A Springtime of Celebration
by Rob DeNunzio
Director of Music Conservatory and Music Programs

Each year, springtime seems to overflow with opportunities to enrich our students’ musical lives, and they pay us back with unbridled enthusiasm for performing, for learning, and for sharing their love of music with their community. True to form, the past few months have brought a whirlwind of activity to the Virtuoso Program, from off-campus performances to impromptu guest masterclasses, and from our second annual “Women in Music” concert to hosting a very special birthday party.

But while you’ll get to enjoy reading about our many various escapades in this newsletter, two particular recent events touched me personally as they demonstrated one of the values we hold most dear at San Domenico: our emphasis on community.

In the midst of a storm that toppled trees and knocked out power throughout Marin, we ventured into Fairfax with nine students to perform a chamber music concert in a dinner venue that hosts live music every night—a far cry from the purposefully quiet and attentive audience of the concert hall! The students, however, relished the challenge of capturing the audience’s ears. And thanks to a robust crowd of San Domenico faces and unsuspecting locals, their playing was rewarded with rapturous applause. The sight of such enthusiasm for the music and such excellent attendance despite the violent weather made the evening all the more special. As one high school faculty member in attendance wrote the following morning, “I felt honored to be there… What a special evening.”

On April 2, we witnessed another true Virtuoso Program community gathering, as friends, family, and alumnae spanning decades of relationships with Faith France convened in the gallery space named in her honor to celebrate our founder’s 90th birthday. The testimonials and birthday wishes from those there (and for those who couldn’t attend, by video) illustrated a life dedicated to the joint causes of music, education, and youth in Marin and beyond. It was incredible to see so many travel from so far to join in the festivities and reminded me just how importantly her vision continues to imbue our program with pride, focus, and meaning.

Lastly, I hope you can come and be a part of our community at our final orchestra concert of the year on Friday, May 25 at 7:00 p.m., when we bid adieu to our graduating seniors, along with soloist Caitlin Gowdy ’12, fresh off the heels of her fifth consecutive Marin Music Chest scholarship prize.
From the Podium
by Ann Krinitsky

The second annual “Women in Music” concert March 11 was extraordinarily well-received by our high school and public audiences alike, eliciting praise and enthusiasm for the fine execution of a variety of musical styles from Marianna Martines’ energetic Sinfonia in C to teenager Gabrielle Chou’s nimble Canon and Postlude, recent winner of the Young Composers Challenge. The Andante from Ruth Crawford’s String Quartet 1931 and Pulitzer Prize winner Jennifer Higdon’s String challenged performers and listeners with dense textures and complex rhythms. Caitlin Gowdy ’12 drew strong sentiment with her eloquent and moving rendition of Sicilienne. Guest harpist Anna-Maria Mendieta created a lush atmosphere in her Tango Suite based on the music of Astor Piazzola and set the stage ablaze for the final Libertango along with our own Niki Fukada ’13.

David Smadbeck, owner of the Sleeping Lady, invited two of our quartets plus bass to perform chamber works and selections from our Women In Music program at the cozy Fairfax venue on the rainy evening of March 27. Despite the deluge, we had a great audience, including former VP Director George Thomson who was visiting from Oregon during his spring break. Our students gave brief introductions about their quartet movements and showed great professionalism playing in an acoustically and spatially challenging environment without a conductor. They enjoyed it tremendously and expressed strong interest in playing there again!

Later that afternoon we held our concerto competition, adjudicated by George Thomson and Michael Grossman. Sarasate was the big winner of the day! Caitlin Gowdy ’12 will perform Carmen Fantasy in May, and Elena Kim ’14 will perform Zigeunerweisen next October.

A beautiful luncheon honoring VP founder Faith France was held on the occasion of her 90th birthday was well attended by alumni and friends, and abundant tributes praising her foresight, and accomplishments flowed freely. Thank you, Ms. France, for creating such an incredible environment and wonderful opportunities for our students.