

Chamber Soloists celebrate the legacy of Detroit arts

By Stacey Sherman, For Digital First Media

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Powdered wigs, brocade jackets, ruffled sleeves, and gilded chairs. Those are a few of the things you WON'T see at a Chamber Soloists of Detroit performance.

World-class artists in an up-close setting, creating an intimate expression of music that moves people who claim they don't even like classical music? Yes, that you WILL see.

The Chamber Soloists of Detroit will present its second concert of the 2017 season at St. John Lutheran Church in Farmington Hills at 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15. The performance will feature artistic director and pianist Pauline Martin, collaborating with violinists Aaron Berofsky and Kathryn Votapek and cellist Suren Bagratuni. Also appearing will be a young rising star violist from Bloomfield Hills, Haeji Kim, in her Chamber Soloists of Detroit debut.

The reduced number of musicians is one of the things that makes it "chamber" music instead of the full orchestra many think of as classical music.

Martin likens chamber music to a musical conversation, where the audience can get the best of both worlds and be part of the concert. Instead of a full-blown orchestra, she brings together soloists at the top of their game who enjoy performing with others on a smaller scale. They execute difficult pieces composed to be played in people's homes during social gatherings.

Martin is a seasoned pianist who has toured internationally and won critical acclaim for both her solo and chamber performances.

She was born and raised in Manitoba, Canada, where all the girls wanted to be figure skaters. Martin's family couldn't afford the training, so instead she learned piano from her pianist mother starting at age 12. She and her two brothers also studied violin under their uncle, but by age 15 she was filling in to teach some of her mother's students, and her course was set.

She earned music performance degrees from Indiana University, which at one point was held in higher regard than the esteemed Juilliard School of Music. Martin settled in Metro Detroit over 35

years ago when she attended the University of Michigan to earn her doctorate and met her future husband.

Martin is highly regarded in Michigan's creative world, not only as the featured artist at festivals in Ann Arbor and on Mackinac Island, but through her work with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and as a faculty member at Michigan State, Wayne State and Oakland universities. Arguably one of her biggest contributions to the artistic community has been her time serving as the artistic director of the Pro Mozart Society, which Martin helped transform into the current Chamber Soloists of Detroit. She has served the board of the organization in both incarnations for more than 15 years.

Her passion for the arts and Detroit in particular is hard to miss.

"I've always had optimism for Detroit," Martin said during a phone conversation from her home, where she teaches private lessons. "It is important to me. I think the arts community is what saves any city in the worst of times."

One of the things she strives for with CSD is to let the rest of the world know what Detroit has to offer musically. That is part of the reason she is proud to showcase young people from Detroit — both on their way up and those who have gone on to success, such as violist Haeji Kim.

Detroit was known as the "Paris of the West" in the early 1900s because of its architecture and vibrant arts culture, and Martin wants to make sure the Chamber Soloists remind people there's more to the city than the bad things seen on the news.

There is a legacy, and the roots of chamber music in this city are a part of what built it, she says. While our history might not stretch back as far as the great opera houses of Europe, Martin is quick to point out, "We've got stuff to be proud of! We have things — traditions, landmarks. And we should hold on to those things. On to what is special in our community."

- The Chamber Soloists of Detroit perform on Sunday, Jan. 15 at St. John Lutheran Church, 23225 Gill Road, Farmington Hills. Concert starts at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$30, seniors \$27 and students with ID \$10. All tickets include a light brunch from 1-1:30 p.m. Call 586-944-5353 or visit chambersoloistsdetroit.org for info.

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