

The Arts

Arts benefit concert offers chamber music, 'beautiful views'

By **CAROL BENET**

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House concerts were standard ways that new symphonies, operas and other forms of music were presented in the old days — and I'm talking about centuries ago.

Before compositions were taken on by the larger orchestras, either soloists or small ensembles performed the music, first in châteaux, then in elegant bourgeois homes or salons. Read your Proust to get a full description.

These days, the tradition takes place in many cities where members of the symphonies perform small recitals for a select audience, sometimes as fundraisers, but also to delight patrons or would-be patrons. The New Century Chamber Orchestra started with such house concerts on the Tiburon Peninsula.

And now, Musica Marin — a fledging concert series created by Ruth Ellen Kahn, a Tiburon resident — will present its second concert in a Belvedere home at 3 p.m. Sept. 21.

When Kahn first saw the gorgeous Belvedere house, she thought she was in an Italian villa and her theme for the concert became "An Afternoon in Italy." With its views of Sausalito, San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge, it is fitting that the in Italian word "Belvedere" translates as "beautiful view."

The house belongs to Linda Applewhite and Marshall Miller, who will host the September concert for an audience of about 50 people. The house is known as the Mary Monahans House and was built in 1927. Applewhite bought, renovated and then moved in in 2002. She knew what she was doing, for she is a painter, writer and, above all, an architectural designer who has rebuilt 24 homes. In 2007, she published "Architectural Interiors: Transforming Your Home with Decorative Structural Elements."

Applewhite attended the inaugural concert of Musica Marin on May 3; she said she was moved to tears by the beautiful music and wanted to have "this music in my home too, for classical music is a high vibration — it's transcendent."

Applewhite is in accord with Kahn about the goals of Musica Marin as a nonprofit that donates its proceeds to benefit children in the arts. Applewhite said it's a shame that "so much of the arts have been taken out of the schools and replaced by technology" and wanted to do something to rectify this situation.

The proceeds of the first two concerts go to the San Francisco Boys Chorus. Future concerts will benefit arts charities for children, as selected by individual concert hosts.

Kahn, who is also Musica Marin's artistic director, is a violist who grew up in Berkeley and graduated from The Juilliard School. For nearly 20 years she played with the New York City Ballet Orchestra and all over the world. When her husband, Richard Siderman, was transferred to the Bay Area, she remembered Tiburon from her youth



ELLIOT KARLAN / FOR THE ARK

Ruth Ellen Kahn, a Juilliard-trained violist, rehearses with pianist Laura Magnani ahead of their benefit concert Sept. 21.

if you go

Marin Musica's chamber music concert "An Afternoon in Italy" is from 3 to 7 p.m. Sept. 21 in a private home in Belvedere; directions to the venue will be provided one week prior to the concert. The concert benefits the San Francisco Boys Chorus.

Tickets: \$75.

Info: musicamarin.com or 732-261-7737.

and they chose to settle here with their two sons, Jacob, now 14, and Joshua, 11, both of whom attend local public schools.

Both boys are in the S.F. Boys Chorus. Kahn said her most memorable concert was when she was in the orchestra pit playing and her son came onstage to sing with the boys in "Carmen" at the San Francisco Opera. Kahn will play her 17th-century viola in the opera's upcoming performances of Bellini's "Norma."

Her goal in creating the series in Marin is to do something "of the highest possible level and provide the audience with an awareness of the arts." With all the large

concert venues separating the musicians from the audience, an experience such as a house concert brings them together in a more intimate setting. She says these concerts offer a "front-row seat and a back-stage pass."

Tickets to the Sept. 21 concert are \$75 and include valet parking, food and wine donated by Servino Ristorante and Caffé Acri, and a concert of chamber music including Mozart's Piano Quartet and solo pieces performed by pianist Laura Magnani, violinist Robin Hansen and Kahn playing viola. Members of the Boys Chorus will also perform.

Four other concerts are planned, with one March 14 featuring Cynthia Phelps, principal violist of the New York Philharmonic. To be included on the invitation list, or to buy concert tickets, visit musicamarin.com. Concert seating is limited and the inaugural concert sold out.

Arts writer Carol Benet, a Belvedere resident since 1969, earned a Ph.D. in comparative literature from UC Berkeley. She has been contributing to The Ark since 1975.