A Welcome Return of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

“The only problem with hearing the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center [CMS] is that it spoils listening to any other chamber group.” (Albany Times Union) While Friends of Music concert-goers have had several opportunities to confirm the truth of that review during previous visits by the CMS, this first concert of our 2016 spring season will feature just two artists - violinist Ani Kavafian and cellist David Finckel (joint artistic director of CMS and cellist with the Emerson String Quartet for 34 years) - who have been with us before. Others in the ensemble will be violinist Erin Keefe, violists Yura Lee and Matthew Lipman, and cellist Nicholas Canellakis. Their unusual program of string sextets will include: Sextet for Strings from Capriccio, Op. 85; Dvořák: Sextet in A Major for two violins, two violas and two cellos, Op. 48; and Brahms: Sextet No. 2 in G Major for two violins, two violas and two cellos, Op. 36.

[Please note: this concert will take place in the newly-renovated Ossining High School auditorium, which was FOM’s previous venue for 25 years. Details and directions can be found on the back page of this newsletter.]
Our Gifted Sixth Performance Award Recipient Makes His Debut With Us

Given that his name translates to “Pure Melody”, Chinese-born Yun-Chin Zhou may well have been predestined for musical success. This talented young pianist, who began his musical education at age seven, studied at the Curtis Institute of Music from the age of nineteen, with Gary Graffman and Robert McDonald, with whom he continues to work at the Juilliard School. Reviewers have acclaimed him. “Manifestly talented and poised,” said the Washington Post; “An original character, insightful musicianship, breathtaking technique, and best of all, he conveyed true joy in playing,” commented The Huffington Post.

Yun-Chin Zhou’s interesting program for us on April 30 – and our chance to experience that true joy - will include Haydn’s Sonata in E-flat Major, Hob.XVI:49; Liszt’s Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude; Ravel’s La Valse; Trenet’s Six Songs (transcribed for piano by Alexis Weissenberg); and Rachmaninoff’s Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 36. For this concert we return to Sleepy Hollow High School.

In addition to winning our sixth Performance Award – arising from his triumph at the 2013 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, where he won seven prizes - Yun-Chin Zhou has won many other accolades, including First Prize in the 2013 Gina Bachauer Piano Competition at Juilliard, which brought him a full scholarship and an appearance on WQXR’s Young Artist Showcase with Robert Sherman. He won top prizes in the 2007 China International Piano Competition, the 2006 Gulangyu Piano Competition in Xiamen, the Busoni Piano Competition in Italy, and the Cleveland Piano Competition.

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When CMS was founded in 1969, it drew together into a small repertory company nine excellent string, wind, and keyboard artists. Now it has a roster of over 120 of the finest chamber musicians from around the world, performing a wide range of concerts and education events. Going on tour plays a large part in its work; these days more than 70 concerts are performed annually outside New York City, around the United States and throughout Europe and Asia. Innovative and up-to-the minute, CMS has its own radio series which can be heard both nationally and overseas. The tech-savvy among us can also access it via the CMS website and app. In addition, the society has its own in-house recording label, CMS Studio Recordings. The most recent release featured works by Schumann and Mendelssohn and was the April 2014 Cover CD in BBC Magazine.

A second recording label, CMS Live!, takes extraordinary performances from the CMS stages, chosen by artistic directors David Finckel and Wu Han from among each season’s many concerts. The latest releases feature music by Korngold, Hummel, and Adolphe. And in April 2015 Deutche Grammophon released a live-concert recording of the piano quartets of Mahler, Schumann and Brahms, recorded at CMS and featuring David Finckel and Wu Han, with violinist Daniel Hope and violist Paul Neubauer.
Meet the Polystylistic Music of Alfred Schnittke

Friends of Music programs have rarely featured works by the Soviet/Russian composer Alfred Schnittke who died in Germany in 1998. But thanks to the Pacifica Quartet, we will be hearing his famed String Quartet No. 3 – one of the most performed works in the post-1945 repertoire—this spring.

Perhaps best known for his Concerto Grosso No. 1, Schnittke was a postmodernist Russian composer who created serious, dark-toned musical works characterized by abrupt juxtapositions of radically different, often contradictory, styles, an approach that came to be known as ‘polystylistism’.

Like his great predecessor Dmitri Shostakovich, Schnittke combined disjointed elements within a single work, but his mash-ups are considered far more jarring—a Beethoven quotation, an altered version of a folk song, or fragments of a medieval chant might all appear within the space of a few minutes.

The Pacifica’s recording of this piece has been praised for its stunning display of virtuosity. As with the Montrose Trio’s October performance of a new work by James Lee III, Friends of Music Concert is happy to offer an opportunity to spread our musical wings a little.

David Kornreich: A Friends of Music Stalwart

David Kornreich, who died in November at age 79 after a relatively short illness, was in so very many ways responsible for the longevity of Friends of Music Concerts. His 27-year presidency was nurturing and creative, bringing with it many advances. Among the innovations for which he was a catalyst were: the creation of our Performance Award, which has brought to our roster seven (so far) amazing young musicians who have been winners of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions held in New York City; the transformation of our long-standing music education efforts into the newer Partners in Education program by which we send, free of charge to the selected school districts, young professional ensembles for day-long residencies of performances and master classes; the encouragement, with Board member Bill Altman, of the commissioning of a new string quartet by the American composer Richard Danielpour marking our 50th Anniversary; and the unique Schubertiade, arranged with Board member David Kraft, in celebration of our 60th anniversary season.

David did all this while running his life insurance business; attending many concerts including those given by his late wife, the pianist Camille Budarz; tooling about on the Hudson River in his boat; playing regular tennis week in and week out; and participating, with his many, many friends, in the life of his Ossining community. His last few years were additionally happy with his second wife Nancy Gold, whom he met at a Friends of Music Concerts Board meeting. We are pleased to have played matchmaker there, and regret so much the loss of his adventurous spirit, humorous stories, and advice.

–Betsy Shaw Weiner, President
George M. Raymond: A Celebration

Although he was an urban planner extraordinaire and a tireless advocate for affordable housing, George Raymond, who died in December at age 96, was known to Westchester’s music world, including all of us, as the founder of Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. He was a magnificent illustration of what can be accomplished by volunteers.

In a 2006 interview with a Rivertowns Enterprise reporter after his induction into the Westchester County Senior Citizens Hall of Fame, he told of the start of Friends of Music. His move to Croton in 1951 with his wife and two-year-old daughter had left him longing for the live classical music he had enjoyed when he lived in New York City. “I thought that perhaps I could bring the music here, to Croton, rather than have to traipse into New York, and decided to start a group that would sponsor musical concerts in our community. I joined with friends who had gathered once a month to listen to records; we went around to neighbors and even made cold calls on the telephone to see if we could interest people. We raised $400 in donations, which was a lot of money back then, and it enabled us to bring the Juilliard String Quartet, one of the most famous up-and-coming ensembles in the country. Four hundred people showed up.”

That first concert was held in the gym of Croton High School, with volunteers setting up chairs and handing out programs. The Juilliard also agreed to give an afternoon concert for children. The rest has been history. Here we are, in our 62nd season.

George Raymond was born in Odessa (then in Russia) in 1919 and raised in Romania. He came to the United States at the age of 17 to study architecture. He finished his studies after having served for four years in the U.S. Army in World War II and then, as a result of perhaps the first of his ubiquitous letters to many authorities and opinion makers on the need for orderly city planning and related subjects, was hired by a New York City firm to help draft a new Zoning Code for the city. He later established a small urban planning firm which he moved up to Westchester where it remained and grew for the next 50 years, with branch offices opening in New York City, Washington, Princeton, and New Haven. Among its many projects was the redevelopment of a then severely deteriorated portion of downtown White Plains where the plans required first the building of affordable, “scatter-site” housing for residents of the affected area.

He started and served as chairman of Pratt Institute’s Department of City Planning, which remains a model in the field. And in New Jersey, he served as a court-appointed master in at least a dozen communities, helping, he said, “to achieve compliance with court orders having to do with combating exclusionary zoning. The goal…was to bring about a responsible attitude toward housing, one that provided housing opportunities for all.”

For all his professional accomplishments and the many honors he had received and continued to receive from his peers, Friends of Music Concerts remained near and dear to his heart. We have honored him ourselves, both as the honoree of our 50th Anniversary gala in 2004, and when our 60th Anniversary season coincided with a celebration of his 95th birthday. He was a subscriber to the end, attending whenever his health would permit. We are grateful for his foresight, and will miss him.

—Betsy Shaw Weiner, President

Bronfman Follow-up

At November’s concert, Yefim Bronfman, who had performed brilliantly a difficult, somewhat tumultuous program that included three Prokofiev sonatas and two works by Robert Schumann, responded to his standing ovation with a sweet encore of rippling arpeggios. Sitting down at the piano with no preamble (as is his wont), he left many of us guessing. We are pleased to report that it was Chopin’s Étude in F Major (“Sunshine”), No. 8, Opus 10.

Bronfman had been exploring Prokofiev all year. He had played all nine of the Prokofievs in two concerts at Ravinia that summer; after that experience, he changed those he originally was to play for us, deciding to do them in chronological order. Following our concert, he went on to play all of them in a series of concerts at Carnegie Hall. Interesting that we could hear him right here in Westchester at so much less the cost. Just what George Raymond had in mind.
With highlights of their 2015-2016 season including a performance at New York’s 92nd St Y – “Remarkable expressive range and tonal beauty of this ensemble,” commented the New York Times – the beginning of a two-season residency at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and a residency for the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music in Tucson, The Pacifica Quartet continues to grow its reputation as one of the finest ensembles performing today. Virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and daring repertory choices are its trademarks, developed over the past two decades.

This is the quartet that first visited us in 2009, having just received the Grammy for Best Chamber Music Performance and having also been named Musical America’s 2009 Ensemble of the Year. “Outstanding,” the UK’s Guardian said of their concert at London’s famed Wigmore Hall. “Top-flight,” pronounced the Classical Voice of North Carolina: “This was the kind of thrilling performance that proves music has great staying power. I was so moved I could barely get out of my seat for the standing ovation.”

The group’s program for us on May 14 includes: Mozart’s String Quartet in G Major, K.387; Alfred Schnittke’s String Quartet No. 3; and Mendelssohn’s String Quartet in E minor, Op. 44, No. 2.

Formed in 1994, The Pacifica is now based in Bloomington IN, having been named quartet-in-residence (with its members part of full-time faculty) at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music in March 2012. Prior to that, the group was quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2009 – 2012) – a position that has otherwise been held only by the Guarneri String Quartet.

In 2008 the Quartet released its Grammy Award-winning recording of Carter’s quartets Nos. 1 and 5 on the Naxos label; the 2009 release of quartets Nos. 2, 3, and 4 completed the two-CD set. Cedille Records recently released the third of four volumes comprising the entire Shostakovich cycle, along with other contemporary Soviet works, to rave reviews: “The playing is nothing short of phenomenal.” (Daily Telegraph, London) Recent projects include recording Leo Ornstein’s rarely-heard piano quintet with Marc-André Hamelin with an accompanying tour, the Brahms piano quintet with the legendary pianist Menahem Pressler, and the Brahms and Mozart clarinet quintets with the Metropolitan Opera’s principal clarinetist Anthony McGill.

**Tech Guru Needed**

Many of you have used our fine new website to great effect, ordering subscriptions or tickets on line and learning more about us. We’re interested in turning it into a fun, interactive destination.

In order to do that, we’re looking for a new volunteer, an Internet-savvy person who also knows and loves classical music. This role would involve some content management (archiving our newsletter, overseeing blog posts by contributors, and Q&As with selected artists; uploading publicity photos and videos from our performers; adding a comments section from our subscribers or other concert attenders) and social media (maintaining our Facebook page and possibly other venues, such as Twitter). If you have these talents – or know someone who does – please contact Board member Tom Post, tchazpost@gmail.com. Many thanks.
Change of location for April 16 concert

Because the Sleepy Hollow High School auditorium will be the venue for the district's high school musical, our April 16 concert has been moved to Ossining High School. Its newly-renovated auditorium has comfortable seats and even better acoustics than it had during our previous 25 years there (1976-2001).

Ossining High school can be reached from Route 9, a.k.a. South Highland Avenue, in Ossining. From either north or south proceed to the traffic light at Waller Avenue/Emilton Place, just south of the center of Ossining. Turn East, up the hill, onto Emilton Place.

To reach the main entrance, turn left at the first intersection onto Wolden Road. The high school entrance is on the left at about the middle of the block before you reach the next intersection. That entrance leads to a drop-off for handicapped, some handicapped parking, and plentiful additional patron parking. Some street parking may be available on Wolden Road.

For additional information, please see our website, www.friendsofmusicconcerts.org.