

— arts & entertainment —

...on the Semiahmoo Peninsula

Still some White Rock Concerts memberships available for 62nd season

Classical-music series 'continues to thrive'

Alex Browne
Staff reporter

There's a great opportunity for Semiahmoo Peninsula classical music enthusiasts to sign up for a season of world-class concerts at an unbeatable price.

White Rock Concerts' 62nd season starts on Sept. 21 – and for the first time in many a year there is no waiting list for subscribers.

"There usually is, by this time," said the series' new publicity manager, pianist Angela Chu. "We're not quite sure what it is – possibly people are assuming, based on past years, that they are going to be placed automatically on a waiting list."

With a bit over 700 members signed up, some 60 to 70 subscriptions remain to be sold, she said – but with a total of seven concerts for \$155 (and only

"If we thrive, we are helping other groups build their brands."

\$50, for the season, for students 25 and under), they're likely to be snapped up.

All concerts are at White Rock Baptist Church (at 140 Street and 16 Avenue), which also offers the

advantage, Chu said, of not having to travel to downtown Vancouver (an increasingly costly proposition, if you factor in parking and restaurant meals, not to mention the price of gas).

As artistic director emeritus George Zukerman – who founded the successful series back in 1956 – noted, "White Rock Concerts is unique in Canada; although we have one employee, we're still essentially a volunteer-run organization."

With almost 800 subscriptions sold each year, the series is a convincing demonstration of Zukerman's continued belief that "there is a still a want and need for classical music."

"The success is based on two relentlessly determined factors," said Zukerman, whose wife, violinist and teacher Erika Bennedik recently retired as president of the board after 13 years service.

"One is the quality of the program, and the other that there are no tickets sold at the door. As long as we can maintain these two, the series will continue to thrive."



Contributed photos

The Trio Tre Voci will demonstrate the tonal possibilities of flute, viola and harp in White Rock Concerts' January presentation. Above right, Mezzo soprano Susan Platt will perform in October.

Under new president John Leighton and a new board of directors elected in June, the organization seems well-poised to continue its proud boast of being, in Zukerman's words "debt-free, grant-free and artistically free."

"Grants are wonderful and necessary for the community at large, but we don't need them," he said. "We were offered a provincial grant and turned it down – we said to the province that other groups need it more than we do. If we thrive, we are helping other groups build their brands."

Eight is the magic number for this year's White Rock Concerts season, Chu said, noting that "it starts with eight

hands and ends with eight cellos."

The eight hands belong to the members of the Canadian Piano Quartet (Sept. 21), otherwise known as the Bergmann Duo (WRC artistic directors Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann), teamed with another married couple, the Duo Turgeon (Anne-Louise and Edward Turgeon) in a program that will revisit crowd-pleasing favourites ranging from Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3* to Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, along with a Gershwin song medley arranged by Marcel Bergmann.

The eight cellos belong to the Belgian-based octet O-Celli, whose incredibly



rich sound and impassioned dynamics will be brought to bear on music by De Falla, Turina, Marquez, Chabrier and Piazzolla on April 12.

In between will come a wide variety of music programmed for the series by the Bergmanns, including a full performance of Gustav Mahler's song cycle *Song of the Earth*, featuring mezzo soprano Susan Platts and tenor Benjamin Butterfield, with the John Avison Chamber Orchestra conducted by Leslie Dala.

Dala and the Avison orchestra – or at least, its woodwind section, led by clarinetists Jose Franch-Ballester and Francois Houle – will be back on Nov. 23 for a performance of Mozart's *Gran Partita*, a serenade which places the instrumentation on the same expressive plane as the string quartet.

The Trio Tre Voci (Jan. 18) will highlight the three complementary voices of viola, flute and harp, as performed by Grammy-award winning Armenian-American violist Kim Kashkashian, Italian-American flute virtuoso Maria Piccinini, and prize-winning Israeli harpist Sivan Magen, in their White Rock debut.

The out-of-this-world possibilities of the human voice will be explored by the Vancouver Cantata singers in their concert *Music of the Spheres* (Feb. 22), directed by Paula Kremer and featuring an intriguing and eclectic combination of 19th century and modern works.

And, on March 22, wife-husband team Duo Concertante – Nancy Dahn, violin, and Timothy Steeves, piano – will feature music of the romantic era, including a performance of Mendelssohn's *Concerto for Violin and Piano*, accompanied by the Avison orchestra.

For membership enquiries, email memberships@whiterockconcerts.com or call 604-385-0543 (messages only).