



Telegram & Gazette ♦ Thursday, September 15, 2016

NEW BEGINNING

WORCESTER CHAMBER
MUSIC SOCIETY KICKS
OFF 11TH SEASON.

PAGE 4

TABLE HOPPIN'

New pizzeria offers true
taste of Italy.

PAGE 5

OFF THE VINE

Learning curve of wine
never stops

PAGE 7

MOVIES, 2-3 ♦ RESTAURANTS, 5-7 ♦ 10 THINGS TO DO, 8-9 ♦ EVENTS, 10-11 ♦ MUSIC, 12 ♦ STAGE, 14-15



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COVER STORY

By Richard Duckett
Telegram & Gazette Staff

Randall Hodgkinson was a guest pianist when he played with the Worcester Chamber Music Society for two concerts in 2014.

The get-together was evidently a success since Hodgkinson, an acclaimed pianist and teacher who lives in Boston, is now a Worcester Chamber Music Society member.

The blooming relationship will be in evidence when WCMS opens its 2016-17 season with concerts titled "Music in the Garden" Sept. 15 at Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston and Sept. 18 in Tuckerman Hall in Worcester.

"He's such a phenomenal musician, pianist. The experience two years ago very positive," said WCMS co-founder, executive director and flutist Tracy Kraus.

The 2014 concerts, in collaboration with Music Worcester Inc. and performed at the Congregational Church of Grafton and Tuckerman Hall, included Cesar Franck's Piano Quintet in F minor. Joyce Tamer, reviewing for the Telegram & Gazette, wrote "the musicians gave it a wonderfully romantic reading with huge crescendos, dramatic silences and wonderful little swells and sighs. The audience literally was swept to its feet at the conclusion."

"It was a lot of fun, I had such a good time," Hodgkinson recalled. He said he put the word out that "if they ever need a pianist, let me know."

They did. Hodgkinson came aboard during the summer in time for WCMS' summer camp for youths and recitals at Clark University, and "officially" became a member Sept. 1, Kraus said.

Hodgkinson has performed with chamber groups nationally and internationally while also maintaining his teaching career at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and Wellesley College.

He said he knew and had played with several members of the WCMS individually before becoming a society member.

"It's a great group of individuals who understand the nature of working together for a common purpose," Hodgkinson



New face, new season

Pianist Hodgkinson joins Chamber Music Society

The Worcester Chamber Music Society. SUBMITTED PHOTO

said. "One of the most fun things about chamber music is we all have different methods but we all bring our experiences together."

This is the 11th season for WCMS, whose members are Kraus, Hodgkinson, Mark Berger (resident composer/violist), Krista Buckland Reisner (violin), Ariana Falk (education director, cellist), Joshua Gordon (cello), Rohan Gregory (violin), David Russell (cello) and Peter Sulski (viola/violin). There has been some turnover over the course of 11 years, but Berger, Kraus and Sulski have been together since the ensemble was formed. Guest artists are also regularly featured at concerts.

The Sept. 15 and 18 "Music in the Garden" season opener (also the Thomas H. Keil Memorial Concert honoring Mr. Keil, an educator and musician who died in 2013), will feature Louise Farrenc's Trio for flute, cello and piano, Mozart's String Quintet in E-flat major and Brahms' Piano Quartet in C minor.

Beyond its "Main Stage" concerts (also "Facets and Reflections" Nov. 3 and 5, and "Landscapes Hidden and Seen" March 31 and April 2), WCMS has gradually developed an array of programming that includes a "Cafe Concert" series with dinner followed by performance at Nuovo Restaurant, 92 Shrewsbury St., Worcester;

an annual free family concert at Mechanics Hall ("families return every year," Kraus said) and annual free senior concert; a "Music on Main" community concert series in Main South; special presentations; "Very Open Rehearsals"; "Neighborhood Strings," a program that provides free music lessons in violin, viola and cello to youth from Main South and fosters family involvement (there will be 45 students this fall); and the summer camp and concerts at Clark University.

Kraus said that after 10 years "I feel we are truly part of the cultural fabric in Worcester. We really are at the table with other arts organizations in town."

Worcester Chamber Music Society, 'Music in the Garden'

When: 7:30 p.m. Sept. 15, Tower Hill Botanic Garden, 11 French Drive, Boylston. **Tickets:** \$35, students \$10; youth younger than 17, free admission.

When: 4 p.m. Sept. 18, Tuckerman Hall, 10 Tuckerman St., Worcester.

Tickets: \$32/35 adults; students \$10/\$12; youth younger than 17, free admission. (508) 217-4450; www.worcesterchambermusic.org.

For the future, "we have no intention of getting bigger in offering more concerts, but we want to make what we have more meaningful, more depth," she said. For example, WCMS is looking at exploring the "relationship between arts and health and how attending an arts concert or museum or creating art - how that really affects our mental and physical health. We're hoping to reach out to health organizations and social service organizations," Kraus said.

Being a WCMS member also means being part of a healthy collaborative when it comes to making artistic decisions such as programming music.

"It's nice. It takes more work to be collaborative but a collaboration I think is more meaningful," Kraus said. "It firms up the connections. You're really getting all the creative juices together."

Hodgkinson came aboard after WCMS members had already decided on the lineup of music for 2016-17, but his creative thoughts are certainly flowing with regard to what he'll be playing with the ensemble for "Music in the Garden."

"It certainly is a piece I love," he said of the Brahms Piano Quartet. "This is a piece he wrote, in my view, in a spare, sparse, economical way. He didn't want to waste anything. He wanted it to have meaning. It's not filled with things that sound good by themselves. It all has to add up together with the four of us."

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