



For Immediate Release
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Oratorio Society celebrates 25 years with music & memories

Come take a musical journey through Germany and Austria on May 17 and 18 as the Oratorio Society of Estes Park (OSEP) and the Estes Park Chamber Orchestra celebrate their 25th anniversary with a free concert in the Estes Park High School auditorium.

“What I’m doing with this concert is taking us back to the core of the classical repertoire,” explains music director Kathy Bowers. “It focuses on baroque and classical, early romantic German-Austrian music.”



On the program are J.S. Bach’s *Double Violin Concerto in D Minor*, a beautiful piece for choir and orchestra by Felix Mendelssohn called *Lauda Sion*, Michael Hayden’s *Turkish March*, and Beethoven’s *Choral Fantasy*.

“If it weren’t for Mendelssohn we might not even know the name Bach today because his work had fallen into obscurity,” says Bowers. “It was only Mendelssohn who decided a hundred years after Bach to bring back the *St. Matthew Passion* in Leipzig and that started a whole revival of Bach’s works.”

This concert will be mix of music and remembrance. The featured violinists for Bach’s *Double Violin Concerto in D Minor* are the chamber orchestra’s current concert master, Jeff Tyler, and a former concert master, Merritt Martin, one of the founders of the Oratorio Society and a violinist with OSEP for all 25-years.

It was in December 1987 that Martin and his wife, Laura, along with Connie and Gary Elting got a bunch of Estes Park residents together to hold a sing-along session of Handel’s *Messiah*. On November 27, 1988 OSEP presented Handel’s *Messiah* to the public at Presbyterian Community Church of the Rockies under the direction of Gary



Elting. Rich Kohl conducted the Easter portions of *Messiah* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* at OSEP's March 19, 1989 performance.



Rich Kohl returns to the director's podium for the May 17 and 18 concerts to conduct the Michael Hayden's *Turkish March*.

"Michael was the younger brother of Franz Joseph Hayden, whom we're all familiar with," says Bowers. "Franz Joseph actually felt Michael was a better composer than he was. One of the reasons I like having the *Turkish March* on the program is it gives us a little bit of the flavor of the Turkish music that became so popular with Mozart and Hayden and Beethoven. They lived during a time when the Turkish military forces were literally at the gates of Vienna. So they brought with them their janissary music which was a big influence on the classical composers."



The last work in the program is Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*.

"For Beethoven, it was kind of a draft for his *Ninth Symphony*," Bowers says. "It's an interesting cross between a fantasia, as we might have heard Bach compose in some of his piano and organ works, and a piano concerto and a symphonic piece. He wanted to try out putting a chorus at the end of the piece. In there, too, is what you might think of as some variations that do a great job of focusing on certain groups of winds. There's a little tiny string quartet at one point. There's a beautiful oboe duet. It just has some really interesting music for different instruments in the orchestra."



Dr. Margaret Patterson will perform the piano solo in the piece. She is a frequent popular performer in the Estes Park Music Festival and in the eastern United States. Before moving to Colorado, she actively performed in the DC/Bethesda, Maryland area and in other east coast cities. She has a varied career as a soloist, accompanist, chamber musician and teacher. She has a private studio and enjoys teaching students of all ages and abilities.

Some of the original members of the Oratorio Society who will be performing at the concert are Melissa Westover (soprano), Kathleen Black (alto), Merritt Martin (violin or viola), and Ray Novy (bassoon).



Another longtime member of the OSEP orchestra is Ginny Page who started playing violin when she was five. She played for 15 to 20 years with a community orchestra in Michigan and then joined OSEP in 2000. For a while she was one of only two second violins.



“At some of the first concerts we had people come up from the valley to rescue us,” says Page. “We played the Brahms Requiem one time and two women from somewhere in the valley came to fill out the violin section. Back then, some people said we weren’t good enough for them to play with us, but the quality of the orchestra has improved.”

Page says playing with the chamber orchestra is just plain fun.

“Every day I’m making time to practice. My stand partner was a music major, so she’s fantastic and I learn at every rehearsal. I’m learning things from her,” says Page. “There’re multiple people with big musical credentials involved in this, so this isn’t any hack deal. There’re a whole lot of people that come with vast experience. Merritt Martin, who will be doing the violin concerto with Jeff at the May concert, he played with the Pittsburgh or Philadelphia Orchestra all his life. The level of talent in this town is absolutely remarkable.”

And that talent will be on display Friday, May 17th at 7:00pm and Saturday, May 18th at 2:00pm in the high school auditorium. Admission is free. Donations are deeply appreciated.

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