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Oysterville Church and Black Oak Ensemble, a modern chamber music group, featuring Grammy-nominated violinist Desiree Ruhstrat, cellist David Cunliffe and viola player Aurelien Fort Pederzoli at 2:35 p.m. Sunday at the Eagle's Nest. Grgic will join them.

The two Eagles Nest events will feature a social hour at 6:35 p.m., featuring light appetizers, beverages and no-host wine bar. Cookies and gift bags will be available at the Oct. 12 matinee.

'Excited'

Ruhstrat, who teaches violin at Northwestern University near Chicago, is delighted to be returning. She and cellist Cunliffe performed last year with a group called Fandango.

"We are very excited to return to the Water Music Festival," she said. "We loved the small intimate venue and the wonderful warm response from the audience."

But there is more to attract them.

"The beauty, and to be in such an unspoiled part of the country, was just such a treat for us — and then to couple that with music-making," Ruhstrat added.

For Cunliffe, a Briton who was working toward his U.S. citizenship, there was a memorable bonus last year. "A most unbelievable sight was to look up on a pole and see a bald eagle for the first time in his life," Ruhstrat recalled.

Songbook

Diane Marshall, festival organizer, said two concerts feature energetic younger performers. "This is not your normal chamber trio that sits on three chairs and plays Bach," she said. "It is a very exciting group of musicians that wow the crowd."

She added that veteran entertainer, Mitchell, who teaches music in Portland, is the long-time traveling pianist for Diana Ross. "He has worked with the best of them," Marshall said. With guest vocalist Greta Matassa, Mitchell will highlight the pop, jazz and Broadway repertoire celebrating the mid-20th century.

"I am so excited about him performing from 'the Great American Songbook,' because those tunes will be familiar to everybody," Marshall added.

Founding

The Water Music Festival began in 1985 when Ocean Beach Schools music teacher Dennis Crabb and his wife, Kathie, recruited like-minded music fans to seek support for a concert series.

To test support for the idea, Pat Thomas performed a February harpsichord recital on Handel's 200th birthdate, coincidentally her



Guitarist Mak Grgic from Slovenia plays a repertoire from renaissance to flamenco, ethnic to cinema classics. The former teenage karate champion has toured with k.d. lang and performed in China, Japan and his native Balkans.

own birthday. Some 50 people attended.

She served as president for the first two years before passing the baton to restaurant owner Ann Kischner, who always gave her "tremendous support," she said.

"I'm thrilled the organization is still turning out music after all this time," Thomas added.

Early shows were staged at the Oysterville Church, Odd Fellows Hall in Ilwaco, Sou'wester Lodge and later Hilltop Auditorium.

"From the start, it was my intention to keep us functioning in the black by creating a self-sustaining organization supported by the community," Thomas said. "It's the reason why we didn't go for outside grants in the early years — we wanted to establish that we could first raise the funds locally, even if most people hadn't even heard of chamber music, or if they had, thought they didn't like it."

More added

Her artist husband Noel Thomas of Astoria designed the group's distinctive logo featuring a wave in a French horn. Other key players included Ann Saari of Ilwaco, the Welshes and the Sayces, with valuable printing and legal work performed by the Murfins and Joel Penoyar.

As years have passed, the group has



George Mitchell, a pianist and teacher from Portland, will entertain with his quintet and guest vocalist Greta Matassa. Mitchell is the touring pianist for Diana Ross.

expanded its musical offerings beyond the initial concept, which took the name from Handel's 1717 classic while making fun of the Peninsula's moist climate. It was intentionally scheduled after the busy summer season.

As well as the fall weekend, the board has added the Music in the Gardens event in July, Jazz and Oysters in August, started by long-time supporters Carlos and Sharon Welsh, plus a Christmas concert.

Money raised from the concerts has benefited the Ocean Beach and Naselle-Grays River school district music programs; both receive substantial donations each year.

When inviting former board members to be honored this year, Marshall received identical reactions.

"They are so thrilled what was started in 1985 continues to be successful — and that it's still going on," she said.



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