

ARTS & LIFE

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Music

57th season of classical concerts

White Rock Concerts' new season starts Sept. 20

SEE VIDEO OF COULOIR PERFORMANCE



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The year George Zukerman began staging concerts in White Rock, “Heartbreak Hotel” was a hit for Elvis Presley and members of The Beatles hadn’t yet played together as a rock band.

It was 1956, and Zukerman was among those who first brought classical music concerts to the area under the banner of White Rock Concerts.

“There was a need for it in communities across B.C., including White Rock,” said Zukerman, a bassoonist who arrived in Vancouver via his native London and New York. “In most places, we were the only game in town.”

In the mid-1950s, the group’s 200 subscribers each paid \$6 for the concert season in White Rock. Today, the yearly fee for adults is \$125.

The 57th season of White Rock Concerts starts Friday, Sept. 20 with a performance by Couloir, a harp/cello duo featuring Heidi Knutzen and Ariel Barnes.

White Rock Baptist Church has seating

for around 800 people, and all tickets to the series were snapped up months ago.

“We have close to 200 people on our subscription wait list,” noted Zukerman, who remains the artistic director of the organization. “This year, we managed to welcome 84 people from that list, after the renewal period in spring.”

There are no assigned seats in the church, so “the rush is on” two hours before the first note is played at a White Rock Concerts event. “It’s a lucky thing that there are no bad seats in the house,” Zukerman said.

There are seven concerts in the volunteer-run group’s 2013-14 series, to also feature The New Orford String Quartet (Oct. 18), soprano Simone Osborne (Nov. 8), trumpeter Jens Lindemann (Jan. 24), The King’s Singers (Feb. 12), the Arc Ensemble (March 28) and acclaimed pianist Louis Lortie (April 18).

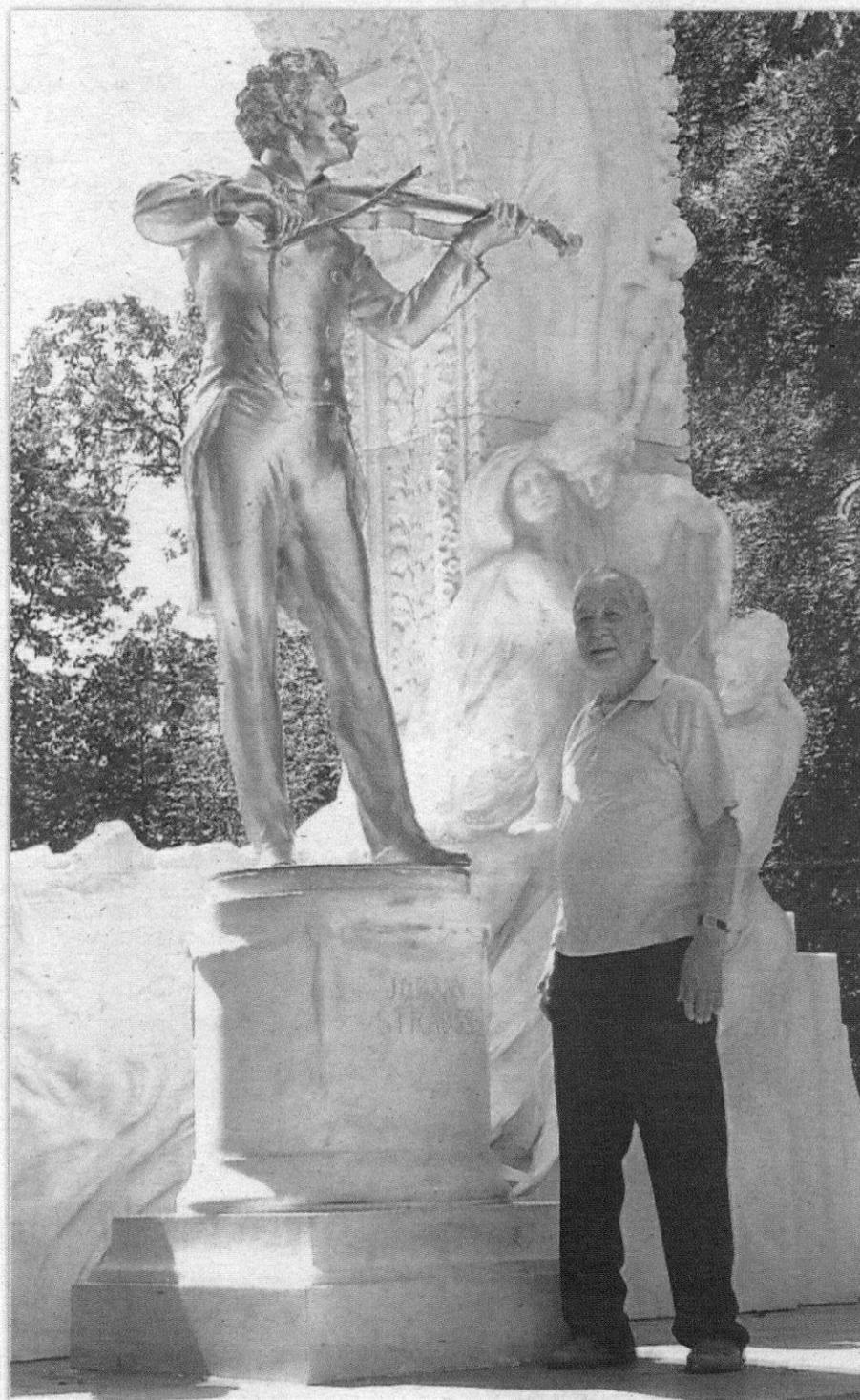
White Rock Baptist Church has hosted the group’s series since 1983, other than a one-off at the larger, but acoustically inferior, Peace Portal Alliance Church in 2010.

This season, retired music teacher Susan Olsen is chief publicist for White Rock Concerts, and president Rick Gambrel has resigned as president, after 12 years at the post, in order to pursue new adventures.

“We thank him for his strong, enthusiastic and dedicated leadership, and wish him the very best,” Erika Bennedik, the group’s new president, wrote in a message to subscribers.

“It will be a challenging job for me to fill Rick’s shoes – but I will try my best.”

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George Zukerman, artistic director of White Rock Concerts, stands with a statue of Austrian composer Johann Strauss during a visit to Vienna’s famous Stadtpark in August. “I also spoke to Schubert and Brückner,” Zukerman says, “but only Strauss agreed to have a decent photograph taken.”