Women in Music 2011

The word that resonated most loudly in reception in the Faith Y. France Lobby after the concert was “community”. The crowd that had gathered for an afternoon in tribute to female composers, performers, scholars, and their patrons was itself made up of local artists, musicians, historians, and Virtuoso Program donors, demonstrating a common goal of desiring to shed light on this unsung ancestry of musical pioneers while passing the torch to our future’s musicians and music lovers.

Dr. Lenore Alford delivered a pre-concert talk that helped to shed light on the somewhat quiet history of women in classical music, which lead perfectly into a program of rarely heard works spanning the past 300 years, culminating in a work by local composer Gabriela Lena Frank, who was on hand to introduce her work and give some insight to her compositional process and goals. From its inaugural success, it’s an event that we’re proud to call our newest tradition.

Educating the whole musician

by Rob DeNunzio
Music Conservatory Director

After our recent “Women in Music” concert, surrounded by portraits of women composers from throughout history as drawn by local artist Maureen Blumenthal, I was reminded how in our efforts to train students to excel in the craft of making music, we are immersed in opportunities to educate not only the young performer, but the entire musician: informing their place in history, the greater role that music can play, and the near limitless possibilities that their studies can afford them. And as we look to offer our students role models to help them navigate the landscape of careers in the arts, it was heartening to stroll the gallery and read the biographies of so many women whose musical lives were so rich, in times no less hectic or uncertain as our own.

The work done by a student and their private instructor is the essential foundation of their musical development, but in isolation it does little to prepare a student for a rich musical life. It is in the challenges posed by the ensemble, by collaboration, by unfamiliar musical styles and unfamiliar performance venues—that is where the young musician truly comes into her own, finds her voice, and begins to understand the relationship she will have with music for the rest of her life. Add to that formula the patronage and support of their communities, and the promise of a healthy artistic upbringing is complete.

With that, we’re eagerly anticipating our season finale concert, featuring collaborations between the Orchestra da Camera and other school ensembles, such as the high school’s San Domenico Singers and our primary school Challenge Choir, as well as our primary school orchestra. I sincerely hope you can join us in wishing our graduating seniors a bon voyage as they head off to college, as well as witness the next “next generation of string musicians”.

Save the date!
Season Finale Orchestra Concert
May 27, 7:00 p.m.
Featuring the Virtuoso Program Orchestra da Camera,
With the San Domenico Singers, Challenge Choir,
and the Primary School Orchestra

With works by Villa-Lobos, Bloch, Rossini, Rutter, and Whitacre,
and soloist Allie Simpson ’11, viola
On Wednesday, March 24, VP members were treated to a supremely educational and fantastically entertaining afternoon with the Cavani String Quartet. This irresistible ensemble has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and the Kennedy Center; won Naumburg, Fischoff and Banff competitions; received the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming and the Guarneri String Quartet Residency Award; recorded on numerous labels; and collaborated with such distinguished artists as Itzhak Perlman and members of the Juilliard, Emerson, Takacs, Ying, St. Lawrence and Cleveland Quartets. Formed in 1984, the Cavani Quartet was appointed Quartet-in-Residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music in 1988.

Annie Fullard, Mari Soto, Kirsten Docter and Merry Peckham began by playing excerpts of the program they had performed in Berkeley the previous evening. Hair flying, eyes communicating, and bodies moving in appropriate synchrony, the foursome tore through movements of Bartok, Ravel, Beethoven and a little James Brown. After a bit of honest and hilarious question-and-answer about their career and life challenges, they then worked with three of our groups on chamber works -- a Mendelssohn Quartet, Beethoven Trio and Haydn Trio. It was easy to see why the Cavani Quartet has won national acclaim for their inspiring and innovative teaching. They engaged our students immediately and consistently with their obvious love for their art, desire to share it with others, mutual respect and fantastic sense of humor. The emphasis was on listening well, communicating effectively, supporting one another successfully and portraying the music appropriately. Their ability to connect on every level by bringing together historical perspective, culture, language, and art forms and encouraging students to follow suit with supportive comments, inviting questions, clever commentary and tremendous goodwill has won them huge fans, here and elsewhere.

As they were during past visits, the Cavani Quartet was extremely impressed by our program and would like to return to SD later this year for more work with the VP students. I intend to do all I can to make that happen.

Alum Updates

Eileen Blum Bourgade ’84 is keeping busy as a violin coach for the Golden Gate Philharmonic Camerata, with her daughter, Lea (11) as a 1st violinist in the Camerata, and her son Tristan (8) as principal cello in their junior orchestra. On Sunday, May 01 at 3:00 p.m. she and her children are hosting a “family” concert to benefit the GCP Scholarship fund for inner city kids at the Main Post Chapel in the Presidio in San Francisco, featuring Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante, Brahms’ Sonata D minor, Tartini’s Devil’s Trill, and Saint Saens’ fantasy for violin and harp.

Rachel Noyes ’94 writes, “Since arriving back in the Bay Area this fall, I’ve been busy finding a balance between performing and teaching. I have served as assistant principal and principal second violin for the Modesto Symphony and Fresno Philharmonic and also with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra. I’m even taking lessons again after a 10 year break with Cathy Van Hoesen of the San Francisco Symphony on orchestral excerpts to prepare for upcoming auditions. I’ve got 10 great students between the ages 3 1/2-8 in Marin. I frequently get together with friends to read quartets or quintets and enjoy hearing live music of all genres. I’m getting married this July and setting up a home in Larkspur.”

In keeping with our goal of educating the whole musician, we had the privilege of inviting Dr. Holly Kelly ’88 to come speak to the students about the sometimes overlooked physical education that’s so vital to a hard-practicing musician. Like any athlete who depends on their bodies’ well-being for success, Dr. Kelly showed our students some keys to preventing, identifying, and treating various types of performance injury.

Alums: Keep us in the loop! We’d love to share your news in the next issue of Overtures. Simply drop us a note at music@sandomenico.org.

Post-masterclass: Elena, Niki and Caitlin with Mari Soto and Annie Fullard

San Domenico Virtuoso Program Faculty & Staff
Ann Krinitsky, Virtuoso Program Director
Eugene Chuklov, Violin Teacher and Chamber Music Coach
Susan Bates, Viola Teacher and Chamber Music Coach
Sergei Ribatchenko, Cello Teacher and Chamber Music Coach
Miles Graber, Piano Accompanist
Rob DeNunzio, Music Conservatory Director
Teresa Notari, Administrative Assistant

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