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Local musicians celebrate 10 years of creating dynamic chamber music – West Newsmagazine

Ellen Lampe

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Dana Hotle [left] with artistic directors Laura Reyecraft [viola] and Jennifer Gartley [flute].

To some, the term chamber music may sound boring – a small group of musicians playing formal classical pieces – while its audience nods off. Now, let's put this myth to rest. Performed by Chamber Project St. Louis [CPSTL], chamber music is anything but dull. It's contemporary and energetic, just like its youthful musicians.

Their concerts are given in both traditional and non-traditional venues such as The Missouri History Museum, the World Chess Hall of Fame and even a few local breweries.

Clarinetist Dana Hotle is CPSTL's executive director and a Manchester resident. In her words, "Every Chamber Project concert is different. Each has a unique theme that genuinely reflects today's sensibilities, issues and ideas. All the music is woven together from that [theme]. Each selection can offer a different mix of musicians and instruments on one program.

"We play the classics, modern works we love and commissions by local composers! We try to include a female composer on every program and strive to expand the scope of the art form to include stories, composers and artists beyond the traditional European male cannon. Of course, we love and perform Beethoven and all those guys, but through our themes, we connect them to today's society to make them relative to what's happening."

CPSTL began with a desire to leave behind the concert hall and take great music to the people.

“We’re a grassroots organization that began with a handful of professionals yearning to try something different with the music we love,” Holte explained. “We had zero money, no experience producing concerts and no marketing experience – but we had passion, a good idea and incredible work ethic.

“Most importantly, we had musicians who were willing to play for less than industry rates for a few years while we worked on building funding. We are now a fully fledged performing organization. The group has expanded from just three or four [musicians] 10 years ago, to over 20 local artists. A concert may employ up to 10 musicians.”

CPSTL members enjoy a special connection with their audiences. Kathy Lawton Brown, of Radio Arts Foundation-Saint Louis [107.3 FM] describes CPSTL as “passionate about what they do.”

“Their programming is fresh and innovative,” Brown said. “They also love audience input. Because of this close communication, they have an exceedingly loyal following.”

Violinist and Creve Coeur resident Kyle Lombard enjoys being a member of CPSTL and said “it adds many dynamic and fruitful experiences to each season!”

“The challenge of commissioning and performing new work is always exciting, and Dana does an excellent job finding hidden gems,” Lombard added. “Our audiences never need to worry about complacent or mundane programming, that’s for certain. As performers, a fresh approach to standards, old and new, is crucial for renewed excitement toward our craft.”

CPSTL has introduced a whole new generation of concert-goers to great music.

“I believe our biggest sense of accomplishment is the community we’ve created through intimate music making. Our fans and our musicians are a diverse and welcoming group,” Hotle said. “For many, we are the first classical music concert they’ve ever experienced – and they keep returning for more.”

CPSTL will perform “ORIGINS” at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 11 at The Schlafly Tap Room, 2100 Locust St. Tickets are available at chamberprojectstl.org



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