

“Music, food, love ... it’s all there!”: An Interview with “If Music Be the Food...” founder Carol Rodland

www.esm.rochester.edu/blog/2016/10/music-food-love-its-all-there-an-interview-with-if-music-be-the-food-founder-carol-rodland/

October 19, 2016

IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD...
Announcing our eighth season of benefit concerts
for Rochester's Foodlink

Works by Pierné, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky

Grace Wong harp
Bonita Boyd flute
Renée Jolles violin
Carol Rodland viola
Mihai Tetel cello

The Amenda String Quartet
Kimberly Merrill soprano
Isaac Assor Baritone
Jeong-Eun Lee piano

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23 - 7:30 PM
ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
25 WESTMINSTER ROAD

ADMISSION
Non-perishable food items or
monetary donations to Foodlink


www.ifmusicbethethefood.com
f If Music Be The Food

Poster for this weekend's "If Music Be the Food..." concert. Note change in program (see below for updated information).

By Erik Elmgren

On Sunday, October 23, local nonprofit “If Music Be the Food...” will present a concert at 7:30 p.m. in St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. This concert brings Eastman and other local musicians together in a benefit performance for Foodlink, an organization which serves the greater Rochester area by providing food and services to those facing food insecurity. The concert is not ticketed, but audience members are instead asked to bring monetary or food donations. For a closer look at how this unique concert came to be, I spoke with the founder of “If Music Be the Food...”, Eastman School of Music Professor of Viola Carol Rodland.

Can you tell us a little bit about what inspired you to create “If Music Be the Food...”?

I have been a supporter of food banks since my childhood, when I was inspired by a dear family friend who ran her local food bank in Pennsylvania. When I came to Rochester in 2008, I was truly horrified to learn that 50% of the children in my new city were living in poverty. I wanted to do something to help besides just sending in a check, so I decided to create a model for a concert series which combines three of my passions: raising awareness and support for the hungry, sharing great music to nourish the souls of all in the community, and teaching our Eastman students about the importance of community service via their art.

We had our first concert in November 2009 and have had three concerts annually in Rochester ever since. The idea has really caught on, and if you visit our web page and Facebook page, you will see that other wonderful musicians have created concert series based on this model in their own communities. Some of them use the title “If Music Be the Food...” and some of them are operating under my friend Kim Kashkashian’s Boston-based “Music for Food”, which was also inspired by our series here in Rochester.

That’s great! Could you tell us a little bit about the organization you are partnered with for these concerts: Foodlink?

Foodlink is a fantastic organization. They are the Feeding America Food Hub for our region of Western New York and they have myriad programs with a wide and uniquely effective reach in our community. One of my favorite programs is their “Backpack Program”, which provides food for needy children on the weekends, when they do not have access to their school meal programs.

How do you choose what music is programmed for a “If Music Be the Food...” concert?

I consider the programming for IMBTF to be somewhat miraculous. The “rules” are that people should only participate if it brings them joy, and so I encourage the musicians to make suggestions of pieces they are itching to play, and I do my best to program them based on the availability of the musicians. The result is often a joyful potpourri/variety show! Occasionally, I choose a theme, if there is a “holiday” to celebrate, such as a specific composer’s birthday (we have celebrated Strauss and Mozart, for example), or an instrument (such as the organ — as when St Paul’s Episcopal Church, where we do two of our three annual concerts, had completed a renovation of their mighty Skinner and we felt it warranted a celebration concert!).

Since we are now in our eighth season of concerts, I am frequently fielding requests from colleagues a year ahead of time. I also put out a “call” at the end of the season for the next season’s concerts, to see who might be interested in participating, and then I partner people if there are not specific requests. I like to be sure we have Eastman faculty and students, members of the RPO, other local musicians, as well as international guests who are coming through town performing on the concerts. It is truly a community effort and results in performances of the highest caliber.

What music will you be performing at the October 23 concert?

We will open with Gabriel Pierre’s *Variations libres et Finale*, Opus 51, featuring the Rochester Philharmonic’s principal harpist Grace Wong, special guest artist Mihai Tetel, cello, of the Hartt School, and Eastman professors Bonita Boyd, flute, Renée Jolles, violin, and yours truly on viola.

For the second “act” on the program, Eastman Professor of Voice Katherine Ciesinski has curated a delightful set of

vocal works entitled “Flown the Coop”. These works of an ornithological bent by Mozart, Guion, Offenbach, and Ravel will be sung by Eastman students Jessica Newman, Daniela Camilleri, Julia Fedor, and Isaac Assor. These wonderful young singers will be assisted by collaborative pianists Jeong-Eun Lee, Songyuan Tang, Wanyi Wang, and Sasha Rasmussen.

The program will end with Beethoven’s beloved Quartet No. 10 in E-flat Major, the “Harp”, performed by Rochester’s own Amenda Quartet: violinists David Brickman and Patricia Sunwoo, violist Melissa Matson, and cellist Mimi Hwang.

Why do you think music is such an effective way of raising donations to fight food insecurity?

“Nourishment” is a universal need. Our bodies need it in the form of food and our souls need it in the form of music. “If Music Be the Food...” strives to address both of those needs and does so, I think, in a unique and beautiful way. The rest of the Shakespeare quote is of course “if music be the food of love, play on!”. It felt like the perfect title for a series with this mission. Food, music, love...it’s all there!



Carol Rodland, Professor of Viola, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.
Photo by University of Rochester, Brandon Vick

It’s clear that this program has really found a place in the Rochester community and serves a great need. What sort of vision do you have for IMBTF going forward?

I love that eight years into this, colleagues and former students are taking the idea to their own communities and finding ways to help and share that fit their environments, wherever they may be. It is evolving in even greater ways than I could have imagined with my little Rochester-based idea, and I am excited to see what happens next!

Details for the first concert of IMBTF’s eighth season are listed below. Please visit their website and Facebook as well for more information on how to get involved!

Sunday, October 23, 2016 – 7:30 p.m.
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
25 Westminster Road, Rochester, NY

<http://www.ifmusicbethethefood.com>