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Anatomy of a Chamber Series

BY PAT ROGERS

It's been more of a well-kept secret than a blockbuster series—chamber music has been performed at the Avram Gallery at Stony Brook Southampton. Those who caught whispers from satisfied listeners or spotted concert listings got in on the ground floor of what may become a regular occurrence. For now, the final concert in the three-concert series will be held on Sunday at 2 p.m. at the Southampton campus.

On stage will be the Stony Brook Chamber Music Cooperative. The group is a mix of students, faculty and alumni from SUNY Stony Brook's Department of Music. They will perform music by German composer and pianist Ludwig von Beethoven (1770-1827) in a program that also includes works by Hungarian composer and pianist Ernst von Dohnanyi (1890-1959) and Bohemian Czech composer Bohuslav Martinu (1877-1960).

The musicians performing are Andrew Beer on viola, Katie Schlaikjer on cello and Marc Levine on violin. Mr. Beer has performed extensively throughout North America, Europe and Asia. His performances include appearances with the Grammy-award winning Emerson String Quartet and with Sony Classical recording star Midori. Ms. Schlaikjer is a former member of the award-winning Avalon Quartet. She performs frequently in Manhattan and her credits include the Ravinia Festival in Chicago, Carmoor Festival in Katonah, New York, the Aspen Music Festival and School in Colorado and the Yellow Barn Chamber Music School & Festival in Vermont.

This spring, she will tour with the Core Ensemble in "Tres Vidas," which combines chamber music and theater to portray the lives of three significant Latina women. Mr. Levine is the founder of the Southampton Sunday Music Series and performs early music and new music. He has a doctorate from Stony Brook University and has performed with Early Music New York, Concert Royal, the Dallas Bach Society, the Naumburg Early Instrument Players and Stony Brook Baroque, and is a founding member of Flying Forms.

He has performed around the country including with Ensemble 212 in Manhattan, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble and with the Stony Brook String Quartet at Carnegie Hall. He has held concertmaster positions at Indiana University, Stony Brook University and the Amherst Early Music Institute. Currently, Mr. Levine is the assistant conductor at Stony Brook Opera and is a faculty member of the Stony Brook Pre-College division and the Music Institute of Long Island in Manhasset.

So far, the Southampton Sunday Music Series has met with enthusiastic audiences who appear to know the ways of chamber music, Mr. Levine said. (One hint—audiences have been clapping at the correct places: between movements isn't one of those.)

The idea to bring a chamber music series to the East End first formed after Stony Brook University took over the Southampton College campus two years ago. SUNY Stony Brook has a well regarded music program that offers degrees for

undergraduates, master's and doctoral degrees. Their regular offerings on the Stony Brook campus include university sponsored opera, orchestra, chamber ensembles and other groups. They also have pre-college programs and adult chamber ensemble workshops for musical community members.

Linking the new campus with Stony Brook's stellar musical program seemed a perfect marriage. Mr. Levine approached school officials last year and recently received the go-ahead for three concerts. The series does double duty—it gives East End audiences a chance to hear quality chamber music while giving emerging groups and professional musicians the opportunity to play and develop a following.

The first concert, held on March 30, featured the Escher String Quartet. Formed in 2005, the group was immediately invited by violin masters Pinchas Zukerman and Itzhak Perlman to be the quartet-in-residence at their respective summer festivals. The group represented Manhattan School of Music for the Kennedy Center's Conservatory Project and will begin a residency this September with the Chamber Music Society Two at Lincoln Center in Manhattan.

The second concert was held on April 6 and featured Flying Forms. Founded by Mr. Levine, the group is a baroque chamber music ensemble that features period instruments. The group features Mr. Levine on baroque violin, Marie Dalby on viola da gamba, Jonathan den Herder on cello and Tami Morse on harpsichord. Flying Forms is the artist-in-residence at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Islip. They have performed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University, the Boston Early Music Festival, SUNY Stony Brook and other venues.

While the series was welcomed to Stony Brook Southampton, a budget wasn't possible and the series' future is on a wait-and-see basis. If East End audiences embrace the concerts, most likely the series will be something they can count on. So far, the response has been a strong one, Mr. Levine said. He hopes the turnout will be good for the final concert as he has plenty of ideas for additional programs.

"I'm really excited about the possibilities," Mr. Levine said. "I would like people to see the wide-ranging styles and instruments in chamber music. I think the series can provide something valuable for audiences and the performers, especially while school is in session. It gives musicians an opportunity to perform and gives the community high quality concerts during times when there's not as much going on as during the summer."

The next concert of the Southampton Sunday Music Series will be held on April 20, at 2 p.m. at the Avram Gallery at Stony Brook Southampton in Southampton. The Stony Brook Chamber Music Cooperative will perform. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for seniors and students. For ticket information, call 632-8000.



Marc Levine is the founder of the Southampton Sunday Music Series.

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