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2015 FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

July:

- 22....**Opening night honors a Kingston benefactor
Violinist Bella Hristova debuts in Dvorak String Sextet
- 24....**Composer David Ludwig introduces *Swan Song* before concert
Tchaikovsky's towering A-Minor Piano Trio
- 25....**Free open rehearsal, 9 a.m. to noon
- 26....**Composer David Ludwig introduces *Pale Blue Dot* before concert
Grammy-winning guitarist Jason Vieaux goes solo for 7 works
Schumann's radiant Piano Quintet
- 29....**Woodwind fans can delight in works for bassoon and clarinet
Clarinetist Benito Meza makes his festival debut
Pianist Stewart Goodyear returns
Schubert's ever-popular "Trout" Quintet
- 31....**Bassoon and clarinet back for a second concert
Beethoven's elegant "Archduke" Trio

August:

- 1....** Free open rehearsal, 9 a.m. to noon
Goodyear plays Bach's Goldberg Variations in church
- 2....** Piano is part of all three works
Concluding with Brahms Quartet in A Major

Would you like to have a festival brochure mailed to a friend? Call box office, at 401-874-2106.

Natalie Zhu, artistic director

Kingston Chamber Music FESTIVAL NOTES

Summer 2015

Natalie Zhu, artistic director

Vol. 17, No. 2

A MERGER IN TWO-PART HARMONY

*Lauded composer, violinist
to make music in Kingston
and marry a few days later*

By **BRIAN MITCHELL**
Newsletter Editor

"Pretty early on I thought this is just one of the greatest violinists I'd ever heard and I wondered what it would be like to write music for her."

Composer David Ludwig was speaking in a recent interview about the playing of Bella Hristova, the Bulgarian-born violinist he met roughly 10 years ago at Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

What once may have been wistful thinking on Ludwig's part has turned into a reality. The celebrated and busy composer is writing a full-length violin concerto for the celebrated and busy violinist.

This musical confection probably doesn't need any frosting, but the sweetest part is this: The two are engaged to be married. And Kingston audiences get to be part of the pre-wedding celebration.

The partners in life and music will be in Kingston for three concerts, with Hristova playing the lead in two com-



Composer David Ludwig and violinist Bella Hristova compose a "selfie" alongside Chesapeake Bay.

positions written by Ludwig, who will introduce those two works prior to concerts on July 24 and 26. A week after the July 26 concert, the couple will be married in Vermont.

Ludwig made his Kingston debut last season when an entire concert, held in Kingston's Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, was devoted to a wide

variety of his chamber music. Hristova will make her Kingston debut this summer.

"Everyone was so welcoming in Kingston. I feel really honored to have been asked by Natalie (Zhu) and we are very happy to be returning," Ludwig said.

See **A MERGER** Page 2

Kingston Artist Wins 2015 Grammy

Classical guitarist Jason Vieaux, who returns to Kingston for two concerts this summer (July 22 and 26), after a spectacular festival debut last season, won a 2015 Grammy Award (best solo classical album) for *Play*, right. He performs worldwide and was a co-founder in 2011 of the guitar program at Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

For More Highlights of 2015 Festival, See Page 4.



P.O. Box 1733, Kingston, R.I. 02881
at the University of Rhode Island

Kingston Chamber Music
festival

A MERGER IN TWO-PART HARMONY

From Page 1

The composer said he will be “right in the thick of it,” writing the concerto for his still future wife when the couple is in Kingston — with the work scheduled for its world premiere, with Hristova as the soloist, of course, on March 19 next year by the Vermont Symphony Orchestra (VSO) — just one of many connections that tie both Ludwig and Hristova to Vermont.

Ludwig’s roots in Vermont run deep. His great-grandfather, the violinist and composer Adolf Busch, was a co-founder of the Marlboro festival in 1951, and his grandfather, the pianist Rudolf Serkin, was the festival’s first artistic director, serving for 40 years, until his death in 1991. Ludwig has served as the festival’s composer-in-residence for three consecutive seasons, and now he is the new music advisor for the VSO, where the idea for commissioning Ludwig to write a concerto for Hristova was born.

Since 2000, the VSO has been under the musical direction of the renowned violinist Jaime Laredo, one of Hristova’s teachers at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Alan Jordan, executive director of the VSO, said the idea for the commissioning was hatched during a lunch he had with David two summers ago when wedding plans were already being made.

The VSO formed a consortium of seven orchestras to support the commissioning and the concerto will be played by Hristova over the next two or three seasons with all seven orchestras. The other six are the Kansas City, Quad Cities, Louisville, Reno, Westchester and Rogue Valley symphonies.

“The idea of a concerto written by David for his fiancée is so beautiful and romantic,” Jordan said. “We cannot wait to hear how he expresses his love through his music.”

Ludwig sees the concerto as “a musical result of our relationship” and “a fruitful collaboration between people who are close to each other and friends.”

“In any concerto, the challenge for the composer is that it both fits like a glove for the person performing it, but also is flexible enough for them to make it their own. One just hopes it lives past the next few years and



Ludwig and Hristova walked the edge of the Sky Tower, 630 feet above Auckland, New Zealand, during a recent visit to that country. The wind-blown walk around the circumference took 30 minutes, Hristova said.

fits other performers as well,” he added.

Hristova says she “gives her all” and treats every performance as very special, but acknowledges the world premiere of David’s concerto with the VSO will mean something extra. “But of course this performance will be really meaningful to me, especially when the piece is over and David and I are taking bows onstage with Jaime, who has been such an incredible supporter, mentor, and friend to us both,” Hristova said, adding, “It will feel like we’re getting married all over again! I really can’t wait.”

Even though the two first met at Curtis a decade ago, they mostly just knew each other in passing and, as Ludwig tells it, it wasn’t until Hristova returned to Philadelphia five years later after studying with Laredo in Indiana that thoughts about dating occurred to him. “We were in Marlboro and I joked with some mutual friends that, now that she was back, Bella and I could date,” Ludwig said, “And to my surprise they all thought that was a great idea.”

Both have piled up a bunch of accolades and accomplishments early in their careers. Hristova, recipient of a 2013 Avery Fisher Career Grant and several competition prizes, is near the end of a 2014-15 season that featured a mix of concerto, recital and chamber music performances in halls around the world. She showcased a wide-ranging repertoire, as she performed 10 different concertos, from Bernstein and Corigliano to Prokofiev and Sibelius, as well as the world premiere of an unaccompanied work by Joan Tower.

Born in Pleven, Bulgaria, to Russian and Bulgarian parents, Hristova began violin studies at the age of six. At 12, she participated in master classes with Ruggiero Ricci at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. The next year she came to the U.S. and, five years later, entered Curtis in 2003, six years after Ludwig entered as a student. (Ludwig is now dean of Artistic Programs and a member of the composition faculty at Curtis.)

Ludwig said he has a backlog of com-

missions and deadlines stretching for the next three years. “That said, the rest of life doesn’t stop either, so I am pretty strict with myself about keeping a period of time to compose in a ‘distraction-free zone’ every day.”

Other recent credits include the release of a major motion picture (*Cymbeline*) that he scored, and the premiere of his bassoon concerto, *Pictures from the Floating World*, commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra for bassoonist Daniel Matsukawa, a Kingston alumnus. In 2013, his choral work, *The New Colossus*, was selected as the opening work for the private prayer service for President Obama and his cabinet at his second inauguration.

Both of his works to be played in Kingston this summer, with Hristova playing a part in each, are recent compositions, and both were written since the couple began dating and forming what has also become a musical partnership and collaboration. *Pale Blue Dot* (July 26), for string quartet, was commissioned for the Dover Quartet, the first-ever quartet-in-residence at Curtis. “Bella helped me find some of the more zany effects in the piece,” Ludwig said, adding, “I am lucky to have such a great editor who is so easily accessible!”

And *Swan Song* (July 24), for violin and piano, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall for violinist Benjamin Beilman, another Kingston alumnus. “Ben was a classmate of Bella’s . . . she made some great suggestions while I was writing the piece,” Ludwig said.

Now Hristova will be playing *Swan Song* herself in Kingston. “And so in this wonderful way the process has come full circle,” Ludwig said.

Hristova has a similar sentiment: “Everything in our lives is rather a team effort; getting married is just a very natural next step.”

(Hristova will also perform at the festival’s opening concert, on July 22, in a *Paganini concertante* with guitarist Jason Vieaux and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan, and in *Dvorak’s String Sextet in A Major*. She will also be part of *Schumann’s Piano Quintet in E-flat Major* on July 26.)

URI music students, graduates help keep the festival on track

Kingston assistants making music or teaching it elsewhere

Behind every successful season of the Kingston Chamber Music Festival is a great administrative team.

For nearly a decade, students or recent graduates of the Music Department at the University of Rhode Island have been serving as administrative assistants to the festival’s managing director, helping to make sure all the artists are well taken care of, and that everything runs smoothly on stage and behind the scenes.

However, when these assistants are not giving rides to artists or running for coffee, they are out making their own music or teaching it to others.

Zachary Friedland, who starts his fourth season with the festival this summer, just recently graduated with his master’s degree in music composition from the Longy School of Music of Bard College in Cambridge, Mass. His thesis composition, *Boston Strong*, a musical response to the indomitable spirit with which Bostonians met the challenge of the 2013 marathon bombings, was recently performed by the Metropolitan Wind Symphony at the Boston Festival of Bands in Faneuil Hall.

The world premiere of Zach’s composition was performed a few weeks earlier by the same symphony in Lexington, Mass. Zach spoke about his work before the concert and the performance received a standing ovation, with Zach taking the stage for bows with conductor Lewis Buckley.

Zach said he feels a special connection to Boston, having first gone to Boston Children’s Hospital when he was six months old and diagnosed with a congenital heart defect. He continues to benefit from the monitoring and treatment he gets at the hospital.

For the past three years, Zach’s teammate in Kingston has been Theresa Procopio, who, after URI, earned her master’s degree in oboe performance from the University of Akron under the tutelage of Jack Harel. She is now an active musician in the Cleveland-Akron area where she maintains her own oboe studio, teaching students of various ages, and plays as a substitute oboist in the Tuscarawus Philharmonic. She continues to return to Kingston to work with the festival.

Zach and Theresa were preceded in their Kingston posts by URI Music Department alumni Allison Lacasse and Michael Raymond. Ally is now teaching band and general music in Chelmsford, Mass., public schools. She has performed throughout the Northeast in festivals and fellowships, including at the Imani Winds Chamber Music Festival, as a soloist with the Fusion String Ensemble, and as principle flutist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Onstage at the Symphony Program.

Mike now teaches high school chorus and general music in the Pawtucket public school system. He also performs throughout Southern New England as a clarinetist, violist, vocalist, and even as part of a recorder consort.



Zach Friedland stands with Lewis Buckley, conductor of the Metropolitan Wind Symphony, after a concert in Lexington, Mass., that included a world premiere performance of Zach’s composition, *Boston Strong*.

NEW CONCERT START TIMES: 7:30 p.m. (except Sundays at 4)

FOR TICKETS:

Online at kingstonchambermusic.org

Call the box office, at 401-874-2106, weekdays, 10 am to 3 pm