

Hudson—Catskill Newspapers'
weekly entertainment guide

Friday, January 28 through Thursday, February 3

On **The Scene**

'Take a Seat'
in Columbia Festival
Orchestra's Master Class

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Photo by David Lee

*World-renowned pianist, Joshua Rifkin conducts
a special class for Columbia Festival Orchestra.*

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: *Rifkin conducts piano master class for Columbia Festival Orchestra*

By Karen Bullot

This past Saturday, Hudson Opera House played host to an accomplished group of piano students who played in a special piano master class. Presented by Columbia Festival Orchestra (CFO) as part of its “Take a Seat in the Orchestra” program, internationally renowned pianist Joshua Rifkin spent nearly three hours working with and coaching eight serious-minded student pianists. Their repertoire ranged from Bach to Debussy to contemporary Beatles arrangements.

Students were nominated to participate by four Columbia County piano teachers including Chris Lastovicka and Delana Thomsen from Claverack, Uel Wade from Chatham, and Karen Bullot from Spencertown. “I’m impressed with the students’ levels of musicianship and responsive nature as they worked in detail on their pieces with me,” says Rifkin, who also appreciated the audi-

ence’s patience as he advised on sometimes small, but important phrases of the music performed.

Created by artistic director Gwen Gould, “Take a Seat in the Orchestra” is a unique mentoring program for serious-minded students providing opportunities for them to work and play music with professional musicians affiliated with the CFO.

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— Hannah Liscomb
Piano Student

Hannah Liscomb, one participant who played a Bach Invention, took copious notes and described how she revised and improved her piece based on Rifkin’s input. “You have to try different techniques, feel the music, experiment with the tempo and volume, and sing and conduct the melodies”, reports Hannah.

Indeed there may not be a better coach on “conducting the melodies” than Joshua Rifkin as he is world famous as both pianist and conductor. His three Nonesuch recordings of Scott Joplin in the early 1970’s ignited a national passion for ragtime jazz while his book on interpreting JS Bach is highly regarded. For nearly forty years, he has conducted major orchestras and ensembles from Australia to Israel in a wide range of music.

The CFO was able to offer the piano master class with Rifkin as he was in Hudson for the weekend performing a special concert for the CFO. “I’m delighted to present such exceptional talent to our community through our concerts and interactive student programs” says Gwen Gould, adding that “I’m pleased Joshua could join us in Columbia County amidst his demanding international schedule.”

The CFO is presenting a monthly series of intimate concerts called ClaverackLanding featuring CFO professional



Ivy Liscomb polishes a syncopated rhythm in her interpretation of *Let it Be*.



Masterful pianist Joshua Rifkin shared stylistic insights and encouraged students to experiment with music — “Do something you might like instead of what your teacher likes... but always have a good explanation why.”

Left, Julia Doyle considers the challenges of Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue in G Minor*.



Above, accolades for Max Lagonia’s performance of *Imagine*.

At left, CFO artistic director Gwen Gould introduces Joshua Rifkin. Participants in Saturday’s program included: Julia Doyle, Ivy Liscomb, Max Lagonia, Nora Maetzener, Hannah Liscomb, Christopher Howard, Lilyana Grantcharova and Annabelle Johnston.

musicians from the tri-state area, and award-winning guest ensembles and soloists. While these talented musicians are in our area to perform, the CFO seeks interesting ways for serious-minded students to interact and learn one-on-one with them.

Gould created the "Take a Seat in the Orchestra" program in 2008 in conjunction with the CFO's Classical Road Trip concert at PS21. Eighteen students worked with the Orchestra's musicians over a 2-day period culminating in the world premiere performance of David Grunberg's "Overture to a New Theatre". There have been a variety of ongoing programs with highlights including an all-day strings residency for the Chatham High School Orchestra, and a flute workshop with 17 Columbia County students performing with Flute Force, a brilliant flute quartet from New York City.

The CFO looks forward to two exciting programs this spring in Hudson. On April 1, CFO's ClaverackLanding presents Ljova and the Kontraband. Hailed by Billboard Magazine as "one of NY's fastest-rising instrumentalists and

composers," Lev (Ljova) Zhurbin is a remarkable violist who performs in diverse groups such as his own, other string quartets, jazz combos and Gypsy bands.

Inspired by his collaborations with Yo-Yo Ma and rapper Jay-Z, Ljova and highly-acclaimed colleagues will coach and play with serious-minded string and banjo students. On May 1, Tapestry, an award-winning a cappella ensemble from Boston joins Claverack-Landing. Vocal students and community choral enthusiasts will have the opportunity to prepare and sing a special vocal selection with the group.

Designed to supplement in-school and private music education in Columbia County, CFO's "Take a Seat in the Orchestra" relies on public and private support, and volunteers to offer its unique hands-on programming. CFO is a 501c3 and recent sponsors have included the T. Backer Fund, Hudson River Bank & Trust Foundation, Herrington's, the Golub Foundation, and JSL Computer Services. For information or to make a donation, visit www.columbiafestivalorchestra.org or call 518-828-7513.



Above, Christopher Howard is coached to play his Bach prelude in a more disturbing fashion.

Photos by David Lee/Hudson-Catskill Newspapers



Making the melody sing is key for Nora Maetzner playing Debussy's "The Girl with the Flaxen Hair."



Applause for Lilyana Grantcharova playing Genrikh Pachulski's 'Fantastic Fairy-tale'