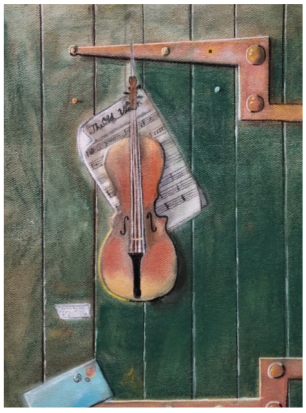
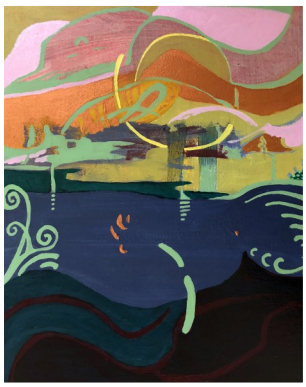


And the winners for 2020/21 art are… See inside for details.



Chamber Music
Amici News

Creating Community Through Great Music

Spring 2020

Stories to Entertain Us During Pandemics

By Sharon Schuman

As sad as we are to have to postpone our April 2020 Amici concert that features the world premiere of Colin Dixon's sextet "The Rooster and the Fox," we want you to know that this piece will be performed in our 2020/21 season. We also want to share with you its oblique, eerie connection to the coronavirus that has us all hunkered down.

Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" were inspired in part by Boccaccio's "Decameron," a compendium of one hundred fictional tales, told by ten young people over a ten-day period. Rather than diverse pilgrims walking 62 miles from London to Canterbury to reach the shrine of Thomas a'Beckett, Boccaccio's pilgrims were wealthy nobles riding in carriages the short distance from Florence to Fiesole, the hillside town just above it, to escape the Black Plague of 1348. This disease is said to have killed 75-200 million people, in the greatest pandemic in history.

To pass the time while they were in social isolation, Boccaccio's seven women and three men each told a story a day for ten days, a total of 100 stories. Ironically, none of the social isolation we are now embracing, or that they embraced six centuries ago, would have helped victims of their pandemic, because what was later identified as the Bubonic Plague was not transmitted by coughing or touching. It was carried by fleas on rats (which they might have brought with them from Florence to Fiesole).

Luckily, all of Boccaccio's story-tellers survive, as do all of Chaucer's, even as millions of people in the real world died. The point may well be that however our own pandemic unfolds, the stories we are telling each other right now—maybe to pass the time, to cheer each other up, or just to bear witness to this strange experience—may one day inspire a whole new generation of artists to make sense of this chaos.

When Amici finally performs "The Rooster and the Fox" next season, part of what we will enjoy is realizing that this story about animals was intended to help people get through a challenging journey.

April 13 & June 8 concerts have been postponed.
See page 6 for more information.

Chamber Music Amici

Amici Musicians

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Jessica Lambert
Lillie Manis
Steven Pologe
Sharon Schuman*

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Welcome, Eunhye Grace Choi

By Jessica Lambert

Dear friends, it is my very great pleasure to have some great news to share with you: Grace Choi has accepted our invitation to be Chamber Music Amici's incoming Artistic Director!

I have been Amici's Artistic Director for five years now and have enjoyed every aspect of the role. And yet it is part of Amici's design that the role of Artistic Director rotate regularly amongst the musicians so I am very pleased to see Amici's tradition of sharing this role moving smoothly into our third rotation.

Will I miss being Amici's Artistic Director? Mostly, yes! Having the opportunity to work with Loi Heldt and David Meredith, as well as Don Hirst and the rest of the board has been fantastic. I have enjoyed almost all the aspects of the role, from program planning to communicating with guests, from writing press releases and various articles to future-casting sessions imagining and planning Amici's coming years and projects. I can honestly say that my favorite thing was something I get to continue doing: playing great music with good friends for all our amici on the other side of the stage.

Grace and I are already working side by side and I like hearing her ideas for Amici! These last months of our season have been cut short and we are all filled with worry and uncertainty due to the pandemic but Amici is actively planning for a great season next year to share with you.

You will start seeing Grace's new ideas and energy shaping Amici's concerts as well as our educational programming in the coming season and for many more to come. It is a marvelous job with so many interesting challenges and opportunities and I know Grace will be a brilliant Artistic Director.

Laurel Ross, Board Member, Former Teacher

I serve on Chamber Music Amici's board as the secretary and am a retired elementary music teacher. I was at Page Elementary in Springfield for 30 years.

Our first experience with Amici at Page was through their production of "The Emperor's New Clothes." We studied the tale, the moral, the newly composed music, ballet, choreography and concert etiquette prior to the performance. Amici provided us a notebook with excellent materials and the school librarian even included it in her lessons by comparing it with other fairy tales. The culminating performance at The Wildish was outstanding! The students enjoyed seeing all the pieces from their studies come together at a theater. They were completely engaged. Of course, the pre-teaching was important. But the quality of the final product—all the components together—was exquisite.

For every year after that big project, once a year, Amici would come to Page to perform movements from their concerts. Imagine the musicians these young students got to hear up close and ask questions. It was a thrill every year!

Next Generation

One year ago, when planning was under way for the current season, Jessica Lambert made the case for a concert featuring rising stars. The core musicians agreed. They picked two Romantic Era pieces that they themselves remember being in love with as youths—and then recruited six young musicians who could fit such a concert into their schedule for Sunday, March 8th, 2020.

How fitting that Pilar Bradshaw would be joining them! Dr. Bradshaw, having grown up in Eugene and herself having played violin in the Youth Symphony, was a founding member of Amici. She continues to be a strong supporter of young people in many settings. Her intermission pep talks to Eugene/Springfield Youth Orchestra students are legendary. And now, finding a little slice of time in her pediatric practice, she started preparing for this concert at the Wildish Theater as the seventh guest musician on the bill with Lillie Manis, Jessica Lambert, Steven Pologe and Sharon Schuman.

Weeks of practice at home were followed by a week of rehearsals together. A dress rehearsal in the Wildish the day before provided a chance to adjust to the wonderful acoustics of the performance space. Then: Dvořák and Brahms!

March 8: Dvořák's Piano Quintet No. 2 (top) and Brahms' String Sextet No. 1, (bottom)

At the close of the concert, Jessica addressed the audience. *"Thank you for joining us this evening for a concert very dear to our hearts! Our dear friend Pilar Bradshaw is one of our guests and we always love to have her back with us. We also have the pleasure of sharing the stage with six exceptional young musicians. I have a secret hope that, several years from now, some of these teenagers will come back to Eugene and continue our Amici concerts long past the day I hang up my bow!"*

Julia Daniels, viola; Sarah Rosier, cello; Avery Hsieh, violin; Katie Siegfried, viola; Adrian Hsieh, cello; Michael Gu, piano

Sarah Rosier

Well, it's hard to imagine just a couple weeks ago I was having the time of my life playing on stage with you guys, and now we're in quarantine. The crisis we are all in at the moment actually highlights how educational, nourishing, and exciting playing chamber music with Amici was! It was truly an experience that has impacted me deeply as a musician and encouraged me to work hard on the cello.

Avery Hsieh

Thank you to Amici for this experience! Amici allowed me to appreciate how rigorous and rewarding playing music with others can be. The work required of us was not only to prepare ourselves technically for our own parts, but to have our own opinions of each phrase and the piece as a whole. Similar to how the melodies in the Brahms weave through each other to form the piece, the six of us were able to weave our different ideas of the music together to form a unified performance.

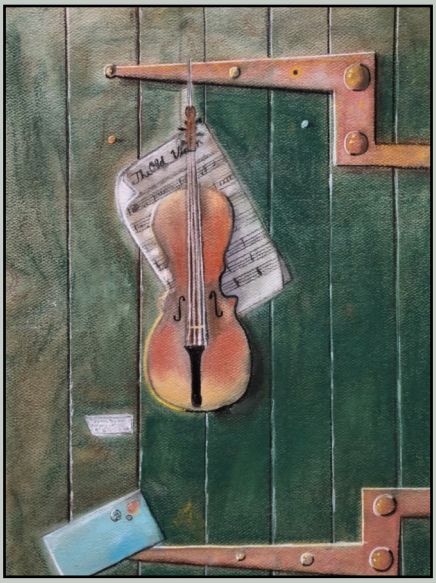
More from our guest musicians at www.chambermusicamici.org/blog

And the Winners Are…

In the 2020/2021 Season, watch for posters and programs bearing these five works of art recently chosen by an Amici jury! They are (on front page of newsletter, top to bottom): *Violin*, by Alina Raiskin; *Of One Voice*, by Kris Steward; *The Dawning*, by Chris Pontrelli; *Purple Cello*, by Irene Mcguire; and *Vibrations of Hope*, by LiDona Wagner.

These works, along with five other finalists, were on display at the Emerald Arts Center (EAC) on the evening of Springfield's Second Friday Art Walk in February. Based on that evening's voting, Chris Pontrelli's work was also awarded the People's Choice Award.

Youth string ensembles hired by Amici performed as Second Friday walkers made their way through the EAC. Also in the audience were Holly Spencer, executive director of Eugene/Springfield Youth Orchestras, and Lillie Manis, assistant director of the Community Music Institute. Each of them was there to accept a $1,000 grant toward student scholarships for their organizations that were made possible by a generous gift from Jim & Yvonne Wildish to Amici last season.



Alina Raiskin's *Violin,* winner of the youth category

Among the ten finalists on display at the EAC, Alina Raiskin's work was declared by the Amici jury to be the best by a youth entrant.

> Writes Alina, *"I became interested in art when I was 4 and I began taking art lessons at the Little Owl School, now known as the Multicultural Children's Art Museum and Center. Currently I take art lessons with Bert Kozlowski…..I love working with acrylics, pastels, and pencils……My favorite artists are Salvador Dali and Vincent Van Gogh. Lately, William Harnett has caught my attention. I love the amazing way he captures untraditional objects in his work and I liked taking on that challenge in mimicking his art style in The Old Violin, but with my own twist—I did it in pastel."*

People's Choice Award,
The Dawning, by Chris Pontrelli

David Meredith presenting scholarship funds to CMI (Lillie Manis, center) and ESYO (Holly Spencer).

Weiwei Zhang, violin, performing Concerto in G Minor, Allegro, by Seitz.

Amici Budget Growing

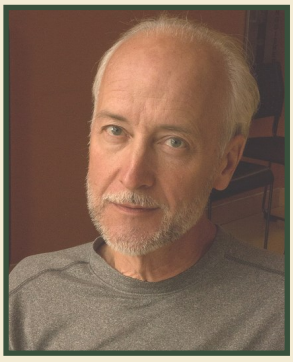
By David Meredith

Season after season, Amici finds additional ways to share its music. Beyond its concert hall appearances and repeat performances around town the Amici players—core and guest musicians alike—go to interact with students of all ages. In early seasons, we started holding conversational performances in classrooms at the elementary level. We later added workshops for young musicians. When stars like Guy Few come to town, we even have masterclasses at the university. Two years ago, we started visiting Head Start centers with our tot-size violins. Last year, we started sending musicians to coach school-age chamber ensembles and orchestras, including ESYO's Youth Symphony and the UO's Community Music Institute.

This growing variety of visits means our budget has gone up over the years (to say nothing of inflation). Thankfully, donations and ticket sales have kept pace. And our grant support stands to get a small boost as well. Oregon Arts Commission grants have been aiding us for years and, now that Amici's expenditures exceed $150,000 per year, we move into the larger of OAC's two operating grant programs. This April we submit our first proposal to OAC for this higher annual award! Thank you, patrons, for bringing us to this point.

Audience at an Amici Cascade Manor Concert

Orchestrated Transitions



"It has been a wonderful education in music," remarked David Meredith when asked to reflect on his time with Amici.

"Before I started as Amici's first Development Director in 2015, my experience with classical music was almost entirely orchestral—it all sprung from our younger son who took up the double-bass in 4th grade. My wife and I clocked hundreds of hours at performances of Junior Orchestra and Youth Symphony, and in following him to competitions and summer music camps.

"It was with Amici that I found a real window into that other world of small-group music. A window into what happens when a group is so small that you hear every musical voice."

David joined Amici the same year that Jessica Lambert was hired as Artistic Director, the two of them joining Executive Director Loi Heldt as staff members. Together, in the subsequent five years, they have worked with the board to boost the number of patrons to 1,200 and expand the annual revenue to $170,000. Those same years saw the recruitment of musicians Lillie Manis and Eunhye Grace Choi.

David and Jessica, having orchestrated orderly transitions for both positions, step down at the start of this summer. Jessica continues as a core musician. David and his wife Betsy travel in June to New York City for their son's wedding. There will be music!

Amici thanks you for your support!

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Dear Friends

In light of the current COVID-19 crisis, we have made the difficult decision to cancel our April 13 and June 8 concerts as well as education and community engagement activities we had planned. The health of everyone, our musicians, our staff members, as well as our wonderful patrons and audience members, is of paramount importance. Consequently, we think it is best that we take no chances. The decision to cancel our remaining season comes with heavy disappointment. We hope that you understand our intent is to practice all measures recommended by our health officials, including social distancing.

We are recasting our refund and ticket exchange policies in light of this unprecedented situation and will notify ticket-holders shortly. We appreciate your patience while we work through a solution. If you have any questions about your tickets please feel free to call the office. We would love to hear from you.

We do have some good news. You will still be able to attend the world premiere of Colin Pip Dixon's *The Rooster and the Fox* and the Sparkling Jewels performance, which will feature Victor Steinhardt's *Running* Blue. Both these concerts will be included in our 2020/2021 programming. Details will be coming as soon as we have them prepared.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your continued support and your understanding during these very difficult times. We look forward to getting back to concerts and seeing you soon. We send our best wishes for your safety and good health.

Amici thanks you for your support!

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Digital version of this newsletter at www.chambermusicamici.org

Next Generation photos and details inside

On Mar. 8th, guest musicians Pilar Bradshaw, Julia Daniels, Michael Gu, Adrian Hsieh, Avery Hsieh, Sarah Rosier and Katie Siegfried joined with Amici musicians to perform the Piano Quintet No. 2 in A Major by Dvorak, and the Sextet No. 1 in B-flat Major by Brahms.

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