

Published September 4th, 2019

Gold Coast Chamber 20th anniversary - Raising the bar of excellence

By Sophie Braccini



Dmitry Sitkovetsky Photo courtesy Dmitry Sitkovetsky

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Gold Coast Chamber Players, led by Pamela Freund-Striplen in Lafayette. Over the past two decades GCCP has performed memorable chamber music, from baroque to contemporary, featuring composers from faraway lands to those closer to home - sometimes attending the American premiere of their creation - and always with groups of top-notch musicians invited by Freund-Striplen. This year of celebration will open on Sept. 14 with a memorable treat: the coming to Lafayette of world-renowned violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky to perform an all-Schuman program with fellow musicians Grazia Raimondi (violin), Pamela Freund-Striplen (viola), Bernadene Blaha (piano) and Luigi Piovano (cello), who is returning from Italy to play again this year with Gold Coast.

Freund-Striplen was elated talking about being able to host Sitkovetsky for the opening concert of the anniversary year. She met with him in 1994 when she was called to substitute for one of the musicians of the New European Strings Chamber Orchestra that he founded. Since then, it has been Freund-Striplen's dream

to work with Sitkovetsky again. His incredibly busy schedule had never allowed it, until serendipitously on this anniversary year.

Sitkovetsky's career spans over 40 extraordinary years that took him from Soviet Russia where he escaped, to playing all over the world, often as a soloist, but also conducting the leading orchestras of our time including the London and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, San Francisco, St. Louis, Seattle and Dallas Symphony Orchestras, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Santa Cecilia and the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. He is also famous for his transcription for strings of major work such as Bach's Goldberg Variations, and he has a varied recording career.

In a recent interview for the Piedmont News, he confirmed that he would be playing in Lafayette, and in Piedmont the next day, the Stradivari violin made in 1717 in Cremona that he has been playing for 36 years, and that many great musicians have played before him. Playing with him will be artists that both Freund-Striplen and Sitkovetsky have known and worked with for a long time, such as cellist Luigi Piovano, who Sitkovetsky considers his musical brother and who Freund-Striplen had already invited last year to her audience's delight.

The choice of an all-Schuman program for this performance was a common choice that will allow GCCP to feature all the musicians individually as well as together with the quintet. It includes the Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor, Op. 105, the Fantasiestuecke, Op. 73 for Cello and Piano, and the very romantic and exuberant Piano Quintet, Op. 44.

For the rest of the 2019-20 season of the Lafayette-based chamber orchestra, Freund-Striplen promises a kaleidoscope of colors. For the first time a contemporary Chinese composer who lives in Ohio will be featured and will come to the concert. This is an example of what the director loves to do: introduce people to new and accessible music, bringing out different cultures and backgrounds and give them a nice showcase.

Another of this year's concerts will feature the Grammy-nominated Azury quartet, while another will present the Eicher quartet that Freund-Striplen calls a "hot new young quartet."

This year Freund-Striplen is also proposing a fundraiser on Sept. 21, which will be a pairing of music and food in a private home, featuring an Italian feast complemented with the music of Italian cellist Luigi Piovano. Freund-Striplen explains that as the level of the musicians keeps rising, funding for the program also needs to increase.

Details, as well as season and individual tickets are available at <https://www.gccpmusic.com/>

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