



THE CHIARAS: SIROTA, BEAVER, YOON, AND FISCHER

Taking It on the Road

The timing was right when the Chiara String Quartet got a CMA grant for a residency in Grand Forks, North Dakota. In the year

2000, the group was fresh out of Juilliard, and had just taken on Julie Yoon as second violinist. “We weighed staying in New York, barely staying afloat, and taking a year or two to develop a sound,” says Rebecca Fischer, the Chiara’s first violinist. “The residency gave us an opportunity to hunker down and learn what it was to be an ensemble.”

But it wasn’t just expediency that made the residency a good fit. From the first, the Chiaras had sought ways to bring chamber

music to new audiences. Already, three of them—Fischer, violist Jonah Sirota and cellist Gregory Beaver—had taken part in the Morse Fellowship Program at Juilliard, training with arts educator (and *Chamber Music* columnist) Eric Booth, then going into New York City public schools to perform and teach.

The Grand Forks experience was enlightening, confounding expectations about the tastes and responses of audiences. The musicians were pleasantly surprised at how open their listeners were—not only to the standard repertoire, but to the some of the tougher nuggets of modern music. “If you’re not used to hearing that kind of programming, you aren’t *expecting* to not like something,” Fischer explains.

One instructive moment came in a concert soon after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Berg’s knotty opus 3 string quartet was scheduled for the program. “We thought ‘Should we change the program and play more calming music?’” Fischer says. “Then we decided ‘This music was written at a time of conflict; why not play it and talk about the thorny issues it brings up?’ It turned out to be one of the most intense concerts we had. People were *primed* to listen to music like that.”

The Chiaras are now in residence at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (“Our first real job!” Fischer crows), and in fall 2008, they start a post as Blodgett Artists-in-Residence at Harvard. Meanwhile, they continue to honor their commitment to expand the audience for chamber music. They’ve embarked on a series of gigs at clubs and galleries—places that are more likely to host jazz, folk and even rock groups than a string quartet.

“One of the reasons we wanted to do this, aside from just reaching new audiences, is that we wanted it to be more intimate,” says Fischer. “It sounds clichéd to say we’re trying to break down barriers—everyone aims to make music as friendly and at the same time intense an experience as possible—but sometimes that depends on the venues.”

Generally, the group will arrange for club venues in tandem with formal concerts, taking advantage of the flexibility that clubs offer—unlike more traditional engagements, the club gigs can usually be booked as little as two or three months in advance. They usually play two sets on an evening; the first made up of individual movements from a variety of pieces and the second consisting of a whole work. Often, they’ll abandon their intended program, allowing the mood of the audience to dictate what pieces they play.

One particular evening, at a club in Fargo, ND, started with a wildly eclectic mix of movements from quartets by Jefferson Friedman, Mozart and Pierre Jalbert, along with an arrangement of a Prince song and the first movement of Schoenberg’s early, tonal D-major quartet. After the second set—Haydn’s C-major Op. 20, No. 2—the crowd demanded one final piece: the last movement of the Schoenberg work. Brags Fischer: “I’m very excited to say that we played Schoenberg for an encore—in Fargo, North Dakota!”

www.chiaraquartet.net

Bounty from Vineyards

This year’s ten-concert season features the likes of the Juilliard, Miró, Jupiter and Takács string quartets, Yefim Bronfman and Garrick Ohlsson, Barbara Bonney and the Academy of Ancient Music. They

perform in an intimate jewel box of an auditorium. Tickets cost \$20 apiece.

Interested in signing up? Sorry—unless you’re from Napa County, California, you’re plumb out of luck. Chamber Music in Napa Valley is so popular that there’s a waiting list for subscriptions—and Napa residents get first dibs. “We cut by zip code,” says the organization’s director, John Kongsgaard. “If you’re from Berkeley, you can’t come to these concerts.”

The locals-only nature of CMNV is part of its very DNA. In 1980, Clos du Val, a French wine company with Napa holdings, was looking to soften its interloper status; its local lawyer, Richard Lemon, suggested the chamber music series as a way of bringing the best of European culture to the area. The company underwrote the first few seasons, but now all costs are covered by the community. Kongsgaard makes a pitch for donations from the podium at the beginning and end of each season; much of the difference comes via the generosity of the area’s vintners. “We have to milk them, but not too hard,” he says. “There’s no fund drive—people just cough it up.”

For much of its history, finances were hand-to-mouth: Each season ended with the ledger book at zero. But five years ago, an anonymous donor (“a winemaking angel”) presented a large donation that essentially puts CMNV a season ahead. “Now we can plan this season on last year’s donations, rather than hoping for this year’s,” says Kongsgaard.

One priority for both Kongsgaard and his donors is that ticket prices be kept low. “The mission is to provide the best possible musicians to a local audience for a very fair price,” Kongsgaard says. “We want everybody to come. We’ve got winery owners sitting next to the cellar master.”

Kongsgaard got involved early in the organization’s history, initially writing program notes, and soon after taking over the programming of the concerts. Now he and his wife, Maggie, run CMNV by themselves. The two own “a little family winery” that produces coveted high-end Chardonnays and Syrahs; they handle organization business as a sideline, running it out of their kitchen.

Aside from its concert series, CMNV sets up educational outreach activities, bringing visiting artists to local schools, and sometimes busing groups of kids to the Kongsgaard vineyard, where they can spend a day hanging out with the likes of the Penderecki Quartet and composer-pianist Marc Neikrug. Participating students get priority for rush seats at the concerts. “They’re thoroughly lectured by Maggie and me on what’s expected of them,” says Kongsgaard. “Then they sit up straight and listen to people play Ligeti.”

The very popularity of the concerts allows CMNV to program music that might prove a hard sell in other venues. Kongsgaard’s own tastes are partly responsible; by his own admission, the organization’s programming has “weeded out” musical conservatives unwilling to stretch past the 19th century. As a result, the people who’ve stuck with the concerts—and the new audience members who’ve weathered the waiting list to join—actively welcome encounters with music of recent times. “I was worried when a whole pack of gray-haired people came up to me after the Vogler Quartet played the Ligeti 1,” Kongsgaard reports. “I thought ‘Here we go!’ but they said ‘This was great! Please don’t be afraid to do modern music.’”

The concerts are held at the Napa Valley Opera House, a refurbished vaudeville theater that seats 500 people. The atmosphere there is so appealing that artists will often agree to a fee concession—augmented, it must be said, by a wine donation. The cozy surroundings—and the fact that no critics are invited—motivate performers to take risks that they might avoid in more high-profile venues. “You can let your hair down a little here,” says Kongsgaard.

“Garrick Ohlsson did his first public *Hammerklavier* here, and when he got into the slow movement, I almost panicked because the tempo was so slow. He pulled it off, but you wouldn’t dare do that with an urban audience—the guy in the *Times* would kill you!”

www.chambermusicnapa.org



NAPA VALLEY’S JOHN KONGSGAARD

Musical Diplomacy

Like so many people, Allegra Klein found her life changed by the events of September 11, 2001. She had forged a career in music as a violinist, a teacher and an administrator. But now it seemed important to use her background to address the world situation. She founded Musicians for Harmony, dedicated to using music for the cause of furthering peace. Each year, the group stages a benefit concert, on or around the anniversary of the terrorist attacks, with the proceeds going to a charity that promotes international understanding.

In 2003, Klein's work for the organization brought her for the first time to Iraq, with funds and instruments for the war-beleaguered Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra. This year she returned for an extraordinary ten-day event: the Iraqi Summer Performing Arts Academy, in which American faculty members collaborate with Iraqi musicians, dancers and musical theater performers. Held in Erbil, Kurdistan, the Academy was arranged by American Voices, an institution that sponsors U.S. cultural programs in developing countries.

Even though the Kurdish region is relatively far from Iraq's central areas of conflict, it takes a special kind of person to voluntarily ship off to a country whose violence lands on the front page of U.S. newspapers day after day. "I had difficulty finding faculty who wanted to go," says John Ferguson, executive director of American Voices. "Because it was Kurdistan, people were afraid. I would get two reactions when I'd call people: They would basically hang up the phone, or say 'Yes, I'm there.'" Klein clearly fell in the latter category.

"The reality on the ground is that [Erbil] is a 90 percent normal place to go," Ferguson observes. Nonetheless, the city lacks the kind of infrastructure that Westerners might take for granted. Simply getting the Academy up and running required forbearance and a bit of muscle. For instance, the morning that the Academy was due to start, the main hall still didn't have power. "To get the electricity flowing, I had to take off my diplomat's hat and pitch a good old fit," says Ferguson.

For her part, Klein brought along 35 boxes of items donated to Musicians for Harmony: sheet music, child-sized instruments, reeds, Suzuki instruction books. She worked with the Erbil String Orchestra—a disorganized group that during the course of the ten days transformed itself from a mongrel assortment into an ensemble capable of bringing delight in public performance. She also introduced musicians to the Suzuki method, hoping to plant the seeds for future pedagogical endeavors.

Ten of the students at the Academy were from Baghdad. Even though the war has thrown their lives into chaos, Klein found herself struck by their optimistic attitude. "These children are really remarkable, and that's what's inspiring to me," she says. "It doesn't take much to bring them some light and happiness. You just want to be able to maintain the context for a little bit of hope."

Klein's professional life is being transformed by her international activities. She had been executive director of the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, but her new career's new focus obliged her to resign. Now she's embarking on a master's degree in global affairs at New York University. "I want to practice cultural diplomacy, combining music with global affairs," she says. "My vision is less about fulfilling a particular administration's agenda than about an overall cultural awakening."

No question but that those ten days in Erbil are responsible for Klein's new course. "This particular experience," she says "changed the path of my life." www.musicians4harmony.org

ALLEGRA KLEIN



Young Blood

For 22 years, the Eastern Shore Chamber Music Festival has brought great music to Talbot County, Maryland. Nurtured by artistic directors Marcy Rosen and J. Lawrie Bloom, and sustained by an active, enthusiastic board,

the festival presents a series of concerts over two weekends in June in some of the seaside area's most picturesque venues. But a few years ago, board member Arnold Lerman started worrying about the musical preferences of ESCMF's audiences.

"We're looking at audiences who are used to 18th and 19th-century music," says Lerman. "They aren't in tune with the way music was changing and with what was happening in our music schools."

Lerman's solution: A competition for young ensembles, held under the festival's auspices. The competition would not only bring new area audiences to chamber music; it would also give support to young musicians. It's a concern that's close to Lerman's heart: Although he's a lawyer by profession, he has played violin his whole life, and has always counted musicians among his closest friends. "Where are our future musicians coming from?" he asks. "How can we encourage them?"

When he first presented his idea to ESCMF, Lerman encountered a bit of resistance from his fellow board members. The worry was that the competition might drain resources from the festival itself. But Lerman promised that his fundraising wouldn't step on the festival's turf. He formed a competition committee, consisting of himself and two other ESCMF board members, Anna Larkin and Patricia Barbis. The competition also received key early support from Marcy Rosen. Just three weeks before the application deadline for the first competition, the "troika" staged a chamber concert in a board member's house. The event was successful beyond anyone's dreams, raising funds to cover the first competition, with some left over to start the second one.

The Chesapeake Chamber Music Competition has now had two biennial outings, with a third edition scheduled for March, 2008. The competition is open to ensembles of all varieties: "I felt very strongly that it ought to be any combination of instruments, even those that are a mite unusual, because music is developing that way," says Lerman. In fact, the first winner was Exit 9, a percussion group. (The David Trio, a piano trio from Italy, won the 2006 event.) The only restriction

for entry is that a group's average age must be under 31.

Even though the competition hands out substantial prizes—\$10,000 to the winners, \$5,000 to the second-place ensemble—its goal isn't just disbursing cash, but also throwing a spotlight on its young participants. The winners of the 2008 competition will play at the opening concert of the next Eastern Shore festival, and then, over the following weekend, for two neighboring presenters: the Candlelight Concert Society and the Chincoteague Cultural Alliance. Moreover, the competition itself is heavily attended by presenters, providing valuable exposure to all of the finalists.

The competition in its first two outings has turned into a local hit, with people staying through the whole marathon event to hear every ensemble play its 40-minute set. "Right from the start, the community fell in love with the event," says Lerman. "A lot of people in the community are scared of the words 'chamber music.' What this shows them is that chamber music is more than 18th and 19th-century music, and old graying people sitting there. The minute you say you're dealing with young people, a whole different dynamic develops."

www.musicontheshore.org

www.chambermusiccompetition.org



ITALY'S DAVID TRIO, WINNER OF THE CHESAPEAKE COMPETITION

Passing the Reins

What happens when an established chamber music organization rests solely on one person's shoulders—and that person decides to back down? Georgiana DiMauro founded the Staten Island Chamber Music Players in 1974 and built it into a vibrant musical force in the most far-flung of New York's five boroughs. In the early 2000s, though, she started thinking about cutting back her activities. "It's age-related," she admits. "I was the founding person, and at that time I had a lot more energy than I have now. I started thinking not only about age creeping up, but about wanting the group to continue when I was no longer in charge. I used to worry: How do I clone myself?"

As if by divine intervention, she saw that the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York was holding a workshop on this very dilemma: founding directors who were looking to set a plan for transition. She emerged from the workshop with a key piece of take-home wisdom: "You don't have to do it all at once." The message fell on grateful ears. Still vitally involved in the organization's workings, DiMauro was reluctant to just walk away. The workshop provided her with tactics for gradually ceding control, while still keeping an active role in SICMP.

Soon after, she posted an ad for an administrator, and an eminently suitable candidate came forward. Elizabeth LaCause, a Staten Island resident, had been festival director at the borough's Snug Harbor Cultural Center—a position that had been eliminated due to post-9/11 financial difficulties—and, with young children to raise, was now looking for a job that would allow her to work from home. "This was just what I needed to do," LaCause says.

LaCause started as managing director in 2003, becoming executive director in 2006. Her job puts her in charge of four ensembles: a string quartet, a jazz quartet, a brass quintet and a woodwind quintet. SICMP stages two four-concert series in which each ensemble appears once—a subscription series during the regular season, then "Forest Fanfares," a free four-concert series held in High Rock Park. The organization also brings dozens of outreach activities and concerts in local schools, senior citizen's homes and hospitals.

As she has taken on new duties, DiMauro has provided guidance each step of the way. Says LaCause: "She's been an incredible mentor!" LaCause is now in charge of grant writing, and just as significantly, marketing, PR and promotions, with particular attention to attracting the 35–55-year-olds—a demographic that's underrepresented in SICMP's audiences. She has installed software to track donations, launched a new website and even set up a PayPal account for ticket buyers. "Georgiana doesn't even own a computer," says LaCause. "One of the reasons she hired me is that she wanted to bring [SICMP] into the 21st century."

For her own part, DiMauro has cut back on her salary as she has offloaded responsibilities. She is currently artistic director and CFO, handling scheduling and financial records. LaCause is not a musician—her background is in ballet—and DiMauro retains control of SICMP's musical activities; when she eventually gives up this aspect of the job, LaCause will turn to the participating ensembles for guidance.

"I don't want to leave the group where it just dies if something happens to me," says DiMauro. "I want to know it's going to continue." By installing a next-generation administrator at her side and grooming her gradually, DiMauro has effectively avoided "Founder's Syndrome" and ensured SICMP's future. www.sichamberplayers.org



STATEN ISLAND BRASS:
MATT RAGSDALE,
TRUMPET;
BRIAN COOGAN,
TRUMPET;
CAROLYN CLARK,
FRENCH HORN;
KEVIN CLARK,
TROMBONE;
HENRY HEYZER,
BASS TROMBONE



ALHAMBRA:
ISABELLE GANZ, DIRECTOR, MEZZO-SOPRANO, SHAWM; HAIG MANOUKIAN, OUD; ELLIOT Z. LEVINE, BARITONE, RIQ (TAMBORINE); MICHAEL HESS, VIOLIN, KANUN, NAY (WOODEN FLUTES); NICOLE LeCORGNE (NOT PICTURED) AND PETER BOGDANOS, PERCUSSION

Diaspora Diamonds

Even for early music scholars, the traditional music of the Sephardic Jews is a little-known quantity. But in the early 80s, when Isabelle Ganz

was working in Renaissance fairs as a percussionist, she stumbled across Sephardic music and, in her words, "It astonished me." Soon afterward, she founded Alhambra, a chamber group dedicated to this unusual repertoire—the music of the Jews who originated in Spain and, after the expulsion of 1492, emigrated to northern Africa and the Middle East.

It's a body of work that spans centuries and cultures, drawing influences from areas as disparate as the Arab countries, Turkey and even India. Most of its instruments would be unfamiliar to Western audiences—the oud (a relative of the lute), nay (a wind instrument), kanun (a trapezoidal zither), shawm (a forebear of the oboe), dumbek (a goblet-shaped hand drum) and bender (a frame drum). An integral component of the music-making are *taksim*s—improvisations in Middle Eastern style.

The demands are unusual for Western musicians, but Ganz has learned to take them in stride. A musical polymath, she made her reputation as a mezzo-soprano performing both early and 20th-

century music. One significant influence was John Cage; Ganz was the soloist at the premiere of his chamber work *Ryoanji*. The modern repertoire turned out to provide valuable training for her later forays into the Sephardic literature, with its irregular rhythms and use of quarter- and even eighth-tones. "Of course, in 20th-century music, you have to have very good pitch," Ganz notes.

With its music straddling the Muslim/Jewish divide, it's inevitable that Alhambra's very existence should invoke some of the current conflicts oppressing the Middle East. But the group takes an ecumenical approach; one of its programs is even called "Building Bridges: The Arabic-Sephardic Kinship." Says Ganz: "I firmly believe in bridging the gap."

Alhambra's performing forces shift from concert to concert, but the core personnel has a distinctly cross-cultural aspect. Cantor Daniel Pincus is a frequent presence; so is Maurice Chedid, a Lebanese oud player and singer of Arabic music. "A local paper in Houston asked us 'With the Middle East conflict, are you people talking to each other?'" Ganz reports. "I said 'What kind of a question is that? We gotta rehearse!'"

www.alhambragroup.com

SEGUIES

The Colburn School has appointed the **Calder Quartet**—Benjamin Jacobson (violin), Andrew Bullbrook (violin), Jonathan Moerschel (viola), and Eric Beyers (cello)—to assistant faculty at the **Colburn Conservatory of Music**. The Quartet continues as Colburn's first quartet-in-residence.

Annette M. Romain has been named executive director of the Pittsburgh-based self-presenting string ensemble **Chatham Baroque**.

John Newkirk has succeeded Mark Huber as executive director of **Chamber Music Monterey Bay**, in Carmel CA.

Kathryn Welter has been appointed executive director of the **Boston Camerata**, succeeding Ronald Vigue. Welter, a musicologist, has been assistant dean of Harvard Summer School and manager of the Heidelberg Castle Festival Orchestra.

In Memoriam

Richard Cook, jazz historian, journalist

Art Davis, bassist

Albert Fuller, harpsichordist/conductor

Jon Lucien, baritone, songwriter

Sal Mosca, jazz pianist and teacher

Louis Moyse, flutist, Moyse Trio; founder Marlboro Music School and Brattleboro Music Center (see page 80)

Luciano Pavarotti, tenor

Herb Pomeroy, trumpeter; teacher, Berklee College of Music and MIT

Specs Powell, percussionist

Max Roach, drummer, composer, Max Roach Double Quartet

Aldemaro Romero, pianist, composer

Marty Streicher, actor, director, producer, music publicist

Edward Zambara, bass-baritone; New England Conservatory

Joe Zawinul, keyboardist; Weather Report



Additions and Corrections to the Directory Issue

The Dranoff Two-Piano Competition

Because of an editing error, the name of the founder of the Dranoff International Two-Piano Competition and Foundation was misstated in the October issue ("Have Repertoire, Will Travel," page 118). Mrs. Dranoff's first name is Loretta.

Christopher Schaub

The listing for singer/songwriter/lutenist Christopher Schaub was mistakenly placed on page 295 of the Directory. Schaub is now based in Nashville, TN. His email contact is info@christopherschaub.com.

Duo Concertante

On page 246 in "Ensembles," Duo Concertante's listing was incomplete. The full listing follows:

DUO CONCERTANTE

Nancy Dahn

School of Music, Memorial University
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Canada

(709) 737-2372

ndahn@mun.ca

www.duoconcertante.com

Since forming in 1997, Duo Concertante—Nancy Dahn, violin/Timothy Steeves, piano—has performed hundreds of recitals across Canada, the United States, and abroad. Hailed for its "artistry, poetry, and impeccable technique" (*La Scene Musicale*) and "exceptional warmth and intimacy" (*Ottawa Citizen*), the Duo has appeared in London (Wigmore Hall), Germany (Am Neuendorfer Anger, Berlin), Chicago (Dame Myra Hess Series), New York City (Music of the Americas; Trinity Church), Ottawa (National Arts Centre), Beijing (Forbidden City Concert Hall), and Los Angeles (Los Angeles County Museum of Art).



Phoenix Quartet

An out-of-date photograph of the New York-based Phoenix Quartet ("Ensembles," page 234) was published in error. Above is a current photo of the group, whose members are (left to right): Debra Poulter, mezzo-soprano; David Orcutt, baritone; Erica Row, soprano; David Root, tenor; Richard Pearson Thomas, piano