

Classical music

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# Founder of White Rock Concerts passes torch to the Bergmanns

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WHITE ROCK/SOUTH SURREY — Classical music buffs on the peninsula have no doubt have heard of George Zukerman by now.

The founder of White Rock Concerts, a successful classical music series on the Semiahmoo Peninsula, has held the post as the organization's artistic director since its inception in 1956.

Zukerman is passing on his position to internationally-renowned pianist-duo Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann after 58 years of service to the subscription-based sold-out concert series.

At a media event on Sept. 26, Erika Bennedik, the president of White Rock Concerts, announced that its "membership can feel confidence in the future of our society."

In not too much haste to pass the torch, however, Zukerman has appointed the duo as associate



Erika Bennedik, new associate directors Marcel and Elizabeth Bergmann, and founder of White Rock Concerts George Zukerman gather in Bennedik's home music studio. (Photo: KRISTI ALEXANDRA)

directors as they make a two-year transition into the role. The Bergmanns will assume full responsibility for the society's artistic direction in the 2016-17 season.

"We wanted somebody who's got, preferably, some practical experience in performing because and we wanted somebody local, that seemed to be coming from the audience, too. Wanted somebody who could fit in very well. Those were the most important items."

Benedik said the decision to look for a

replacement was catalyzed by Zukerman's sudden illness this spring, which he has since recuperated from.

"I think what we're most excited about is that they are performing artists with great reputations, lots of experience," Bennedik said.

"They'll dazzle us with their playing and their choices, and we're already starting now to discuss the 16/17 (season). I will not be the one to make the decisions, but I have a few recommendations," Zukerman joked.

"Obviously he's

going to be a huge resource," Elizabeth confirmed. "I don't think it's a clear cut-off date per se."

Zukerman said one of his main accomplishments in the past few years is having an orchestra play for at least two shows per season, which, he attests, is more expensive than the big names they play behind.

White Rock Concerts' 59th season kicked off Sept. 26 with pianist John O'Connor at White Rock Baptist Church.

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