

The Chamber Music Residency Program at Camphill Village Kimberton Hills

Program Description

Background

The primary goal of this program is to introduce young musicians to the values of community and service, while also allowing them an immersive chamber music experience. The years of pandemic have not only shown the fragility of the classical music enterprise; they have also awakened in many young musicians questions about the meaning and purpose of their art, and an eagerness to use their talents to improve the conditions of those around them. We believe that even a few days' immersive experience in an intentional life-sharing community that includes persons with disabilities can be life-changing, as well as bringing joy to that community. By including the broader Chester County area in this process, we aim to be an inspiration and model for civic health and regeneration.

Overview

At intervals throughout the year, groups of young musicians would come to Camphill Village Kimberton Hills (CVKH) for periods ranging from 4 to 7 days to rehearse and perform chamber music. The groups would be selected and in some cases coached or joined by cellist Robert Martin, member of the CVKH community and former director of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. The young musicians would have some of their meals with CVKH households, volunteer for one or two workshops, and attend an orientation session on the history and philosophy of the Camphill movement, in addition to presenting a public concert.

What is Camphill Village Kimberton Hills?

“Depending on how and why you approach Camphill Village Kimberton Hills, you might think of it first as a biodynamic farming and gardening training center, or as an example of intentional community living, as a residence including people with “developmental” or “cognitive” disabilities, a local organic food producer, or as a workshop and conference site. Perhaps you would see it as an ideal place to help students of varying ages integrate ideas about sustainability, social renewal, local sustainable agriculture, healthy lifestyles, watershed management, sustainable architecture, and entrepreneurial partnerships. You might see it as a studio for artists, weavers, potters and mosaic art, or an ideal place to volunteer for a day, a year or a lifetime.

“Camphill Village Kimberton Hills is situated on 432 acres of Chester County farm and forest land, outside of Philadelphia. As an intentional community, it is home to more than 100 people, including adults with disabilities, long-term volunteers and their children, and one to three-year service volunteers and apprentices. In Kimberton Hills those with and without so-called disabilities can experience meaningful social and cultural interactions and vocational opportunities, as well as a sense of place in nature and within the flow of the seasons. It is a place of celebration, learning and creating.”¹

Building on a tradition of music at CVKH

Chamber music concerts in the acoustically superb Rose Hall at CVKH² would mark a continuation of a tradition that began even before its founding in 1972. Music was understood as important from the earliest days of the first Camphill communities in Scotland. Within the first decade of CVKH the distinguished architect and author, Joan DeRis Allen, then living at CVKH, designed Rose Hall, a space for gatherings and performances, comfortably seating 200. Described as a space “that makes one feel human”, Rose Hall is built on a star-shaped footprint; the absence of parallel walls is particularly conducive to its warm sound.

Over the years the community brought a steady flow of wonderful music to Rose Hall, ranging from annual series arranged by Astral Artists in Philadelphia to music produced by its own co-worker, the composer Ruth Liberatore, for weddings, funerals, birthdays, christenings - whatever CVKH needed! The Kimberton Arts Alliance brought chamber music to Rose Hall three or four times each year. Students from the Curtis Institute, the Mongolian throat-singers “Alash”, folk music from the Casa de Venezuela Ensemble, and even a home-grown performance of the Mozart Requiem with piano accompaniment came to Rose Hall. That these performances had deep roots in the community is particularly well illustrated by the concerts presented at various times by the three children of long-time co-workers Diedra Heitzman and Michael Babitch: vocal concerts by Tascha, jazz performances by Dylan, and folk music with her group founded at Macalester College by Lia. By conservative estimate, 100,000 people have listened to music in Rose Hall since it opened its doors. It has drawn its audiences from all segments of the local community and beyond.

As CVKH emerges, along with the rest of the world, from COVID, the resumption of concert life is facilitated by the arrival of two new members of the community, Katherine Gould-Martin and me, Robert Martin. From 2005 to 2019 I served as Director of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. That, and my years as a professional cellist and member of the Sequoia String Quartet, gives me a range of musical contacts that will help me identify brilliant young musicians to participate in our Chamber Music Residency Program. I will be particularly happy to play a role in reviving the rich musical tradition of CVKH.

¹ Sign near the entrance to the Café at CVKH, written by Diedra Heitzman.

² As reported on April 2, 2014, “Rose Hall, part of Camphill Village Kimberton Hills, was voted the “Best Live Music Venue” in Chester County by readers of the Philadelphia Inquirer. Its excellent acoustics and intimate feeling make it an amazing place to experience live music.”

In keeping with its tradition, the Rose Hall concerts will be a gathering place for the broader community as well as for CVKH itself, reaching out to blue-collar Chester County along with the wealthy estate owners of the region.

Introducing young musicians to the values of community and service

Young musicians studying in conservatories tend to be disciplined and idealistic. If they weren't disciplined they probably wouldn't have reached the high performance level required for admission. If they weren't idealistic they would probably have chosen a more lucrative career path. For some, the discipline was imposed externally by parents and teachers. These young people are particularly prone to question their path as they get older, but even those animated by their own deep love of music are often thirsty for a context of meaningfulness for their art.

There are already programs in many conservatories that help students find opportunities for external involvement³, but there seem to be very few music programs, if any, that belong to special needs communities themselves. That is what we are attempting to create at Camphill Village Kimberton Hills. By combining an intense rehearsal period with experiential learning about the goals and practices of the Camphill movement, our program has the potential to affect the lives of young musicians positively, for themselves and for society.

Description of the Program

Five times each year, groups of young musicians will come to CVKH for periods ranging from 4 to 7 days for rehearsals, some open, followed by at least one public performance. The musicians will join CVKH houses for some of their meals, volunteer for one or two workshops, and attend an orientation session on the history and practices of the Camphill movement, in addition to presenting a public concert. The classical music tradition will be richly represented, with string quartets, piano trios, and various mixed ensembles; however, jazz, folk music and other kinds of music-making will also be represented. Particularly through the inclusion of these other kinds of music-making will the concert series be able to attract a broader audience than usually found at chamber music concerts.

The residency musicians will be mostly students from the Bard Conservatory, Curtis, the Temple University School of Music, Juilliard, Mannes, and the Manhattan School of Music as well as

³ A highlight of the Bard Conservatory experience, according to many of its graduates, is the annual performance at Eastern Correction Facility, a maximum-security prison in Napanoch, New York, by the Bard Conservatory Orchestra. Over the years, a highlight of Bard's chamber music program has been performances at Camphill Copake and Camphill Ghent. At the Curtis Institute, courses offered by Mary Javian, Chair of Career Studies, have had outstanding success in involving students in community initiatives. The celebrated *Live Music Now*, founded by Yehudi Menuhin in 1977 in the United Kingdom and now spread to many countries, notably Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, "brings music to those with reduced access to live music, in care homes, schools, hospitals, hospices and community settings."

friends and contacts of current CVKH volunteers. For each of the residency sessions a coach will come for a day to work with the ensemble in an open rehearsal; the coach – usually a member of the faculty of one of the schools from which the students are drawn - will be chosen with special attention to the needs (including repertoire) of the group. The presence of the coaches will add to the incentive of the students to participate in the residency program. The coaches will receive a modest fee. All costs of the students will be met.

Here is a sample season calendar:

1. Oct – 4 days
2. Nov – 5 days (Thanksgiving Wed. through Sunday, especially good for international students)
3. March – 7 days (spring break)
4. April – 4 days
5. May – 7 days (end of music school year)

How will the residency ensembles be chosen?

We will advertise the Residency Program on the CVKH website and send notices to on-line platforms at Chamber Music America and conservatory electronic bulletin boards. We will also design and print a brochure announcing the program and make these available where young musicians gather. In addition, Robert Martin will spread the word through his personal network, and seek help from those with connections in the worlds of jazz, folk and other traditions. Ensembles will be asked to send letters of interest providing background information on their members, reasons for interest in the program, and suggestions of coaches they would like to work with. Robert Martin will follow up with the help of a small committee of CVKH co-workers and others, collecting further information as needed and making decisions as to whom to invite. Criteria for selection include level of musical talent, interest in learning, general motivation, and evidence of responsibility. The process will be “rolling” - that is, applications can be considered at any time and a schedule of residencies will be constructed in an ongoing fashion.

How will the concerts be publicized?

We will announce the concerts and advertise widely in the Phoenixville and Kimberton area and throughout Chester County, making use of as many local organizations’ websites as possible, and various social media. We anticipate that the Kimberton Arts Alliance can be especially helpful. This is particularly important since, as mentioned above, we hope to attract a broad cross-section of the area’s residents. Especially in these days of polarized politics, a concert of wonderful music can be a much-needed chance to put aside the things that divide us!

What kind of preparation and follow-up will there be?

With the help of Mary Javian, Program Advisor, we will offer a 90-minute orientation for each ensemble before it arrives at CVKH, so the young musicians will know what will be asked of them and what they may expect from the experience. We will also offer optional post-Residency consultations for students who want to learn about further possibilities for community engagement. Mary Javian is Chair of Career Studies at the Curtis Institute of Music, and Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of Project 440, a Philadelphia non-profit that “helps young people use their interest in music to forge new pathways for themselves and ignite change in their communities.”

Benefits of the Chamber Music Residency Program

For CVKH: The CVKH 2019-2024 Strategic Plan calls for effective outreach “through biodynamic agriculture, handcrafts, and other ecological, social, cultural and educational endeavors, and offers a model for renewal.” The program proposed here is a form of cultural outreach through chamber music. Besides providing music of the highest level to the CVKH community, the residency program would inform and inspire young musicians and their mentors concerning the values and practices of CVKH. Besides giving their music to the community, the residency musicians would take with them, when they leave, memories and impressions and knowledge with which to spread the word to people who may never have heard of Camphill.

As explained above, the Chamber Music Residency Program will revive a strong tradition of music making at CVKH.

For the musicians who participate, the Chamber Music Residency Program will provide an intense period of rehearsal followed by a unique performance experience in a warm and welcoming setting. It is quite rare for young musicians to have the chance to perform in a beautiful setting for a sizable and deeply appreciative audience. During the days leading to the public concert the young musicians will experience first-hand the workings of an intentional community founded on principles of respect for individuals of varying abilities and disabilities. There is a special connection – a kind of alchemy – that occurs naturally between an artist and persons with special needs. It is important and meaningful for young musicians to realize that music can make a difference in people’s lives.

By staying for more than the customary brief outreach event, the ensembles participating in our program will have the chance to develop lasting connections. We believe the Chamber Music Residency Program at CVKH can serve as a model for enriching communities with chamber music.

For the community, the Rose Hall concerts constitute an important service, bringing together members of the broader community to enjoy music together. We will work with the Phoenixville Public Schools to encourage attendance by young people and to promote ancillary opportunities for the resident ensembles to interact with the music programs in the schools.

Partnership with the Kimberton Arts Alliance

“The Kimberton Arts Alliance was formed to take over the burgeoning arts effort started by the Kimberton Village Business Association. KVBA started the arts effort 5 years ago (with Theatre in the Park), with a view to promoting cultural tourism as one part of its mission to promote the interests of its member businesses through the sustainable revitalization of Kimberton Village.

“By contrast to KVBA, KA2 was formed with an exclusive arts focus-to promote the performing and visual arts, to host professional and community performing and visual arts events, to develop performing and visual arts venues and to provide arts education.

“KA2 intends to offer arts education in the planned Kimberton Performing and Visual Arts Center across a wide array of the performing, visual and material culture arts to children, adults, seniors and challenged populations. Special emphasis will be made on accommodating the latter two groups as appropriate to the area concentration of special schools and intentional communities including the Camphill Organizations and the area concentration of senior housing and the growing need to accommodate the aging population demographic.”⁴

We envision significant collaboration with the Kimberton Arts Alliance. For example, the website of the K2A would promote the public events of the Chamber Music Residency Program at CVKH. Whenever possible, special events in various locations would be offered to K2A season subscribers, featuring chamber ensembles from the Chamber Music Residency Program at CVKH.

In time, the Program can become self-sustaining

Arts programs of this nature are rarely self-sustaining, and we recognize that outside financial support will be necessary for our initial years. However, we have a strategy for becoming sustainable, consisting of two main parts: a Friends group and sponsored concerts. To develop the Friends of the CVKH Chamber Music Residency Program, we will start by keeping a list of attendees for each concert through a Guest Book and we will ask for voluntary donations at the end of each concert. When the time is right, perhaps at the last concert of the season, we will invite audience members to become Friends by contributing – whatever they can afford - toward the next season. Friends will be acknowledged at the Chamber Music Residency Website website.

⁴ Excerpted from the Kimberton Arts Alliance website <https://www.kimbertonartsalliance.org/about-the-alliance.html>