



Music Up Close & Personal

THE STORY BEHIND THE MUSIC

The Weekend of Chamber Music (WCM) under the artistic direction of founder Judith Pearce has provided more than a decade of world-class concerts and innovative programming for children, and it has created unique opportunities for the public to actively participate in the intimacy and warmth of chamber music through all of its endeavors.

In June 1994, flutist Pearce and her colleagues set out to present chamber music as ‘a vital art to a broad cross section of people’ with WCM’s first ‘festival,’ which consisted of just one weekend of chamber music at the Meat Market in Lake Huntington, NY. The artists’ workshop and summer gallery became WCM’s home for two years, where high quality performance with a range of instruments was always the imperative.

WCM’s first children’s program included a chamber arrangement of Camille Saint Saens’ work, “Carnival of the Animals.” In a morning workshop, hands-on activities included painting and live animals, and Bud Wertheim, a sculptor known for his metal works, created huge, articulated, sculpted animals for the event.

When the Community Center in Cohecton opened in the fall of 1994, WCM featured the first of a number of concerts of American songs intermingled with local history. “A Concert of American Music, Poetry and Song” used historic letters from local archives to weave quotes about country life into music of the period.

WCM moved to Narrowsburg’s Tusten Theatre when the Meat Market closed its doors in 1996, and the chamber group’s single weekend became a two-weekend affair. During the Tusten years, a Saturday writing workshop for children was added, and they created poems which were set to music with the help of WCM’s professional artists. Interactive children’s concerts also began, and the “Music and Imagination” series started in April 1997. Incorporated in that same year in New York State, The Weekend of Chamber Music was granted official status as a Non-Profit 501(c)3 Public Charity in June, 1998.

Lake Huntington lured WCM back in 1998 and the series moved to the Nutshell Gallery, on the idyllic lakeside. A Thursday evening buffet and informal concert were added to the schedule, and there was an art exhibition on view to round out the elegant evening. Another day was added for the

“Music and Imagination” series that year, and WCM musicians began coaching high school students in Monticello High School’s chamber music class, in addition to their work with younger students. WCM’s band and chamber music coaching work with students has continued every year, and starting in the fall of the 2006-07 school year, two additional schools will bring Weekend of Chamber Music artists to students and music programs, reaching an estimated 200 students in band and chamber music classes next year.

WCM moved to Hortonville Presbyterian Church in 2000. The mid-19th century church was later listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Ms. Pearce celebrated by expanding programming again, adding a third weekend in 2001.

When a collaboration with the Liberty Library and the Liberty Museum and Arts Center (LMAC) began with the “Main Street Program,” WCM added another artistic genre to its work – architecture. The program combined a concert of children’s original poetry set to music, with an architectural tour of Main Street, and a final concert at the museum opened a quilt exhibition, tying music into the everyday lives of people. This led to a New York State Council on the Arts grant, spearheaded by LMAC, for the “Memory Project,” and WCM began working with an English teacher and Narrowsburg 9th graders on the four-year interdisciplinary project in 2001.

“The Memory Project,” in its final phase in 2005-06, includes 180 Liberty High School ninth-graders writing articles and poems based on interviews about local history, to be excerpted for public concerts and exhibition on June 3, 2006 at the LMAC.

In its milestone 10th anniversary in 2004, WCM Summer Festival featured Metropolitan Opera soprano Stephanie Blythe, a Sullivan County native, and last year, WCM celebrated the 70th birthday of acclaimed British composer Nicholas Maw, traveling to six venues in the Delaware and Hudson Valley regions for the three-weekend festival.

This year, *Summer Festival 2006 – In the Company of Mozart* will be condensed into 2 weeks, and WCM is pleased to announce that it has found a new home for the event. The Eddie Adams Farm in Jeffersonville will be the festival’s home for its 13th season, July 9 to 22, 2006. WCM is grateful to Alyssa Adams and pleased to recognize the Eddie Adams Farm as Presenting Sponsor for the festival. Nine events celebrating the Mozart’s 250th birthday are planned, including a free outdoor performance of one of the beloved composer’s Serenades for wind octet.

After more than a decade of reaching out to the community, it’s fair to say that WCM has grown into a well-regarded citizen of Sullivan County’s cultural life. The Weekend of Chamber Music has made significant cultural and educational contributions over the years, and in that role has unquestionably enriched quality of life for Sullivan County’s citizens.