

Baroque concert begins Weekend of Chamber Music 2010 season

WCM's 17th season ready to start

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An outdoor concert on the lawn at the Hortonville Presbyterian Church. Weekend of Chamber Music

By Linda Fite

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March 21 is the birthday of Johann Sebastian Bach, the composer at the pinnacle of Baroque music. So it's sweet synergy that Sunday also marks the launch of Weekend of Chamber Music's 17th season.

WCM has been bringing terrific and varied music programs to the region since 1994, when Judith Pearce, its founder, artistic director and sometime Sullivanite, had the thought: Let's bring great chamber music to the country!

Sound eruption

Sunday's concert is titled "Bold Baroque — Secrets From a Musical Volcano!" Kenneth Hamrick, who will play harpsichord at the event, explained the volcano connection, starting with an explanation of the word "baroque." He said it refers to the irregular, peculiar, one-of-a-kind and much-prized natural pearls of 17th-century Europe. Hamrick said these barroco pearls represented the era's profound appreciation for the beauty of the unique, the unusual, the unpredictable. The Baroque period also created by contrast — shifting moods and tonality, wild emotions followed by calm reverie or ordered measures.

IF YOU GO!

What: "Bold Baroque - Secrets From a Musical Volcano!" concert, Weekend of Chamber Music

Where: Hortonville Presbyterian Church, Hankins Road, Hortonville

When: 2:30 p.m. March 21

Tickets: \$20

Call: 932-8527

On the Web: www.WCMconcerts.org

"Like a volcano!" said Hamrick. "First it's 'Oh my god, catastrophe!' but then it's, 'Look at the beauty of the glowing lava flowing out.'"

The centerpiece of Sunday's program is "Le Cahos" (chaos), with three dance movements from Jean-Fery Rebel's "Les

Elements" arranged for the ensemble, consisting of Hamrick, flutist Pearce, violinist Jose Pietri-Coimbre and cellist Nina Lee.

The program also features avant-garde pieces of the period, including a sonata for violin by Isabella Leonarda, the Haydn Trio in F major, movements from birthday-boy Bach's solo cello suite, and Telemann's Fantasia for solo flute, along with Telemann's Paris Quartet No. 3 "Sonata Prima" in A major, which closes the program.

Country church, great acoustics

"Bold Baroque" will take place at Hortonville Presbyterian Church.

"The church is all wood and plaster, and I think it produces the most beautiful sound in the region," said Hamrick, celebrating his 10th year with WCM. "It's a special Catskill setting," he said, which highlights yet another WCM contrast: country living and chamber music.

"One thing that makes WCM unique is that we desired to put music in significant buildings — yes, funky and off the beaten track — like the old barn at the Eddie Adams Farm, where the big doors open up on the sides, giving the audience both beautiful music and beautiful Catskill views," Hamrick said. The farm will be utilized starting in June.

Festival summer

"The overall thrust of the festival is color and contrast," said Pearce, with a focus on some 20th-century music, including that of Bela Bartok and Claude Debussy — and there's some contrast right there.

"We're always engaged in ways to show that chamber music isn't overrefined or elitist," Pearce said. "The phrase

'chamber music' means simply a musical performance by an ensemble with no conductor; that's all it means." She talked about the "vital art of chamber music," noting that WCM's free concert at the start of the 2009 season featured an arrangement of Irving Berlin tunes.

"What we're about is bridging the gap between the player and the listener," said Pearce, adding that the audience's proximity to the musicians helps. "It's the emotional, expressive, physical excitement that comes from being so close to music-making."