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ARTS AND CULTURE, COMMUNITY NEWS

WIPAC's Gala Fundraiser: "A Sparkling Night on the Riviera"

by [Lisa McFarren-Polgar](#) • November 26, 2017

The Washington International Piano Arts Council hosted an enchanting evening of music, dance and graciousness at their benefit Gala "Le Bal des Lumieres" held at the Columbia Country Club in Chevy Chase.

Reminiscent of "La Belle Epoque" with a contemporary infusion, the doyen and doyenne of WIPAC, Mr. and Mrs. John and Chateau Gardecki, welcomed their guests to celebrate yet another year of WIPAC's continuing support of pianists of the classical piano repertoire.

Indeed, it was "A Sparkling Night on the Riviera," with its simulated casino night and a silent auction of gifts donated by WIPAC supporters.

Attended by WIPAC's loyal supporters the Gala was Co-Chaired by Robin Phillips and Timothy Thomas. WIPAC President Clayton Eisinger eloquently expressed a sense of pride in being a part of the WIPAC organization and pledged his continued support for WIPAC and the vision of its Founders, Chateau and John Gardecki to promote the art of piano performance.

Paying tribute to the inspiration that WIPAC has given to pianists for 16 years, the winner of WIPAC's first 2003 International Piano Artists Competition, pianist-composer Paul Anthony Romero spoke of the positive impact that the competition had on his life as a musician. Performing with saxophonist Dr. Brock Summers, Paul Romero dazzled the audience with his beautiful arrangement of a medley of George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" tunes mixed with Rachmaninoff's 2nd Symphony, followed by original works by Paul Romero for piano and saxophone. As a prolific composer of operatic and symphonic music for computer game soundtracks, his imagination and creativity captured the thrill and mystery of the music scores of James Bond movies. His performance was welcomed with great enthusiasm.

A highlight of the evening was the appearance of chanteuse and patroness of the arts Robin Phillips. Her mesmerizing and passionate cabaret songs performance of Errol Garner's "Misty" a medley of Edith Piaf's songs "Je Ne Regrette Rien" and "La Vie En Rose," Norbert Schultze's "Lili Marlene," and Hubert Giraud's "Sous Le Ciel", demonstrated her genuine artistry and talent. Indeed, she has that gift of making everyone feel that she is singing to each of member of the audience directly.

Dancing to the music by the Radio King Orchestra continued throughout the evening. Special acknowledgement was extended to the Ambassador of Malta and Mrs. Pierre Clive Agius and the Ambassador of Bulgaria and Mrs. Tihomir Stoytchev.

While the August International Piano Artists Competition is the culmination of the WIPAC season, the organization sponsors events throughout the year that highlight piano art music. On December 11, in collaboration with the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, WIPAC will present the world premiere of “Lullaby of Peace” composed by Haskell Small. Held at the Dean Acheson auditorium of the US. State Department, it commemorates the Massacre in Khojaly Azerbaijan Khojaly in which over 600 ethnic Azerbaijani civilians died in the Nagorno-Karabath war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Lullaby, a composition commissioned by WIPAC and co-sponsored by the Azerbaijan University of Languages of Baku, Azerbaijan, will be performed by soprano Laura Choi Stuart, pianist/composer Haskell Small and clarinetist Cheryl Hill. Included in the performance is the recitation of a poem “A Lullaby for Khojaly Kids,” written by Yusif Savalan.

First prize winner of the 2017 Piano Competition, Pianist Hiroaki Taniguchi, will be returning to Washington to perform a solo recital in the Spring.

Stay tuned..... Photos below: WIPAC GUESTS



