

Published March 11th, 2015

Renowned Pianist to Perform Benefit Concert for Trust In Education

By *Sophie Braccini*



Tanya Gabrielian Photo provided

Pianist Tanya Gabrielian is no stranger to those who love classical music. Since winning victories in the Aram Khachaturian International Piano Competition and the Scottish International Piano Competition at age 20, she has performed on major musical stages all over the world. Gabrielian will be performing at Acalanes High School on March 20.

What transformed the Lafayette high school into an annex of Carnegie Hall is the young pianist's desire to support causes greater than herself. One such organization is Trust in Education (TIE), Budd MacKenzie's nonprofit that has been providing Afghanistan villages with educational, economic and health care assistance for the past 11 years.

"I met Budd last summer in Montana after a concert, and he came up to me and told me about his organization," remembers Gabrielian. "I told him that the next time I came to California, I would put on a benefit concert for TIE." Since the beginning of her career, Gabrielian has been giving back, reaching out beyond the typical classic concertgoers and trying to show that classical music is not just for the elite. "Music shows how much we have in common," she says. "Music is about joy, about our connection to each other, and

why we exist. The love of art is something that makes us human."

Another of Gabrielian's motivations is education, another reason she was touched by TIE. While in Lamorinda, she will perform for students at local middle and high schools and share her passion for music with them. A Bay Area native, Gabrielian was raised in Mountain View by her Armenian father, from Iran, and her Korean mother, from Japan. Because of these historical ties and after seeing how wars hurt these different regions, Gabrielian feels the need to engage in something greater than herself. "Being involved in the music industry is a pursuit that can be selfish," she says. "I need to link music and activism."

MacKenzie is thrilled that Gabrielian will play for TIE. Not only does he think she's a great talent, he loves the fact that she is funny and self-effacing. Steinway of Walnut Creek is loaning a piano for the concert and Jessica Winn, an Acalanes graduate and soprano who is performing throughout the Bay Area, will also perform. Winn is currently singing La Madre in Golden Gate Opera's production of Puccini's "Madame Butterfly."

The money collected at the concert will benefit current TIE programs. Over the past 11 years, TIE has provided the means to teach over 1,000 children - more than half who are girls - and built and delivered 5,000 solar cookers for refugee camps, impacting 25,000 people. "Our most recent program is the translation of educational videos loaded on computers or tablets that children will be able to rent from our libraries," says an ever-enthusiastic MacKenzie. "It will provide them with the ability to learn offline in their homes."

Gabrielian hopes to be able to visit Afghanistan and perform there some day. In the meantime, for the concert on the March 20 she chose a piano adaptation of a viola and violin Bach

sonata and a very vibrant piece by Spanish composer Manuel de Falla.

Tickets for the performance can be purchased online at <http://www.trustededucation.org/>.

Another Not-to-be-Missed Concert Planned in Lamorinda

'Czech Mix'

Lamorinda music lovers have another classical music opportunity March 14 with the Gold Coast Chamber Players concert, "Czech Mix." The performance will feature three of the most famous 19th century Czech composers Antonin Dvorak, Leos Janacek and Josef Suk. Dvorak's pieces for string trio and harmonium were created for the composer's family and friends and are quite accessible, says Artistic Director Pamela Freund-Striplen. "Josef Suk's Piano Quartet is at times dramatic, lyrical, triumphant, and deeply expressive. It is the perfect keystone to this Bohemian program," she adds. Chicago-based pianist Yana Reznik will perform with the Chamber Players, playing the harmonium, a rather rare instrument that took some research to locate. The concert will be held at the Lafayette Library Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette. A pre-concert talk with musicologist Kai Christiansen will start the evening at 7 p.m. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.gcplayers.org or call (925) 283-3728. S. Braccini

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[back](#)

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