

arts & entertainment

...on the Semiahmoo Peninsula

Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann to assist series founder George Zukerman

New directors for White Rock Concerts

Alex Browne
Arts Reporter

White Rock Concerts, a cornerstone of cultural activity on the Semiahmoo Peninsula for close to 60 years, has named two new associate artistic directors to assist and eventually succeed series founder George Zukerman – and they're concert artists well known to local audiences.

The piano duo, wife-husband team of Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann, named to the roles last Friday by organization president Erika Bennedik, will assume full artistic

direction for the already sold-out 2016-17 season.

In the interim they will serve as associate directors, then co-directors, under the guidance of Zukerman, who has held the post since 1956.

Zukerman, an Order of Canada and Order of B.C. recipient, retired from his career as a world-renowned bassoon soloist in 2012, after close to 60 years of world-wide touring.

The Bergmanns, who have performed in many of the world's major concert halls over the last 20 years and have recorded for the Naxos and Brilliant Classics labels, are also co-directors of the Langley Community Music School. They have been South Surrey residents since 2011.

"We've been in the process of organizing this for a few years," said Bennedik, Zukerman's wife and a noted violinist and violin teacher.

"George kept threatening that one day I was going to retire, but for a while, nobody believed it."

Benedik said a bout of poor health Zukerman experienced in the spring of this year – he is now fully recovered – was "a scar that made immediate past-president Rick Gambrel's insistence that finding an associate artistic director to ensure smooth continuity for the series needed to be addressed."

She said the Bergmanns fit all the criteria advanced and were unanimously accepted.

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Erika Bennedik
president

'No one can replace' Zukerman as artistic director



Alex Browne photo

Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann, at piano, join White Rock Concerts founder George Zukerman and president Erika Bennedik

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by the board.

"We're very excited and very honoured to be asked," Elizabeth Bergmann said.

"No-one can replace George, and obviously, we're a two-headed associate artistic director, but we're used to working together."

Both said they were looking forward to working with and learning from Zukerman during the current season and 2015-16.

"It's wonderful – so much better than doing things abruptly," Marcel said.

"It's a great opportunity to do something like this well. What George has achieved is unique, and this assures the stability of the organization and the audience."

Zukerman said he remains keenly interested in the self-sustaining subscription

"You're not going to get rid of me just yet – I'll still be around," he quipped, while saying he felt the series would be in good hands in future with the Bergmanns.

As musicians themselves, he added, the Bergmanns understand the needs of both the audiences and the artists, and he noted that in the last few years they have also embraced his passion for bringing concerts to more remote, far-flung areas of Canada.

White Rock Concerts now commands a sold-out audience of 800, with a waiting list of some 300 names. Since 1956 it has presented close to 350 concerts, bringing Peninsula audiences such stellar performers as Ben Heppner, James Ehnes, Tafelmusik, The King's Singers, Angela Hewitt, Juillard Quartet, Louis Lortie, Octagon, Anton Kuerti, Russell Braun, and Isabel



Joanne Taylor
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Joanne Taylor
778.227.1443

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