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CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL BEGINS SEASON WITH REQUESTS

The Chamber Music Festival of Saugatuck will launch its 2009 season on July 9th and 10th with a concert titled “Any Requests?”. “The musicians in this festival are never shy about making suggestions of what works to include in the program”, says Andrew Le, Artistic Director of the festival along with Jennifer Walvoord. “And neither is the audience”, he adds with a smile. “We want to open the season with a concert that focuses on some of those special requests.”

This concert will be Le and Walvoord’s first appearance since assuming the role of Artistic Directors of the festival. Serving in that position makes the husband and wife team something of ‘special requests’ themselves because outgoing Artistic Director, Joan Conway, hand-selected them as her replacement in the role. Le, piano, and Walvoord, violin, are already well known to area audiences regularly performing together locally and nationally. Le is the Keyboard Area Head of Hope College's music department, where he teaches applied piano, keyboard skills, piano literature and chamber music. He was the first-prize winner of the 2004 Hilton Head International Piano Competition, and gave his Carnegie Hall debut in the same year to critical acclaim. He holds Bachelors and Masters degrees from The University of Michigan and earned his Doctor of Music Arts degree from the Juilliard School. Walvoord holds the position of concertmaster with the West Michigan Symphony (formerly known as the West Shore Symphony Orchestra), is a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony and is on the violin faculty of Calvin College. In 2007, Jennifer’s piano quintet performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. as part of the Millenium Stage Concert Series. She earned her Bachelors from Hope College and her Masters degrees in violin performance and chamber music as well as her DMA at the University of Michigan.

The concert will celebrate the transition of artistic leadership with a Felix Mendelssohn composition “*Allegro Brillant for Piano 4 hands in A Major, Op. 92*”. The four hands performing this piece will be those of Conway and Le at the piano. “Joan enjoys performing four hand works, as



do I”, says Le. “We really like the idea of sitting down at the piano together to kick off the new season and the future of the festival.” Another piece performed by Conway, and at her request, will be “*Clarinet Trio in A Minor, Op. 114*” by Johannes Brahms. A regular CMFS concert goer is credited with suggesting “*Contrasts*” by Béla Bartók. Rounding out the program is Ralph Vaughan Williams “*Quintet in D Major for Clarinet, Horn, Violin, Cello, and Piano*”, a favorite of frequent festival performer Paul Austin.

Le and Walvoord also made some special requests, asking several of the festival’s favorite performers to share the stage with them in their artistic directorship debut. Conway, piano, is a highly regarded soloist, chamber musician, collaborative pianist, two-piano and piano four-hand performer. Judith Vander Weg, cello, is principal cellist of the Flint Symphony Orchestra, has appeared at the festival for the past eleven seasons and is its Associate Artistic Director. Bradley Wong, clarinet, is a member of the new music group Opus 21, winner of the 2006 Chamber Music America/ASCAP Adventurous Programming Award and Professor of Clarinet at Western Michigan University. Paul Austin, horn, is a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony and also performs with the Chicago Chamber Orchestra.

The “Any Requests?” concert is scheduled for Thursday, July 9th and Friday, July 10th at 8:00 p.m. at the Saugatuck Woman’s Club, corner of Butler and Hoffman. A “meet the artists” reception will follow each performance. Tickets are \$18 (\$9 for students). Tickets for the Friday performance can be reserved by calling 269-857-1424. Advance ticket sales for the Thursday concert are closed but standby seating may be available at the door. Visit www.saugatuckmusic.org for further information.

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