

First Annual Lafayette Cello Bash Sings

By Sophie Braccini



40 cellists perform under the direction of esteemed Bonnie Hampton.

Photo Ohlen Alexander

Up to 40 cellists mesmerized nearly 100 audience members June 7 at Lafayette's Plaza Park during the first annual Lafayette Cello Bash, organized by Dawn Foster-Dodson. From Baroque to Jazz, the many facets of this deep and complex instrument resonated throughout the park.

Cello bashes used to be more commonplace. The Berkeley Cello Club began holding cello bashes in the Bay Area during the 1960s, with Foster-Dodson's teacher, Milly Rosner, offering the public concerts in churches and halls. "There is a solidarity among cellists," says Foster-Dodson, who directs the Lafayette Cello Academy. For this first Lafayette event, she invited a wide range of cellists to join, from her young students to professional musicians, including Rebecca Roudman, founder of the "Dirty Cello" band.

The afternoon was still scorching hot and spectators crowded the edges of the plaza to find shade, but as the sun began to set, people slowly migrated to the center of the grass. The cellists installed a floor to set their chairs and instruments on, and the sound system projected the sound nicely.

The program started with Roudman and her guitarist partner taking the audience by surprise with a rarely seen use of the cello. Roudman standing, her cello raised by a tailored pedestal, started playing and singing Cajun, folk and bluegrass music with an exciting energy and astonishing virtuosity.

The tempo shifted when Foster-Dodson introduced the first quintet comprised of her young students who played

Tchaikovsky, followed by a very gifted sextet of high school students who played Telemann, Bach and Bartok cello arrangements. Baroque music marvelously suits the cello. The bass lines characteristic of Baroque music are often written for the cello, and the instrument has enough range to create the multiple voices of a piece.

The group had the opportunity to rehearse at Stanley Middle School, Foster-Dodson said, and she was pleased to be able to involve current and past students in this event, most who have never experienced this before.

When a sextet of adult players started playing the cello arrangement of Bach's Cantata BWV 147 (Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben), the sound of the sacred music enraptured the crowd, the passing cars and little kids happily running around seemingly forgotten.

During the second portion of the evening, the 40 cellists played together under the direction of Esteemed Bonnie Hampton. Hampton was a prodigy cellist who became a teacher, player and conductor. She has been on the faculties of Stanford University, UC Berkeley, the San Francisco Conservatory, and since 2003 at the Juilliard School in New York. She plays all over the world. "We cellists love our instruments and we love each other," said Hampton. The second portion of the program favored Baroque music, but also gave tribute to Bizet's Habanera, the introductory music to the Star Wars movie series.

"Dawn (Foster-Dodson) was a student of mine and I've seen her grow," said Hampton. "What she is doing here is supporting

her own students as they develop and giving back to the community."

Dirty Cello is scheduled to perform at 7 p.m. July 10 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall. For information about the group, visit dirtycello.com. For information about the Lafayette Cello Academy, visit www.lafayettecelloacademyinc.com

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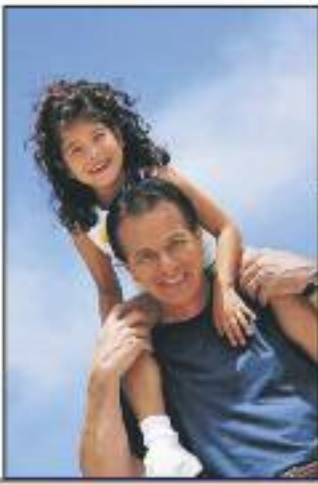

A few selections:

- Beet Salad:** fresh mint, tomato, golden raisins, goat cheese, herb vinaigrette.....7
- Sardines Insalata:** calamata olives, green beans, potato, feta cheese, balsamic olive oil9
- Niman Flat Iron Steak:** potato gratin, green beans, chimichurri sauce18
- Fresh Seafood Cioppino:** in a rich tomato-basil sauce, parmesan, garlic toast19
- Roasted Scallops:** spinach, salciccia sugo19
- Roasted Wild Salmon:** white wine, capers, braised greens, and potato gratin17
- Veal Scallopini:** mushrooms, garlic, marsala wine.....17

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