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THE MERLING TRIO RETURNS TO CHAMBER FESTIVAL

The fourth week of concerts in the Chamber Music Festival of Saugatuck will see the return of The Merling Trio to the festival stage. Immensely popular with festival audiences, the group will be performing on July 30th and 31st. “We are delighted to be invited back to the Festival”, says Susan Wiersma Uchimura, piano, and spokesperson for The Merling Trio which also includes Bruce Uchimura, cello and Renata Artman Knific, violin. “We are looking forward to seeing old friends, as well as playing for new ones.” Two old friends especially happy to see them return are Andrew Le and Jennifer Walvoord, who are in their first season as Artistic Directors of the festival. “Back in high school, my piano trio was once coached by Bruce”, says Le, “and Susan has frequently judged me in various piano competitions”.

The Merling Trio has performed recitals throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. The trio made its New York debut at Carnegie Hall in 1993, and was named a finalist for the Naumburg Foundation Chamber Music Award in 1994. They returned to Carnegie Hall in 1998 to perform, to a sold-out audience, a new work by Terry Winter-Owens, one of several contemporary composers who have written works for the Trio. The Merling Trio has released a number of critically acclaimed recordings and their works have been widely broadcast on television and radio. In residence at the School of Music at Western Michigan University, members of the trio are also faculty members at the Schlern International Music Festival and the ENCORE School for Strings. Renowned educators, their students hold positions in major orchestras and chamber ensembles throughout the world.

For these concerts they have chosen works that are favorites in their repertoire. *Piano Trio in A-flat Major, Hob. XV:14*, by Joseph Haydn is one they describe as “a perfect opener for the concert”, showcasing “Haydn's typical spark, virtuosity, and sense of humor”. The second piece, C. Curtis-Smith's *Second Piano Trio* (“*The Secret Heart of Sound*”), is a work the Trio originally



commissioned for their Carnegie Hall debut. “Curtis considered this piece to be virtually unplayable in terms of difficulty, and we are one of the few groups which have been able to add it to our repertoire”, says Uchimura. “Although tremendously difficult to play, it is not difficult to listen to,” she promises. The concert will close with *Piano Trio in E Minor, Op. 67* by Dmitri Shostakovich which the Trio recently recorded for release on their newest CD, “Postcards in e”. Uchimura notes “This is one of Shostakovich's most well-known works, and audiences respond to the strong emotional content as well as the message of hope it contains”.

The Merling Trio concert is scheduled for Thursday, July 30th and Friday, July 31st 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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