

# Fleeting and Beautiful: A Concert Series Comes to North Montpelier

by Michelle A.L. Singer

“Come back to a world where communities were nourished by gathering in physical time and space, where music was enjoyed in a moment—fleeting and beautiful.”

—Mary Jane Austin, from the invitation to the Rich Hollow Concert Series

It used to be, or so the legend goes, that Justin Morgan stopped at Rich’s Hollow in North Montpelier for shape-note singing in the music room before continuing on to Plainfield to lead another singing session there. Now Rich’s Hollow is a private residence just south of the intersection of Route 14 and Route 214 in North Montpelier, but traces of the inn and tavern it once was are still there.

Celina Moore, who has lived and raised a family with husband, Erik Esselstyn, in the home for the past 40 years, says the music room still “cries out for music to be made in there.” It has a grand piano and original stenciling on the walls and has seen plenty of concerts, music societies and programs since it was built in 1805.

So when local pianist Alison Cheroff called Moore to chat about viable performance spaces in the area, Moore, without blinking an eye, offered her house and patronage for a concert series. Moore is a soprano,

and with Diane K. Huling, her team pianist, brought “A Taste of Opera” to Christ Church in Montpelier years ago. Moore says, “At 71, you go back a bit.” A veteran of concerts and performances, she welcomes music into her home and the “wonderfully talented people who bring it alive.”

Moore is hosting four concerts out of her historic home: March 29, July 5, August 30 and October 25. A maximum of 50 guests will be invited to enjoy Bach, Beethoven, tea and cakes in the way music has always been enjoyed and appreciated. It’s a chance to hear some of the most talented classical musicians of the area in an intimate setting.

“It’s so human,” says Moore, “to be close to the players and in a house from around the same time the music was written. Schubert was still alive when this house was being built!”

Chamber concerts like this serve two important functions. They allow people to experience classical music in an intimate, authentic

setting, and it also allows artists like Cheroff the chance to perform. The elegant performance space and fine Steinway concert D in the Barre Opera House are superb, but the cost of renting it can be prohibitive.

Moore is committed to giving all of the proceeds from the \$20 cover from all 50 of the available seats to the performers. Cheroff says about Moore, “She gave me so much encouragement and hope when I was starting to feel discouraged.” For local musicians, and pianists in particular Cheroff says it can be difficult to find a good instrument and a good venue.

The first concert, on Saturday, March 29, will feature the Kotchka Chamber Players, with pianist Alison Cheroff, violinist Ruben Kosemyan and flutist Hilary Goldblatt. They will be playing J. S. Bach’s flute and piano Sonata in B Minor, considered to be one of the great works for flute; Beethoven’s violin and piano Sonata in A Minor, opus 23; Bagdasarian’s *Rhapsody*; Debussy/Heifetz’s *Beau Soir* for violin and piano; and Ibert’s *Deux Interludes* for flute, violin and piano. Cheroff and Kosemyan have been studying and rehearsing together since they were introduced over one year ago.

Kosemyan, now based in Montreal, was born in Armenia and began studying violin at the age of 4 under the guidance of his

father, Alexander Kosemyan, violist with the State Komitas quartet. He continued his musical education at the Moscow State Conservatory and is a Unesco gold medalist. He is “a beautiful artist,” says Cheroff. She also notes that Hilary Goldblatt is a very fine flutist and a dedicated music teacher in the Montpelier schools.

The second concert on Saturday, July 5, is a piano recital featuring Huling, who Moore has toured Europe with in the past. Moore describes Huling, who has fully arrived in her work as an artist, as a delight to everyone and in demand with orchestras.

The third concert, on Saturday, August 30, is a vocal and piano recital featuring bassist Erik Kroncke and pianist Mary Jane Austin. The October 25 concert is a cello recital featuring cellist Robert Blais and pianist Diane K. Huling.

The concerts are enhanced not only by tea and cakes but also the possibility of being allowed to peek into Moore’s extensive music library or upstairs to see the contra-dance ballroom. If you love music (“It’s all classical,” says Moore, “nothing rock and roll here”) and long to slow down and enjoy it the way it’s always been enjoyed, this is your opportunity.

*Moore hopes to host singer-songwriter and other musical events in the future. For more information, contact Celina Moore at 454-7306.*