

# Bryant: 'Potluck' concerts help hungry

By Erica Bryant. From the Democrat & Chronicle, October 16, 2015 ([www.democratandchronicle.com](http://www.democratandchronicle.com))



A musical potluck of sorts is planned for Sunday evening at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Performers from the Eastman School of Music and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra will offer up a sonata, some arias and a piano quartet of their liking. The audience will come bearing cans of beans, boxes of spaghetti and other nonperishable foods.

This event kicks off the 2015-16 season of "If Music Be The Food...", a charitable concert series that collects donations for Foodlink. The model — bring a can of food as your ticket — was launched by Carol Rodland, Eastman School of Music viola professor, in 2009 and is spreading around the country.

Last year, the concert series collected 900 pounds of food and \$3,000 in donations for Foodlink. Supporters include local music lovers and Eastman students like Nicholas Purdys, who cashed in all the credit left on his campus food plan at the end of the spring semester and filled an entire car with non-perishables to donate.

To create the concerts, Rodland puts out a call for volunteers. Eastman students and faculty, RPO musicians and other professional and international performers offer to prepare different pieces of their choosing, and Rodland arranges them into programs.

Sunday's concert will commence with Jean-Marie Leclair's Sonata for Two Violins, performed by Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra violinists Heidi Brodwin and Lara Sipols. Eastman School of Music professor of voice Katherine Ciesinski and Eastman voice students will perform a series of French opera arias with obbligato instruments. Rodland and fellow Eastman faculty members Mikhail Kopelman, Steven Doane and Anna Gourfinkel will conclude the concert with Antonin Dvořák's Piano Quartet in E-flat, which Rodland describes as a "wonderful, joyous romantic piece of music."

The concerts are a treat for the performers, who get to choose whatever piece they like, and for music lovers, able to afford a concert ticket but have one or two cans of food they can share.



Carol Rodland, University of Rochester Eastman School of Music Professor of Viola.

(Photo: J. Adam Fenster/University of Rochester)

"Music is such a powerful tool for hearing and sharing and bringing beauty into people's lives," Rodland said. "It raises all of our vibrations, really."

Rodland's desire to help the hungry was instilled by the wife of her mother's organ teacher. She was like a second grandmother and would take Rodland along to volunteer at food cupboards. Rodland lived in many places before arriving in Rochester and would always seek out the local food bank when she wanted to get involved in her new community.

"If Music Be The Food..." combined Rodland's desire to start a chamber music series and to teach students about service to their community. The title comes from the opening lines of Shakespeare's play Twelfth Night: "If music be the food of love, play on."

Musician friends of Rodland have started "If Music Be The Food..." concert series in Boston and Tampa. Just this week, a musician in Baltimore contacted her about starting an affiliate concert series in that city.

Rodland's former viola student Candy Amato took the idea along with her to Tucson, where she now plays with the Tucson Symphony Orchestra. Amato's "If Music Be The Food..." series started with a concert on Sept. 26 that benefited the Interfaith Community Services Food Bank in Tucson.

"We can use our art to make a change in the community," Amato said. "That's a really powerful feeling."

Before Sunday's concert at St. Paul's Church, a representative from Foodlink will speak briefly about efforts to feed the hungry in Rochester, a city in which one of two children is living in poverty. Rodland finds that statistic appalling and hopes to raise people's awareness and desire to act.

The concert starts at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 25 Westminster Road. Other concerts in the series are scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 24, at Third Presbyterian Church, 4 Meigs St., and 7:30 p.m. Monday, May 2, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. For more information, go to [www.ifmusicbethethefood.com](http://www.ifmusicbethethefood.com) or find "If Music Be the Food..." on Facebook.

There are no tickets, but attendees are asked to bring a food item or a monetary donation to Foodlink.

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