dangerous environmental impacts of food waste, it can also wipe out food insecurity for good.

Information about all of WPE's programs can be found at <https://www.whiteponyexpress.org>

JM Leadership class helps underserved students



Submitted by Rebecca Metz

The eighth-grade Leadership class at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, taught by Irene Contreras, just raised \$500 in response to a Crayola Crayon drive by local nonprofit, the Sydney Paige Foundation. This donation will help Sydney Paige purchase the important school supplies they provide to thousands of underserved students locally and nationally. Also pictured is Founder and CEO of Sydney Paige, Courtney Brockmeyer, and Executive Director, Tenaya Garrett. For more information about the Crayola Crayon drive, please visit <https://donate.sydney Paige.org/crayons>

Photo provided

Troop 243 recognizes 2022 Eagle Scouts

Submitted by Julianna Haase

Troop 243 of Lafayette held an Eagle Court of Honor on Feb. 26 at Lafayette Christian Church to honor Noah Tristan Yeager, Lucas John Haase, Zack Santos Lara, and George William Rogers, each of whom were recognized for earning BSA scouting's highest rank, Eagle Scout. Achieving this rank requires the completion of 21 merit badges, holding positions of increasing leadership within the troop and completing a community project on behalf of the public or non-profit organization. This Court of Honor continues Troop 243's long history of developing young leaders, dating back to the troop's first Eagle Scouts in 1964.

Officials in attendance included Ron Wecht, Unit Commissioner for Briones District and Andrew Dale, District Exec-

utive for the Golden Gate Area Council. During their years with Troop 243, the Scouts gained practical life and outdoor survival skills through numerous summers at Camp Wolfboro, many overnight camping and backpacking trips, snow camping, public speaking and learning how to safely handle small arms at the shooting range.

As a requirement for earning their Eagle Scout rank, the scouts completed the following service projects: Zack Lara spearheaded a community-wide food drive to combat food insecurity in Contra Costa County; George Rogers led a team of scouts in upgrading Stanley Middle School's musical instrument and equipment storage facility and performance stage; Noah Yeager worked with local soccer teams and schools to collect and send soccer gear and equipment to families in Afghanistan; and Lucas Haase created a web-based mental

health resource based on survey results from Lamorinda teens to help them un-

derstand mental health issues and how to locate available resources.



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