

## Giving Voice to Music: A 15-year Quest in the Practice of Excellence

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### Planting the Seeds

In the spring of 1984, I was dreaming of a chamber music series in the Rogue Valley—and Ashland would be the ideal setting. Reflecting its abundance of theater, music, dance, opera, art, and museums, Ashland was already known as a Northwest Cultural Center and was poised to become a “destination” city for escapees from large metropolitan centers like San Francisco and New York already accustomed to the kind of world-class music I had in mind. As a performing musician—and the parent of two serious young string players—I knew that classical music is associated with more than just its creative aspects—the ingenuity of its composers, the skill of its musicians, the beauty of its sound—it is also a business, a world I didn’t know much about. I had heard of *Mariedi Anders Artists Management Inc.* in San Francisco and decided to start my education there. After only 25 years in the business, *Mariedi Anders*, the agency’s sole proprietor, was already considered to be the doyenne of West Coast classical music and one of the field’s shrewdest practitioners. Coming from a music-loving Viennese family, Anders enjoyed a reputation for impeccable taste in chamber ensembles schooled in the European tradition, artists who have subsequently had a major impact on American cultural life. Since those were just the kind of performers I had in mind to engage, tapping into what I assumed was Anders’ vast storehouse of knowledge, sophistication and unyielding commitment to musical excellence would be a great way to get my project underway. Confirming her standing as a brilliant aesthete, she did not disappoint. Six months (and a half-dozen telephone calls) later, a chamber music series in Ashland was on the threshold of becoming a reality.



Thursday, October 18, 1984, was a typical fall day in the Rogue Valley: Warm sun, soft breezes, colored leaves blanketing the ground—just the perfect weather and setting to celebrate an evening of chamber music performed by an ensemble possessing “musical understanding and expressive warmth in their winning interpretations.”



Following a full day of teaching, I wolfed down a quick early supper at home, jumped in the car with a punch bowl destined for the post-concert reception, a box of newly minted and wife-designed programs sporting a very classy CMC logo and a cash box in hand. I arrived at the “acoustically-superior” Music Building Recital Hall at

Southern Oregon State College (SOSC) a few minutes later (it was 6:30) and immediately began to check the essential items off my “to do” list: *Stage flowers backstage? Check; Music stands and chairs on stage? Check; Tables for the punch and cookies delivered? Check; Box office open? Check.* The list seemed interminably long...

At quarter past seven, several SOSC music majors who had volunteered to take tickets and give out programs sauntered into the building. Shortly thereafter, a couple of the eleven members of the new CMC advisory board took charge of the box office, while others positioned themselves around the hall to act as ushers. In the meantime, the members of the quartet had arrived and were warming up in the Green Room. I continued to check items off my list. By 7:30, the stage crew finally arrived (I was frantic, thinking that they had forgotten to put the concert on their calendars!), the house light switches were humming, the box office was open for business, and the bouquets of flowers were placed such that they were perfectly equidistant on both sides of the quartet of chairs and music stands, each waiting for their appointed charges. There was a feeling of “readiness” in the air. The “show” (I never really appreciated the appropriateness of that description of a chamber music concert...) was ready to press a loving audience to its bosom.

*But wait!* Except for a few people milling around in the foyer reading over the program notes... *there was no audience!* With only 30 minutes to curtain time, the specter of failure began to rise like a flock of Furies over my head. Six months of planning, meetings, dozens of calls with agents and ensembles, all for naught? *Tell me it's not so* kept running through my head as I bolted to a window on an upstairs floor of the building—the only place I could find which would allow a clear view of the intersection of Mountain Street and Siskiyou Boulevard. It was now 7:40 and headlights of cars were cutting their way through the darkness. *Let them be coming here,* I mouthed as I peered down the street. Surely all those telephone calls that I made during the preceding week to remind, encourage, cajole, and specially-invite friends, neighbors, colleagues, high school teachers, musicians, students, retirement communities, and business establishments of various sorts, had not been in vain! And, as if in response to my plea, come they did...slowly at first, then a dozen cars at one time plying the darkness to slowly turn into the parking lot across the street. Then, with more urgency, a stream of headlights of cars at 7:50, many stopping to hurriedly disgorge their passengers at the door before parking.

With the activity on the street beginning to wane at... *already 8:00!!...* I rushed back to the foyer to greet people literally sprinting down the hallway and, as they flew by, to assure them that *This concert will not begin until every last person who wants to hear it is seated!* At 8:15, the doors of the recital hall finally closed and the first strains of Verdi's String Quartet in E minor embraced the 200, or so, people sitting in hushed silence waiting to be immersed in what turned out to be one of the rare and stunning performances of not only the single surviving chamber music work in Verdi's catalogue, but also the works by Beethoven and Haydn that followed.

The performance by the *Composers String Quartet* from Columbia University had been the first of four concerts by the other three other string quartets-in-residence at institutions of higher learning that I had planned for CMC's inaugural year: Brandeis (*Lydian*), Yale (*Tokyo*) and the University of Oregon (*Oregon*). Together, I envisioned that these four ensembles, each selected for their uniquely different interpretative styles and choice of repertoire, would become the stimulus needed to create a professional chamber music series in the Rogue Valley.

The lively post-concert reception in the foyer, where co-mingling audience, members of the quartet, friends, and families noisily engaged in enthusiastic and animated conversations about what they had experienced in the preceding two hours, was the perfect embodiment for what I still believe "Art (chamber) Music" is all about: Keeping alive the qualities of attention, the kinds of human interactions, and the ways of knowing and experiencing that make our daily lives just a little bit better; A model of democracy where individual egos are sublimated to the collective good and where music making is a conversation among equals.

Seven months later—and in front of an audience which, in the meantime, had doubled in size—"Chamber Music Concerts" concluded its very first year of life with a spirited performance by the members of the *Oregon String Quartet and guest*



*pianist, William Woods* of one of my all-time favorite works, Dvorak's Quintet for Piano and Strings in A major, Op. 81. Adding to that special pleasure was the fact that the members of the quartet had performed the work sitting in four new artist chairs donated to the college and, specifically, to Chamber Music Concerts, by my late mother, Mildred Fowler Oldfield.

With the enthusiastic support of an advisory board and the offer of an administrative home in the SOSC Division of Continuing Education, a young and idealistic CMC then set out on its maiden voyage, passionate about—and committed to—its mission "...to bring to the Rogue Valley internationally-renowned ensembles from the United States and abroad playing the finest of chamber music repertoire." For the next six years, the artistic and educational "seeds," sown by CMC's inaugural year began to germinate.



## Fulfilling CMC's Mission

When translated, the organization's "artistic philosophy" soon became the blueprint for a wide-range of organizational objectives: To engage musicians and ensembles that reflect diverse cultural traditions; Develop an educational program designed to expose present and future generations to the chamber music repertoire through apprenticeship, master classes, workshops, pre-concert lectures, performance opportunities, and other forms of instruction; Create an administrative infrastructure that builds partnerships with other chamber music presenters around the state, and beyond, and, in the process, encourages community building within and outside southern Oregon and Northern California. In a real (not just theoretical) sense, these goals were seen as not only the *foundation* of CMC's future, but the tools, which would assure its musical and fiscal sustainability.

Already in its second year, CMC began to make itself relevant to the communities it looked to serve by adding youth and diversity to its roster of internationally renowned artists. Taking center stage along with such revered and long-established ensembles as the *Trio di Milano* and the *Bartok, Tokyo*, and the *Cleveland String Quartets* during the 1985-88 seasons, were the exuberant performances of the *Hagen String Quartet* (a youthful foursome of three Austrian siblings and a family friend), the (then) very young *Takács String Quartet* from Hungary on their debut tour of the U.S., and the idiosyncratic—strictly twentieth century--San Francisco-based *Kronos String Quartet* who, from the composers they performed (Arvo Part, Gan-Ru) to the clothes they wore, saw the composer as a "fifth player"... "enroute to examining values"... "whether it's music or something else."



The 1987 concert by "the (Kronos) fearless four" (co-sponsored by the SOSC Program Board's Lectures and Performing Arts Committee) did more than any previous CMC performance aimed at reaching populations which ordinarily "would not be caught dead" in a chamber music audience. Contrary to the belief held even today that "young people" especially fall into that category, the recital hall literally rocked that night in front of a capacity audience filled with students of all ages—and, sprinkled here and there—a few of the more liberal-minded of CMC's season subscribers...

Expanding the breadth of the chamber music experience also included strengthening the capacity of CMC to present a broader spectrum of the chamber music literature, particularly those works written for strings and piano. Given the great demand on the only two concert grands in the Rogue Valley at that time, booking and scheduling such performances around the availability of a piano—not to mention the cost and inconvenience of transporting nine-foot instruments back and forth—would be

impossible. It was becoming clear that CMC might have to purchase a piano for its own use!

Two completely unexpected events in 1989 paved the way for “The Steinway Caper” (as it was dubbed by SOSOC’s President, Steve Reno) to happen.

### **The Steinway Caper**

In September of that year, an agent at Classical Artists International in New York called the CMC office. One of the West coast performances by a Russian pianist she represented, *Vladimir Krainev*, had been suddenly cancelled, and she wondered if CMC might be interested in booking the 1970 Tchaikovsky Gold Medalist for a concert in Ashland the next week!

The opportunity for CMC audiences to experience the work of an artist touted to be “One of the most brilliant performers in today’s music world”—and “...for a very reasonable fee”—was more than I could pass up. A week later in front of a sold-out audience in the music building recital hall, Krainev was at the college’s Yamaha nine-foot piano applying his dazzling technique and Russian temperament to some of the most daunting masterworks in the piano literature, notably the Scriabin Sonata Fantasy and Ravel’s *Gaspard de la nuit*.



A few days later, the physical and emotional workout delivered by the Krainev performance was being discussed at a meeting of CMC board members. What emerged was a consensus, which was destined to affect CMC’s future in significant ways: *Chopin, Scriabin, and Ravel had emerged from the Krainev performance in great shape; there was less certainty, however, about the quality of the Yamaha...* Translation: “Perhaps, CMC should, indeed, be looking around for its own piano...” Ironically, it was another (completely unplanned and independent) opportunity to invite a pianist to participate in the 1988-89 CMC season that put the wheels on that idea in a major way.



The CMC board, which in five years had significantly grown in membership, enthusiasm and creativity, was primed to consider expanding the reach of CMC even further into the world of diverse chamber music literature. Accordingly, when Columbia Artists Management offered to schedule the *Prague Chamber Orchestra* as “A Chamber Music Concerts Extra” two months after the Krainev recital, the vote to book the concert was unanimous.

On Friday, January 13, 1989, the Yamaha grand piano was once again center stage in the recital hall in the service of another concert. This time seated at the bench—and in the company of 36 virtuoso Czech musicians—was pianist, *Jeremy Menuhin*, son of violin icon, Yehudi Menuhin, performing Beethoven’s First Piano Concerto. Critics had hailed Menuhin as a “...cultivated and intelligent pianist” (with an) “unfailingly musical sense for Beethoven.” As a second generation member of a family accustomed to performing on instruments that optimized and supported that level of sensitivity, however, Menuhin was not pleased with his performance on the Yamaha...nor, more specifically, with the performance of the Yamaha, itself...and said so, both at the reception following the concert and in an impassioned personal telephone conversation with me a few days later.



Of course, professional musicians are no more, or less, gracious than the rest of humankind when it comes to taking umbrage at what they think is a personal insult. Nonetheless, the logic of Menuhin’s heartfelt plea to, as he put it, “Purchase a piano that has the capacity to raise even the most uninspired performance to at least an acceptable level,” seemed unassailable.

Agreement among those of us on the board who had been otherwise enthralled with the Prague’s performance of Mozart, Delius, and Dvorak, set CMC firmly on a journey to search out a piano with those “...magical qualities that would make (almost) *anyone* sound great!” The decision that it had to be a Steinway Model D grand piano didn’t require much deliberation. *Paying* for it, however, was going to be quite another matter.

The cash appeared faster than anyone would ever have thought possible! Discussions with Steinway & Sons in New York—facilitated by the managers of Steinway’s southern Oregon division, Thomas and Dawn Lowell—led to a \$20,000 reduction in the piano’s total price of \$58,000. The remaining \$38,000 was paid through a generous three-year loan arranged by the (then) CEO of Western Bank, Georges C. St. Laurent, Jr. In the course of only a few months—and with a \$38,000 loan looming on the horizon—the “Steinway Caper” had become...“The Steinway Challenge!”

### **The Steinway Challenge**

The official launch of the Steinway fundraising effort to follow was to be the centerpiece of a recital by Tchaikovsky International Competition Gold Medalist, Moscow-born cellist, *Karine Georgian*, at the time one of Europe’s most celebrated young artists. Five days before her scheduled March 18 concert, however, I received a call from her agent

at Classical Artists International informing me that due to an unexpected death in her family, "...Karine Georgian would be unable to honor her CMC commitment."

CMC had never cancelled a concert in its five-year history but with less than a week to find a replacement what else could be done? For two days, CMC's plight was broadcast over the chamber music network. On day three, I received a telephone call from the agent representing the internationally-renowned virtuoso pianist, *Robert Taub*, informing me of his availability on March 18. If CMC wanted him, he could arrive in Ashland the next night "...on condition," she added, "that since he is an official Steinway artist, there must be a Steinway Model D concert grand piano available for his use at the performance."

Two days later, the following sentence appeared in the CMC program notes: "Tonight's audience is privileged to hear Mr. Taub perform on a superb Steinway D generously provided by Moe's Pianos of Portland." Taub's sensitive performance of a mix of works by Beethoven, Scriabin, and Chopin was equally "superb" and left no doubt as to why a New York Times critic had written of a performance, "Taub plays with more than professional affinity—he plays with love."



When Robert Taub returned to New York City the next day, he was on an important mission: To select a Steinway concert grand piano for CMC! A few days later we received a description of the instrument Taub had chosen from the 150

regularly on display in three floors of elegant selection rooms at New York's renowned piano landmark, Steinway Hall: He wrote, *The instrument is a wonderful mixture of tonality, resonance and dynamic range, ideally suited to the needs of the recital, chamber music, and orchestral performance.*

*Jeremy Menuhin would be happy!*, I thought.

With stunning performances by Vladimir Krainev, the Prague Chamber Orchestra and Robert Taub, CMC's 1988-89 Steinway fundraising effort was already in full swing, and the season had not yet officially begun! When it finally did get underway, however, there was no mistaking it. No one who heard the opening performance of the Shostakovich Quartet No. 8—the work written "...in memory of victims of fascism and war"... and performed by the *Chillingerian String Quartet* from the U.K.—will ever forget it. The silence in the hall that followed the performance"...wrote the Medford Mail Tribune's music critic, Mary Ann Campbell... "was like a confirmation of the music." In comparison, even the raw emotional musical landscapes of Janacek's "Intimate Letters" and the great Beethoven C-sharp Minor, Op. 131 string quartet—performed with

youthful mastery by the members of the *Prazak* and *Shanghai String Quartets* two months later—were almost...*cheerful!*

The somber notes of those three opening concerts quickly faded, however, in the anticipation—largely created by the media attention given the purchase of the new Steinway—of the season’s final concert by the “Mighty Three” members of the Russian-born *Borodin Piano Trio*, one of Mariedi Anders’ top draws.



The new nine-foot Steinway had arrived from New York one day before the trio’s April 19 performance. The ensemble’s pianist, *Luba Edlina* was scheduled to debut the instrument the following night. She was on the recital hall stage when CMC’s new and un-tamed acquisition arrived and was unpacked. A charismatic woman of uncommon strength and girth, she sat down, pulled (with surprising ease) the 1,000 pound monster close to her body, and began to play, stopped, raised her hands from the keys and exclaimed, **Zhats a heavy baby!** Then, inhaling deeply and without further comment, she resumed practicing.

At the private reception following the performance the next night—and with the demanding piano scores of Tchaikovsky and Haydn behind her, Edlina joined her late husband, legendary violinist, *Rostislav Dubinsky*, to drink multiple toasts to the new Steinway and to celebrate Dubinsky’s just-published book, *Musical Life in the Soviet Union: Stormy Applause*, a memoir of the Soviet cultural scene during the years 1949-75. Most of the guests at the reception spent the next morning coping with a variety of unpleasant physiological effects while members of the trio—and the new Steinway (as it turned out)—appeared to be in excellent spirits. Indeed, and for many reasons, the visit of the Borodin Trio had become a very special—and lingering—experience all around.

### **The Steinway Years**

Emboldened by the enthusiasm—and financial generosity—sparked by the 1988-89 season of piano fundraising, CMC now directed its full attention to the matter of repaying the Western Bank loan on the Steinway D. Determined to accomplish the \$38,000 goal (plus interest) in three years, the “Steinway Series I, II and III”—and a separate “Medalist Recital Series”—were created for the 1989-92 seasons. The objective was to put CMC’s new acquisition front and center by programming a significantly expanded repertoire of the chamber music literature which included piano.



In the ensuing 41 months—beginning with the November 1989 performance of the *Quartetto Beethoven di Roma* in 1989 and ending on April 23, 1992 with the “Steinway



Dedicatory Recital” by the Gold Medal winner of the first Chopin International Competition (Warsaw), pianist *Garrick Ohlsson*—20 amazing concerts of piano recitals, string quartets, piano quartets, piano trios, octets, and chamber orchestras by 100 artists of the highest international rank, had taken place on the SOSC recital hall stage. In the process, CMC audiences had been afforded a unique opportunity to expand their knowledge of the richness and diversity of chamber music compositions written for piano and various combinations of string instruments.

While all of the performances over that three-year span were multi-dimensional “musical conversations” created by artists exercising superb technique placed at the service of depth and eloquence, a few were especially memorable for single works which the artists had graciously agreed to include in their programs:

Schumann Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 47 [*Quartetto Beethoven di Roma*]

Mozart Clarinet Quintet in A major, K. 581 [*Berlin Octet*]

Sibelius String Quartet in D minor, Op. 56 [*Sibelius Academy String Quartet*]

Schubert Piano Quintet in A major (“Trout”) [*Musicians from Marlboro*]

Dvorak Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 87 [*Ames Piano Quartet*]

Faure Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 120 [*Peabody Piano Trio*]

Schubert Sonata in A minor (“Arpeggione”) [*Arto Noras, Cello*]

However, it was Garrick Ohlsson’s “Steinway Dedicatory Recital” which brought the audience out of their chairs. Not only were listeners in awe of his sublimely beautiful and moving renderings of all 24 Chopin preludes, the shouts of “Bravo” at the end of the performance also were expressions of joy by CMC board members at the retirement of the \$38,000 bank loan!

In that one stroke, the organizational structure of CMC had been immeasurably strengthened, the southern Oregon community had become a stakeholder in the series, and the quality of the organization’s artistic product had been greatly enhanced. Attesting to that fact, is a copper plaque affixed to a wall in the foyer of the Music Building Recital Hall which bears the names and categories of all those who contributed to the purchase of the piano, a remarkable community effort which assured the presence of “Zhat heavy baby” in the Rogue Valley for many years to come!

Soon after, an agreement struck between CMC and SOSC bequeathed the instrument to the Department of Music on behalf of the southern Oregon community. As part of that arrangement, music department students and faculty would be allowed unrestricted access to the instrument for concerts and recitals when the piano was not in the service of CMC-related projects.

George C. Laurent, Jr., a Rogue Valley resident and a classical music-loving entrepreneur was the single major benefactor—and the driving force—behind the Steinway fund-raising drive. With his support the instrument, itself, became the artistic rallying point around which the drive was organized. The formula for success was simple: The more emotionally stirring the performance of a piano ensemble, the more money was deposited in the two CMC Plexiglas boxes strategically located at the exit doors of the recital hall just before the end of each concert.



Providing opportunities for Rogue Valley musicians to share their musical gifts with CMC audiences had been one of the artistic objectives of the organization from the outset. Many of them now stepped forward to help fund-raise for the new Steinway. In September and April of 1989, piano recitals by *Dr. Frances Madachy*, Director of Keyboard Studies at SOSOC, and *Eda Jameson*, a well-known Rogue Valley concert artist, performed piano recitals which included many of the most celebrated works by Beethoven, Schumann, Bach, Debussy, Chopin, Brahms and Mendelssohn.

In December of that year, a special Steinway Benefit Holiday Recital was given by Spencer Carroll, a harpsichordist and member of the University of Oregon Music Department faculty. Assisting her were my sons, *Andrew Fowler*, violinist and *Alexander Fowler*, cello, both of whom grew up in Ashland and had become popular contributors to the musical life of the valley.



A legendary violin once owned by music icon, Jasha Heifitz, made its debut at another “Steinway Benefit” concert in CMC’s 1990-91 “Steinway Series II” season in a recital of works by Beethoven, Kreisler and Mendelssohn performed by Rogue Valley violinist, *Sherry Kloss* and Portland pianist, *Mark Westcott*. The 1736 “Tononi” was the instrument Heifitz chose to use at his Carnegie Hall debut in 1917. Shortly before his death in 1987, he bequeathed the Tonini to his “Master Assistant,” Sherry Kloss, along with “one of my four good bows.”

In the second half of the October 1990 recital, Kloss and Westcott were joined by Alex (Fowler), then a sophomore at Brown University and a cello student of

Aldo Parisot at Yale. Together, the three musicians delivered a sensitive—and athletic—reading of the Mendelssohn Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49, one of the most beloved masterpieces of the chamber music repertoire. The audience, many of whom knew the musicians as friends and neighbors, expressed their appreciation of the emotionally laced performance by depositing almost \$2,000 in the Steinway bank account!

During the 1993-94 “Gala” celebration of CMC’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, prominent classical guitarist and Ashland resident, *Joseph Thompson*, joined the *Cavani String Quartet* to perform Boccherini’s “dance-like” Quintet for Strings and Guitar.

For the first seven years of its life, CMC had committed itself to the performance of the masterworks of chamber music. CMC’s 1992-93 “Masters Series” six-concert season continued and extended that tradition of excellence; it also broke new ground for CMC audiences.

### Breaking New Ground

Booking engagements by the *American Horn Quartet* and *The Scholars of London* (masters of the vocal quartet now known as *Voices of London*) were departures from CMC’s previous booking practices.

Underscoring the fact that quartets of horns and voices also qualify under the rubric of “chamber music” as “serious music played by a small group of musicians,” was a survey of subscribers to the 1992-93 season concerts designed to help map out CMC’s future programming decisions.



Overwhelmingly, the Scholars of London and the American Horn Quartet were judged to have been the “most fun.” The piano recital by *Misha Dichter*, the 1966 Tchaikovsky International Competition Silver Medalist and one of the “icons of classical music,” was judged by CMC audiences as the “most impressive.”

That was no big surprise! Dichter’s movie-star looks coupled with his mature and deeply-thoughtful performance of works by Beethoven, Brahms, Bartok and Liszt—collectively reflecting the pianistic traditions of Dichter’s legendary teachers at the Juilliard School, Rosina Lhevinne and Aube Tzerko—literally brought the audience to its feet. For an avid runner like Dichter, that was an appropriate gesture of appreciation...two hours before his scheduled recital, he was still jogging around Lithia Park!

The Dichter recital was not only memorable for its musical excellence, it was the event which officially launched CMC's "Steinway Celebrity Recitals," a series of annual piano performances by celebrated prize-winning pianists made possible by a \$10,000 gift to CMC from Georges C. St. Laurent. The money was to be used to underwrite the costs associated with the Dichter concert and to seed an endowment to make the celebrity series an annual CMC event.

From the beginning, St. Laurent's generosity to CMC had been no accident. He was a great lover of classical music. In addition, CMC's artistic and administrative philosophy resonated with his own values. His "knack for business" had always been the ability to quickly assess a situation and see an opportunity to make a difference, to put that enterprise into terms that everyone in the organization—and the community—would want to join together to achieve.

At the conclusion of the December 11, 1992 recital, Georges St. Laurent was presented with an inscribed brass plaque acknowledging the sponsorship of Western Bank "in the name of musical excellence." That plaque, signed by Misha Dichter, is affixed to the inside rim of the CMC Steinway which bears his name, testimony to the long and mutually rewarding relationship which followed.

Misha Dichter's wife and duo-piano partner, Cipa, flew from Alaska, where she had been concertizing, to attend the concert and the spectacular reception for the concertgoers which followed under the crystal chandelier in the old ballroom of the (then) Mark Anthony Hotel. Dichter, smoking a big cigar, gratefully acknowledged the many enthusiastic compliments on his performance by his newly acquired southern Oregon fans.

By the end of the 1998-99 season, the names of six additional pianists of international renown had joined Dichter on the list of CMC Steinway celebrities: *Andrew-Michel Schub*; *Oleg Volkov*; *Angela Hewitt*; *Dubravka Tomsic*; *Menahem Pressler*; and *Mykola Suk*. As artists of uncommon individual talents, each had garnered worldwide praise for their "rare musicality," "remarkable virtuosity," "flawless technique" "golden-age pianism," "mind-boggling technical prowess," and "impeccable playing." As a body of performers at the peak of their interpretive powers, however, their collective performances had infused Chamber Music Concerts with a deeper understanding of what music can say to the human spirit.

The 1992-93 season had marked a turning point for Chamber Music Concerts. In the nine short years since its birth, CMC's founding members had converted an idea into a reality. Using the tools of knowledge, commitment, creativity, and passion, Chamber Music Concerts had built the foundation for assuring the organization's sustained growth in the future. The journey had been a heady one indeed!

When pianist, *Mack McCray and the Maggini String Quartet* of London ended the season with Dvorak's justly popular Piano Quintet in A major—ironically the same work

that had launched CMC 10 years earlier—it was clear that the organization was at the end of an era. In the interim, 50 ensembles from the U.S. and abroad had performed 300 works representing the finest of the chamber music repertoire. In grand style, Chamber Music Concerts had delivered on its artistic promise to present live concerts of the greatest musical breadth and artistic excellence to Rogue Valley audiences.

### **Building For the Future**

The fact that those nine years of exhilarating musical experiences had been the result of the work of a small group of committed volunteers—each determined to add another *genre* of music to the valley already-rich with mainstays like the Rogue Valley Symphony Orchestra, the Britt Classical Festival and the Rogue Valley Chorale—was as surprising as it was inspiring. Unlike the chamber music presenters in Eugene and Corvallis, CMC had no paid Executive Director, no paid business manager, no formalized committees, no paid staff, no official office, no experience in arts management, no by-laws nor board of directors. The energy, which motivated CMC, was simply the love of chamber music and the passion for excellence in its performance.

Like all idealistic ideas, however, achieving CMC's ambitious goals was not without considerable emotional and financial cost. As CMC became known for its unique contributions to the cultural life of the valley, audience size, ticket sales, ticket prices, the number of scheduled concerts per season, and numbers of performing artists, had all started to double. In the first three years of CMC's life, five-10 hours per week would suffice. During the three-year Steinway fundraising drive, that number shot to 20 and by the time the "Steinway Celebrity Recitals" were inaugurated in 1993, CMC had almost become a 40 hour-per-week full-time job that no small advisory board—never mind a single person--could manage, no matter how committed.

Chamber Music America (CMA), the national organization most responsible for "promoting artistic excellence and economic stability within the profession," came to the rescue.

### **The CMA Grant**

Throughout its history, Chamber Music Concerts had written many successful grants to support its various activities. The majority of the proposals were related, directly or indirectly, to the Steinway fundraising campaign. When, in 1992, CMA announced its new "Presenter Expansion Program," CMC was knocking on the door.

CMA's call for proposals contained five guidelines. CMC had already accomplished the goals of four of them: To increase the number of chamber music activities; to broaden the audiences for chamber music; to encourage more diversified chamber music programming and to encourage the presentation of outstanding ensembles at every stage of their careers: emerging, mid-level and established. It was goal number five which resonated most with CMC's need: "...to strengthen the organizational skills for chamber music presenting organizations by supporting the transition from volunteer to professional administration."

Taking on the challenge of writing a major grant proposal was seriously discussed among CMC advisory board members. After much hand wringing and agonizing over the details of what a “transition” should look like, we decided to respond to the CMA call for proposals, but with considerable trepidation since we knew that the competition would be incredibly stiff.

To our surprise, modifying and editing the various drafts of the narrative in the weeks that followed, turned out to be an *almost* enjoyable experience—especially when the grant proposal was framed as an opportunity to describe on paper what audiences in southern Oregon had known for a long time: *Chamber Music Concerts had a proven record of excellence and was precisely at the right point in its development to effectively build on its past accomplishments to sustain the understanding and appreciation of the chamber music experience in the future.*

Happily, the CMA grant reviewers agreed with that assessment and a few months after submitting the proposal, CMC joined Detroit, Boston, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and Sedona, Arizona, as one of six chamber music organizations in the U.S. to be selected to receive the \$30,000 award! CMC’s “artistic excellence in programming” and its “incredibly varied program and sense of family” were cited as criteria used in selecting CMC from the 40 proposals that were being considered for the new CMA funding initiative.

Even though 10 years of exceptional chamber music performances provided reason enough to celebrate, CMC’s 1993-94 “Gala” anniversary season was all that much sweeter with the recognition from Chamber Music America. The all-Beethoven program played to perfection by the incomparable *Emerson String Quartet*, and the rare opportunity to experience the level of ensemble achieved by the *I Solisti di Zagreb*<sup>17</sup>, “the peer of any chamber orchestra within memory” as The London Daily Telegraph described the group, served to make that season especially tasty.

Indeed, at the cusp of CMC’s 11<sup>th</sup> season, there was every reason to believe that Chamber Music Concerts was well on its way to forging a special place for itself in the cultural life of the Rogue Valley. To optimize that outcome, however, there was to be a lot of work ahead.

### **The Transition**

Steering the early transition from volunteer to professional operation was the primary responsibility of CMC’s first part-time paid administrative director, Harvey Roth. Drawing on his recent experience as the executive director of a symphony orchestra in Thousand Oaks California, he put his business acumen to work on CMC’s budget. With a dollar-for-dollar match (in three years) required by CMA as a condition of its \$30,000 award, this was no small challenge. Applying his considerable energy borne of his former experience in recreation and leisure services, the fiscal operation of CMC literally began to shape up.

For the first five years of its life, CMC ticket prices fell into two categories: Series subscriptions and individual concerts. During the years of the “Steinway Series,” those categories had expanded to include “Reserved”/“Unreserved” seating and “Benefit Concerts.” Additional benefit concerts like the “Medalist Recital Series” and the annual “Steinway Celebrity Recital” added more price options at prices just slightly higher than the general admission price of \$15 to hear the celebrated *Belgrade Festival Strings* with pianist, *Leonid Kuzman*, or to be able to attend the pre-concert dinner and reception celebrating the North American debut of the *Sibelius Academy Quartet* hosted by the Los Angeles Finnish Consul General, Jussi Montonen and the (then) SOSC President, Joseph Cox.

Mariedi Anders was in town for all of the events surrounding the concert. At my request, she had arranged a one-time management contract to bring the *Sibelius Quartet* to Ashland to participate in CMC’s 1990-91 season as the first stop on its inaugural tour of the United States. A year later, Anders added the name of the quartet’s cellist, Tchaikovsky silver medalist *Arto Noras*, to her prestigious list of artists; in 2008 he is still under her management.



By the time the 1994-95 “Six Concert Season” opened two years later with an energy-filled performance by the 16 youthful members of the charismatic *London Chamber Orchestra*, change was in the air; CMC was already on its transformative fiscal journey to economic stability.

Aimed at filling the (60 percent!) gap between ticket prices and the cost of presenting each season’s concerts—and fund-raising to meet the CMA Challenge Grant of \$30,000 in three years—the recital hall seating had been divided into different-priced sections in a six-concert and a four-concert subscription series. In addition, eight different levels of “Donor” categories had also been created.



To help prime the fiscal pump, several of the artists engaged for that season stepped up to the plate. The members of *The Leonardo Piano Trio* and pianist, *Oleg Volkov* (who had made an impressive Rogue Valley debut the previous summer with the Britt Festival Orchestra) had graciously agreed to preview their full CMC performance at a “Sunday Sampler” designed to further boost ticket sales and numbers of subscribers. For similar reasons—and to honor the “Ashland-Guanajuato Sister-City Relationship”—*The Quarteto Latino Americano* was selected to close the 1994-95 season with a glimpse into the cultural life of Mexico, Peru,

Argentina, Cuba, and Puerto Rico through the works of composers such as Piazzola, Villa-Lobos, and Revueltas.

As a ticket “bonus”—and in line with CMC’s long-standing commitment to community education—(free) pre-concert lectures inaugurated a year earlier and presented by a broad spectrum of Rogue Valley musicians and educators, were made to be features at all six concerts that season.

Even though there was some mild grumbling among CMC subscribers about the amount of time now required to complete a ticket order form, the six- and four-concert series concerts were sold out in a few days after tickets went on sale. Once again, the community had risen to the occasion—this time fiscal—with its enthusiastic support of an organization that was clearly making a difference in people’s lives. In the meantime, CMC was fast becoming known among agents and performing artists as “One of America’s outstanding chamber music series.”

In the years 1995-1999, many new wrinkles were added to the CMC programming recipe of artistic and educational excellence, thus moving the organization even further down the road to fiscal security and administrative professionalism. During the 3-year tenure of CMC’s second part-time Executive Director, Robert Scholl, fulfilling those two objectives remained at the top of the organization’s list of priorities.

### **The Residency Programs**

Since its founding, CMC had been committed to community education. During the 1995-96 “Signature Series,” a decisive move in that direction got underway.

In 1994, the *Cavani String Quartet*, a favorite ensemble in major concert series and at festivals throughout North America and Europe—and later at the Britt Festival—marked its first appearance on a CMC series. The winning personalities and youthful energy of the all-woman ensemble impressed everyone. Their performances of the Shostakovich No. 7 and Dvorak’s “American” String Quartets demonstrated that they also knew how to communicate musically. Combining their “fun of music making” with seamless ensemble had been the icing on CMC’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary birthday cake during the 1993-94 season. A return visit by the quartet was definite; it was just a matter of deciding when.



When the conversation about “community education,” “master classes for young players” and “CMC music residencies” began to get serious during the following year, plans for re-booking the quartet took shape quickly. A telephone call to the Cavanis

confirmed that they were available to return to the Rogue Valley to participate in CMC's 1995-96 season. Furthermore, the members of the quartet were enthusiastic about combining their CMC booking with a four-day community residency project designed to offer workshops, coaching sessions and lecture-demonstrations in both educational and community settings.

Funding to support these activities arrived in the form of a \$6,000 matching grant from Chamber Music America's "Residency Partnership Program," a new CMC initiative which encouraged "...dynamic collaborations and non-traditional partnerships among ensembles, presenters and community-based organizations." The \$6,000 match was subsequently generated through grants from state, regional and community foundations and individual donors.

Looking to extend and enrich the chamber music "conversation" beyond the confines of the performance hall, from the beginning, CMC was always interested in "curating" its concerts by working directly with the agents and artists to include specific works in its programs. In addition to injecting balance, breadth and diversity into each season's concerts, this "curatorial approach" was designed to optimize the accessibility of the music to even the least experienced listener—which is to say, to place it in the service of the common good, to connect the chamber music experience to daily life. Toward those ends, it was clear that the Mendelssohn Octet in E-Flat would be the ideal lynchpin of the Cavani's CMC residency focused on public education and community building.

Composed by the 16-year old Mendelssohn, the first performance of the remarkable string octet took place at a musicale in Mendelssohn's own home, a kind of "close musical dialogue" with friends and family. As a collaborative expression of eight string instruments, the Octet, as in an ideal democracy, relies upon the collective musical instinct, experience, knowledge, and talents of its participants to guide the process of interpreting, rehearsing and performing. Hearing—and, more importantly, experiencing—the work was expected to be an educational experience for students, teachers, and audience members alike. Indeed, Mendelssohn himself spoke of the Octet as his favorite among all works, recalling that he had "a lovely time writing it."

The success of CMC's first residency exceeded all expectations. Several hundred middle and high school orchestra students, and their teachers, took part in workshops and lecture demonstrations at schools in Ashland, Medford and Grants Pass. Master classes and coaching sessions with student ensembles drawn from each of those communities resulted in a CMC-sponsored recital by the six most prepared groups. Dr. Robert Tyndall, CMC board member and former Dean of Fine and Performing Arts at California State University, Long Beach put a fine point on the entire four-day experience with a public lecture aptly titled "The Extraordinary Power of Musical Communication."

The residency came to an official close with the March 16, 1996 complete performance of the Octet by the *Cavani* and *Cambiata String Quartet(s)*. For many in the packed

house, the concert was a first-time chamber music experience. For Amy Schwartz, the first violinist of the (then very young and no longer existent) Cambiata Quartet, the visit to Ashland must have left a lasting impression about Oregon; in August 2004, she joined the Oregon Symphony as its new Concertmaster.



Drawing on the energy and enthusiasm generated by CMC's first residency—not to mention the measurable surge in ticket sales and donations which followed—additional residency projects were subsequently developed in conjunction with the performances by the *Schubert Ensemble of London* and *The Ying Quartet* as part of CMC's 1996-97 and 1997-98 "Musical Images" seasons, respectively.

The excursions of those two groups of young artists into the larger community of Rogue Valley musicians were, in reality, more in line with "services" to targeted constituencies than was the more expansively structured Cavani residency

project. For example, the five members of the Schubert Ensemble attended a rehearsal of the Rogue Valley Symphony; The Ying siblings' enthusiasm for performing in diverse settings led to a series of much-appreciated lecture/demonstrations on "Music and the Healing Arts" at a number of Rogue Valley service clubs, hospitals, medical centers, retirement residences and convalescent homes.

The four years between 1995 and 1999 also saw the birth of other creative initiatives for getting people on the "wavelength" of chamber music; to touch them in places they may have forgotten they had...and, in the process, raising CMC's financial stakes.

### **The CMC Venue**

Blessed with the growing problem of more people wanting tickets to CMC concerts than could be seated at one time in the 436-seat music building recital hall, it was decided that there were only two possible options worth pursuing: Finding a larger space for the series, or remaining in the recital hall and engaging artists for more than one performance.

The first visit of pianist, *Angela Hewitt*, to the CMC series in 1996, provided an opportunity to run the two-concert experiment. After some discussion of the potential benefits and risks of a double-booking strategy, the benefits won the day. The thinking was thus: *As the fourth pianist featured in the Steinway Celebrity Recital Series, at least part of Hewitt's total fee would be underwritten by Western Bank. Scheduling her*



*two performances to coincide with Valentines Day would attract couples who were looking for an evening of romantic music after dinner on February 14. Programming a concert and lecture from the stage on “Bach’s Inner Vision: The Goldberg Variations,” would certainly attract the chamber music aficionado who revels in intellectual challenges. And some people will likely come to both. All in all, then, CMC was looking at a break-even situation, even in the worst-case scenario!*

In the framework of a “business proposition,” these arguments made sense. Arguing from the “Art-Music” side of the equation, however, the money was only a means—not necessarily *the* greater end—for measuring success. In my mind, exposing CMC audiences to Hewitt, one of Bach’s premier interpreters whose “remarkable virtuosity and flawless technique laid Bach’s contrapuntal wizardry in the listener’s lap,” was the more important consideration, *independent of the cost...*

CMC booked two recitals by Angela Hewitt, and happily for all sides, the recital hall for both concerts was 90 percent full—an artistic *and* financial success! In the process of achieving that outcome, CMC had also confirmed what had been clear from the previous 12 years of operation: Financial success is achievable if the musical experience promised is one that audiences want to buy into, independent, in this case, of the performing hall.

In other, less ideal spaces for chamber music than the “acoustically-superior” Music Building Recital Hall, however, that may *not* be the case. The CMC Board of Directors had a chance to test out that hypothesis during the 1996-97 season of “Discovery Series” concerts a year later.

A recital by the 57-year Slovenian pianist selected to be the fifth celebrated artist in CMC’s 1996-97 “Steinway Celebrity” “Discovery” series, *Dubravka Tomsic*, was slated to conclude what had been a highly-successful season of six-outstanding concerts, including a CMC-commissioned World Premiere of the String Quartet No. 2, Op. 151 composed by Czech-American composer and Portland State University faculty member, *Tomas Svoboda*.

As an internationally-celebrated pianist, Tomsic was seen as a potentially huge draw for Rogue Valley audiences who, in 12 seasons of CMC concerts, had grown accustomed to experiencing performances by classical music icons; “...elegantly streamlined keyboard technique, dynamic control and uncomplicated rhythmic precision” was how her playing had been described by the music critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle* reviewing her Herbst Theater recital two days before her southern Oregon appearance.



Accommodating the large crowds that were sure to come to hear a pianist "...of historic stature through whose fingers pass all of human experience," was reason enough for selecting the 750-seat Craterian *Ginger Rogers Theater* in downtown Medford as the performance venue. The mass of bodies crushed into the foyer of the newly renovated building 30 minutes before the doors to the auditorium swung open, suggested that the CMC board had made the right decision.

When Dubravka Tomsic seated herself at the CMC Steinway (transported from Ashland expressly for the occasion) the audience of approximately 600 was on the edge of its seats in anticipation of what they were about to hear. No one was disappointed. Throughout the evening, Tomsic offered readings of consummate good sense in which emotion was balanced with structural clarity. For me, the evening's towering achievement was Ravel's *Three Pieces from Miroirs*, written in 1905 and marking a dramatic change in Ravel's harmonic style that to this day bewilders musicians and audiences alike.

In spite of being very ill with the flu that evening, like any great musician, Dubravka Tomsic did what she was known to do: She kept the listener's attention fixed on the music, echoing Van Cliburn who famously said "...when you have to serve music, you must be thinking of others, not yourself." That turned out to be a very good thing. Thus occupied, members of the audience were accordingly less focused on the Craterian's (then) poor acoustics, uncomfortable seats and cavernous space which, together, reminded audiences more of the structure's movie-house past than spoke to a future of chamber music recitals. Consensus among the CMC community in the weeks following largely supported that view: *Bigger is not necessarily better when seeking a venue for CMC concerts!*

"Perhaps," was the response of the CMC Board members to this observation. *It was possible, so the discussion went, that a string quartet would fare (acoustically and otherwise) better than a piano recital and, from a budgetary perspective, the overhead costs for one well-attended concert had, at this point, been proven to be less than for Hewitt's two recitals.* Using this rationale, CMC again voted to use the Craterian as the performance site for *The Ying Quartet* as part of the 1997-98 season of "Musical Images" in conjunction with their CMC lecture/demonstration community-residency project.

At the January 1998 performance—and on a huge stage with a high and vaulted Proscenium arch which (then) had no acoustic shell—the "lyrical, almost tender quality...and innocent beauty" of the Yings' readings of string quartets by Beethoven, Janacek and Smetana were totally lost on the (very) sympathetic audience sitting (still on uncomfortable seats) in the half-filled *Ginger Rogers Theater*. When that concert ended, so did the idea of moving CMC's performances from its Ashland venue, a space that for 14 years had been cherished by audiences and musicians alike. CMC would remain in the hall where it was birthed!

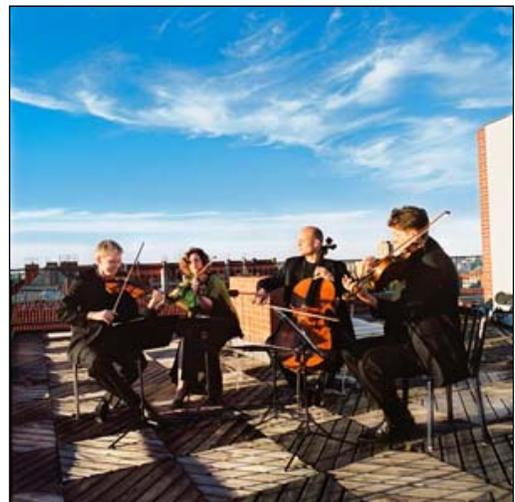
By the end of the 1998-99 season, the list of individual members and business establishments dedicated to the long-term care and feeding of Chamber Music Concerts had expanded to include many well-known Rogue Valley residents and businesses, all dedicated to supporting the sustained presence of chamber music in southern Oregon: Georges and Eleanor St. Laurent Jr.; *Harry and David*, Florence and Bill Schneider; Marcia Van Dyke; Alicia MacArthur; *Chateaulin Restaurant*; Mario and Edith Campagna; Dunbar and Jane Carpenter; Richard and Van H. Ernst; Barbara and Chuck Ryberg; Dr. Linda Harris; *Ashland Hills Windmill Inn*; Eldon and Barbara Johnson; *Ashland Flower Shop and Greenhouses*; Dick and Marty Moore; Gary and Janet Fletcher; Edward and Sheila Hungerford; Russ and Rose Otte; Ross and Kathleen Davis; Doris and Lynn Sjolund; Stephen Cary and Christine Sears; *Silk Road*; Otto and Marabel Frohnmayer; *Chata Restaurant*, Ernest and Mamie Von Wyrzten; *Bloomsbury Books*, Dr. Earl Parrish; *Quality Inn Flagship*; Juli Schwartz; Thomas and Edith Heumann; *Bear Creek Corporation*; and Jed and Celia Meese, among many others. Especially noteworthy among them was Ashland resident, James Atchison, who, in 1995, had lost his battle with colon cancer.

### **The “Emerging Artists” Concert Series**

Two years later, in May 1997, members of *The Sitka Festival Trio* came to Ashland to remember their many years of friendship with Atchison in Sitka, Alaska (home to an outstanding summer music festival founded by the trio’s violinist, Paul Rosenthal) by inaugurating the first (of three) CMC “Annual James Atchison Young Artists” concerts. Reflecting Atchison’s love of chamber music—and wanting to leave some kind of legacy to reflect that part of his life in the Rogue Valley—the concert by the *Sitka Trio* was an occasion for rekindling fond memories by way of beautiful chamber works by Bach, Shostakovich and Smetana scored for piano/keyboard, violin and cello/Viola da Gamba.

Smetana’s Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 15—a passionate venting of Smetana’s own grief at the death of his five-year old daughter—had not been previously performed at a CMC concert. For many reasons, the Sitka’s performance of that moving work reminded all of us in the audience that evening of the ways in which music connects our earthbound selves with our spiritual lives...

The second concert of the Atchison three-concert series occurred a year later as part of CMC’s 1997-98 season. By that time, the name had been changed to the “James Atchison Discovery Concert for Emerging Artists” and featured the Berlin-based *Artemis Quartet*, winner of the 1997 “Premio Paolo Borciani” *International String Quartet Competition*. The quartet’s performances of Haydn, Mozart and Ligeti’s *Metamorphosis Nocturnes*, together provided both a glimpse into the past—and the future—of the chamber music *genre*.



At the time of its CMC debut, the Artemis had only been in existence seven years and was on its first tour of the U.S. In the following decade of mentorships with such estimable ensembles as the Emerson, Juilliard and the Alban Berg, the *Artemis* is now one of the most renowned ensembles of its generation. *And CMC audiences knew them when...*

In the Atchison series' third, and final, year in the embrace of CMC, the 25-year-old Israeli violinist, *Vadim Gluzman* and his (then) fiancé and now wife, pianist, *Angela Yoffe*, opened the 1998-99 season with blockbuster performances of the *Faust-Fantasy of the Opera of Gounod*; *Nigun Suite* by Ernest Bloch (the Swiss-American composer who spent some years living and working on the Oregon coast); Prokofiev's Second Sonata for Violin and Piano; and a transcription of Kurt Weill's *Three Penney Opera*. In 2007, the Glutzman-Yoffe duo was described as "...one of the best instrumental duos of all times." Lauded by both critics and audiences as a performer of great depth, virtuosity and technical brilliance, Gluzman is now a favored choice of orchestras and recital series throughout the world. By those in the audience at their October 1998 Sunday afternoon recital—and at the post-concert reception at my house—Glutzman and Yoffe seemed more like neighborhood kids than consummate artists, testimony, once again, to the transcendent power of music.



James Atchison was a tireless educator, musician, civic leader and social activist throughout his life. His commitment to assisting gifted young artists was a confirmation of CMC's determination to become a venue for both launching new careers, and celebrating established ones. Toward that mutual end, the Atchison Discovery Concerts created exhilarating and memorable chamber music experiences for everyone.

As for "memorable chamber music experiences" generated by the four CMC seasons during the years 1995-1999, there were many standouts and a few of the 100 works performed during those years, struck especially resonant chords with me: The Strauss waltzes of the *Ensemble Wien*, *The Boston Chamber Music Society's* performance of the Brahms C Minor Piano Quartet; Schoenberg's *Verklaerte Nacht* played by the 17 members of *The Chamber Orchestra Kremlin*; Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, *National Chamber Orchestra of Toulouse*; the World Premier of the Svoboda String Quartet, No. 2 performed by the *Leontovych String Quartet*, Trio Di Milano's reading of



Beethoven's E-Flat, Opus 70 piano trio; Debussy's Estampes at the *Menahem Pressler* Steinway Celebrity Recital; the Bridge E minor Quartet performance by the *Vermeer String Quartet*; Brahms' Trio in A Major for clarinet, piano and cello, Op. 114 (*New York Philomusica* with *Robert Levin*, piano); and the Schubert Cello Quintet in C Major, Op. 163 played by the *Takács String Quartet* with guest cellist, *Judith Glyde*.

### **A New Life**

In the spring of 1997, "Southern Oregon State College" was renamed "Southern Oregon University," a change which signaled an expansion of the institution's mission and, simultaneously, a desired change in the artistic leadership of Chamber Music Concerts. Marketed as "The University Series," CMC's 1998-99 Season was the beginning of an official affiliation with the SOU Department of Music—and, ironically—an opportunity to look back at CMC's rich and nuanced past.

Chamber Music Concerts began and ended the first 15 years of its life at the pleasure of an institution which had provided it with a home and a hall. However, without the specific encouragement and support of SOSC administrators like Stuart Turner, Chair of the Department of Music; Lawrence Helms, Director of the Division of Continuing Education; and Presidents Natale Sicuro, Joseph Cox, and Stephen Reno, CMC would not have survived its 15-year journey.

What of those 200 "musical conversations" with almost 400 artist-teachers along the way? Of the lessons taught—and learned?

That it had been a "quest for excellence" is clear. That the quest continues to be a worthy one is borne out by the fact that CMC is poised to celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Aristotle had it right when he opined, "Excellence is not an act, but a habit."

While the numbers of all those individuals whose efforts assured continuation of that journey into the future have since diminished, their shadows and good works remain behind. My telling of CMC's first 15 years has been *their* story, the warp and weft of a practice of excellence dedicated to communicating the similarities of the human condition and the consistency of the human dilemma, from generation to generation.

### **Acknowledgments**

To be successful, image is often as important as substance. As reflected in her simple, yet elegant, logo and creative designs which graced 10 seasons of CMC brochures and program, printmaker Jan Fowler understood that fact.

Advisors come and advisors go, but musician, friend, chamber music aficionado and steadfast supporter from 1987, Brian Tingle, remains to help ensure that the pursuit of excellence which informed the creation of CMC will continue to be the lynchpin of its future.

And, as they say, to get to the heart of a story, you have to go back to the beginning.

Without the interest and encouragement of current Executive Director, Jody Schmidt, however, the story of CMC's founding years would never have been told.

To these three individuals, I—and past, present and future CMC audiences—owe a special debt of appreciation.

