

## Exploring Music at Kohl's New Season -- by Kai Christiansen

Traditional chamber music may strike some as a relatively narrow canon played by a steadfast group of practitioners who form life-long professional alliances. But the upcoming season from Music at Kohl Mansion reveals a good deal more: a diversity of ensembles — veteran and emerging, local and international, dynamic collaborations — a variety of music — 18<sup>th</sup> century Viennese, 19<sup>th</sup> century French and German, 20<sup>th</sup> century British and American — and a range of ensembles — trio, quartet, quintet and solo performance. Even opera assumes chamber intimacy when some of our local celebrities will gather for a gala holiday benefit in support of *Kohl for Kids* programs, to sing up close in a recital setting.

The season features distinguished veterans like the apparently everlasting Fine Arts Quartet and the German Henschel Quartett, now celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But there are also fresh young faces like the Ariel Quartet, the Trio Cavatina and lively pianist Joyce Yang. Yang will join the Bay Area's own Alexander String Quartet to play the Brahms Piano Quintet, one of several collaborations so fruitful that they have taken it into the recording studio for a soon-to-be-released Brahms-Schumann CD. The prize-winning Trio Cavatina, who formed at Marlboro and has debuted at Carnegie Hall and San Francisco Performances, will also feature a spontaneous collaboration: Harumi Rhodes, the trio's violinist, is the daughter of violist Samuel Rhodes, freshly retired from the Juilliard Quartet after a 44 year run. Father and daughter are travelling together this season and join together at Kohl Mansion where the Trio Cavatina becomes a piano quartet. Change is also in the air as the well-established Miró Quartet returns to Kohl Mansion to introduce violinist William Fedkenheuer who joined in 2011.

A glance at the season roster shows the familiar, favorite names: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and Mendelssohn. But there are new and different composers as well. Saint-Saëns wrote two wonderful string quartets, rarely played, and this year we have a chance to discover his second. Garrick Ohlsson returns to the stage for a solo recital featuring late Beethoven, Schubert and his specialty, Chopin. But he will also play pieces by early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Charles Griffes, a true impressionist on native soil. Trio Cavatina + Rhodes will play Brahms and Beethoven, but also a Copland piano quartet, modern, even serialist, 20<sup>th</sup> century American. Music at Kohl and the Alexander SQ mark the Britten Centennial with a performance of his remarkable String Quartet No. 2, itself a "mashup" of a modern tribute to the Baroque English composer Henry Purcell, complete with an old-fashioned fugue in a daring 20<sup>th</sup> century style. Two more fresh names show up this season: the celebrated French composer Henri Dutilleux with a recent "classic" titled *Ainsi la nuit* (Miró Quartet), and an American composer born in Texas in the late 60's, Christopher Theofanidis (known here for his 2011 SF Opera "Heart of a Soldier"), whose *Visions and Miracles* for string quartet will be played by the Henschel Quartett.

Chamber music endures in its commitment to both time-honored legacies and living, dynamic new work. And the music continually flows: from 18<sup>th</sup> century Vienna to 21<sup>st</sup> century Texas. What helps celebrate and sustain this kaleidoscope of ever shifting patterns is a place to gather where it continues to thrive and flourish. And Music at Kohl Mansion is just such a treasured gathering place

-- Kai Christiansen