

Pacific Chamber Orchestra's spring concert offers breathtaking Brahms

By Sophie Braccini

Pacific Chamber Orchestra's last concert of the season will be its largest, with 36 musicians playing brass, winds, and string instruments, interpreting works by Ludwig van Beethoven, Edward Elgar and Johannes Brahms. Once again Maestro Lawrence Kohl proposes a unique yet accessible program that combines a deep understanding of musical history, filiation and structure.

The three proposed pieces will offer a voyage from the classical form to the more romantic, from the more noticeably structured to deepest undercurrents, and will showcase international musical talents such as cellist Nina Flyer.

The concert will start with Beethoven's Leonore Overture #3 from his opera "Fidelio." The opera tells the story of the efforts of Fidelio's wife Leonore to free him from prison. Kohl says that although the great musician was not a natural opera writer, this overture – Beethoven went through four versions — is a complete work of its own, a beautiful rendition of the drama throughout this opera. "Some of the traits of Beethoven that come out in this work are his passion for liberty, the heroic, and his hatred of tyranny. It is a stirring work," says Kohl.

The next piece is Elgar's Cello concerto, written after World War I. Kohl says that it carries a special fervent passion. He is proud to present Flyer, the Pacific Chamber Orchestra's principal cellist, as the featured soloist. Flyer is a lecturer in cello and chamber music at the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music. Her UOP in-residence ensemble, Trio 180, performs and tours all over the world. She was also a lecturer in Cello at Cal State East Bay and taught at the Reykjavik School of Music.

The maestro adds that both Elgar and Brahms were influenced by Dvorak's incredible sense of the natural-sounding folk-like melodic line. "Indeed Brahms used to humorously note that one could write entire symphonies based upon melodies that Dvorak discarded," says Kohl. The maestro adds that Elgar also has this sense of expressive long melodic lines that intertwine with each other's without the listener perceiving any seam.

It took Brahms 10 to 21 years –depending on his own depiction— to write his first symphony. Kohl explains that this work is sometimes called Beethoven



Cellist Nina Flyer will perform with the PCO.

Photo provided

10th because Brahms uses some of Beethoven notes, not as plagiarism, but as an homage to his predecessor. However, in contrast to how Beethoven utilizes powerful small chunks, or discrete blocks to build his works, Brahms creates undercurrents and layers going on at the same time, creating a rich texture.

Where Beethoven would utilize the sound of a shepherd horn on a hill to create a panoramic impression of nature, Brahms will appeal to the senses and render the feeling of pleasure in nature felt by the shepherd on a hill, overlooking the immense panorama so that we feel the shepherd's joy. "That is what makes it a romantic work," says Kohl. He adds that Brahms still has a sense of restraint and contained emotions that makes him the most classic of the romantics.

Breathtaking Brahms will be played at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 22. Tickets are available at www.pacific-chamberorchestra.org.

Pet Projects

Tell Puddles to stay out of the rain puddles

By Mona Miller, DVM

Our wet winter this year has brought many benefits to parched California, and more specifically the Bay Area. However, one negative consequence might be an increase in the number of animals exposed to a potentially fatal disease called Leptospirosis — or Lepto, for short.

Although rare, one veterinary specialty hospital in San Francisco had already seen five cases from December through mid-February — which is more than those veterinarians have seen in a typical 12-month period. In part, this increase is due to more puddles of water and marshy areas, which harbor this deadly bacterium. Lepto is rare, but worth discussing — especially since it causes very serious illness. It can be transmitted to humans, and a canine vaccine is available that can help protect against the disease in dogs.

Lepto is a bacteria transmitted in the urine of almost any mammal, but not birds or reptiles. It can cause a fatal liver or kidney infection, as well as bleeding into the lungs. It is most often acquired when an infected mammal urinates, and another mammal comes along and drinks from the puddle of water that contains the infected urine, or absorbs it directly through a cut in the skin or paw pad.

In the East Bay, a common scenario is an infected deer or rat urinates in an area of marshy puddles or slow-moving creeks in one of the many open spaces that we enjoy. Animals that can carry Lepto

include deer, fox, coyote, skunk, raccoon, cattle and rodents. Additionally there is a population of sea lions on the northern California coast, north of Jenner, that carries Lepto — so pet owners who take their dogs to Mendocino County have a potential higher risk level. Likewise, properties with a large number of rats may be at higher risk. Thus, we often need high-level rodent control when bird feeders are used, or when we keep backyard chickens. Hunting dogs are also at higher risk.

Symptoms occur within several days of exposure to the bacteria, and are nonspecific for any particular illness: general malaise, lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea and sometimes fever, excessive thirst or jaundice.

Diagnosis can be difficult. The veterinarian needs to know to check for Lepto. General blood tests will show kidney or liver disease. More specific (and expensive) blood and urine tests are needed to show either antibodies or Lepto antigen.

The good news is that this is a treatable disease, and the prognosis is fair to excellent with early diagnosis AND aggressive treatment with appropriate antibiotics, intravenous fluids and stomach medication support. An infected dog might require 24-hour hospitalization care for three to five days.

There are vaccines available, and these are considered optional (or noncore vaccines). There are different strains of Lepto bacteria (called serovars), and the commercially available vaccines protect against some of these strains, but not all. Vaccine can alter diagnosis test results, so it's important to know if your dog has been vaccinated for Lepto. I recommend giving the vaccine if your dog is at all at risk — for instance, if they go hunting, camping, hiking in open spaces, or go to the beaches north of Jenner.

Lepto is a zoonotic disease, transmissible to humans — in the same way that dogs acquire it, and it causes the same severe kidney or liver infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control, about one-third of reported human cases

are acquired from contact with infected dogs, and another third through contact with infected rats. Thus, the canine vaccine provides some protection for both dogs and their owners.

Further information can be found at www.veterinarypartner.com and at Centers for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov.



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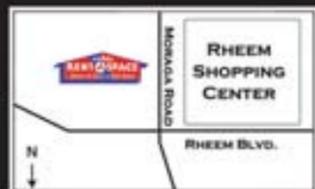
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Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and yellow Labrador. She attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from UC Davis. She

has been happy to call Lafayette home since 2001. She can be reached via email at MonaSDVM@aol.com. She welcomes questions from readers that may get incorporated into a column.