

CANANDAIGUA LAKEMUSIC FESTIVAL

# Reinventing the Classical Concert

By Philip Anselmo

Since its inception in August 2005, the Canandaigua LakeMusic Festival has dared to reinvent the notion of the “classical concert.” For ten days this August, the festival will continue its approach of creating music for the people with the people featuring performances by the Amelia Piano Trio, the Corigliano Quartet, pianist Jon Nakamatsu and Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra Concertmaster Juliana Athayde.



## Birth of a Festival

Classical music has long been blessed and cursed by its courtly associations, never quite able to shake the starch from its periwigs. Johann Sebastian Bach performed for princes and kings, as did Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner. There was no peasant opera—not really. But the music was no less sublime, no less accessible, despite its satin and gold dust dressings. Anyone could be moved by a nocturne of Frederic Chopin if given the chance, thought violist Edward Klorman. Why not give them the chance?

“Some years ago, I remember going to an exhibit, and I saw the most arresting photograph of someone who had heard the music of Mozart for the first time and burst into tears.” recalls Klorman, a Brighton native and artistic co-director of Canandaigua LakeMusic Festival.



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When Klorman's teachers at Juilliard told him—and all the other first-year students, by way of an introduction—that classical music was on the verge of extinction, he scoffed. Maybe its audience was shrinking, but there was no reason to blame the music. Years later, he found an ally in cellist and fellow Juilliard graduate Amy Sue Barston.

"Usually, [classical music] only appeals to one demographic," says Klorman. "We asked ourselves: What would a festival look like if we wanted to appeal to a broader part of the community?"

What if Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* was taken out of the amphitheatre without giving up its pomp or glory? What if its audience traded suit and tie for a tee-shirt and jeans, swapped a flute of champagne for a flagon of lager?

So was the Canandaigua LakeMusic Festival first imagined: a series of chamber music events that would rediscover its audience where it had always been but never been broached: in the community.

"It is really a grassroots organization, and it has a very cozy, intimate, familiar feeling," says Amy Sue Barston, artistic co-director of the festival that kicks off its fourth season this August. "It is a rare meeting of comfort and profound musical experience."

## Evolutions

The LakeMusic Festival has had one guiding tenet: be out among the people. Be in their temples, their galleries, their shops and their parks. Invite them not only to listen, but to take part, to direct, to play.

"An audience usually expects to sit back and relax," says Klorman. "So we were worried that we were asking too much of people. But then, it's a rare opportunity that you get to tell a world class

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musician how to play better. In the end, people heard a lot more detail because they had the experience of living with the music."

Israeli composer Noam Sivan will lead the improvisation at Bristol Harbour this August. His audience of directors will suggest themes and tweak the tempo and style of the performers.

At last year's festival, composer Adam Silverman "took the audience on a tour through a new piece" he had composed solely for them that was then "officially" premiered at the festival.

**Canandaigua LakeMusic Festival's** fourth annual 10-day summer festival will be held in Canandaigua August 21-31, 2008. For more information visit [www.lakechambermusic.org](http://www.lakechambermusic.org).

Klorman, Barston and their guests have opened up their rehearsals—turned practice into a performance. They have welcomed the audience to listen as professionals coach students. They have turned the classical music concert into a fully dimensional, fully transparent evolution, a sharing

as much as an exhibition. There are no boundaries, no limits, and no end to the variations. And the music is no further than your own fingers on the fret of a violin.

Klorman has no mean hopes for the future of the Canandaigua LakeMusic Festival. It is a fledgling four years old, but the quality of the performances has already been established as second to none, he says. This year, the festival spans ten days and ventures for the first time into themed performances drawing on the associations of water and nature.

Still, it is all a beginning.

"Our vision is for the summer to expand to a bigger season, perhaps a month long, with several events a week, so that we are a more integral part of the summer in Canandaigua," he says. "But we won't expand until we are in a position to do so without sacrificing the extraordinary quality of the artists that we present."

