

Trio of sisters schedules program that ‘brings joy to life’

By Hilari Graff

Three Juilliard-trained sisters who all graduated from Ardsley High School are celebrating small classical masterpieces in a new music series that kicks off next weekend in the tri-state area.

Harumi, Sakiko and Mimi Furuya — known professionally as the Furuya Sisters — have announced their 2014 fall concert dates, the first of which is next Saturday, Oct. 18, at Faust Harrison Pianos in Huntington Station, Long Island. Nine performances are planned, including two in Westchester — on Nov. 8 at Frank & Camille’s West on Central Avenue in Hartsdale and Nov. 22 at the Grinton I. Will branch of the Yonkers Public Library.

Each performance will feature the same program — Piano Trio in C Major KV 548 by Mozart, Miniature Viennese March by Kreisler, and Piano Trio No.1 in D Minor, Opus 49 by Mendelssohn — but the encores will offer a variety of surprises.

The Furuya Sisters, who have lived together in Dobbs Ferry for more than a decade, make up a piano trio: violinist Harumi (the eldest), pianist Sakiko (the middle sister), and cellist Mimi (the youngest). Harumi began her musical studies at age 2; Sakiko and Mimi were introduced to their instruments at age 7. While the sisters have been playing together since they were children, these concerts mark the first time they’ve organized all aspects of their show, including securing venues, generating publicity and handling ticket sales.

“It has been overwhelmingly busy, but very gratifying because we have more control and can better plan

ahead,” Harumi said.

“The concert series relies on many volunteers who help out with ticketing, driving us to concerts, selling CDs at concerts, serving as MC before performances, and putting up fliers. Our neighbors and friends — Dr. Laura Roberts, Larry Murphy, Peter Brenner and Liz Everett — have been very supportive. It is a community effort,” she added.

The concerts run approximately 90 minutes, with one intermission. Piano trios generally consist of three to four movements, each 10 to 12 minutes long.

“We put together programs that make artistic sense and also provide variation,” Sakiko explained. “We pick from the best classical music repertoire that everyone will be sure to appreciate. Our goal is to make classical music accessible to the public because classical music is the most accessible form of music.”

Born in Japan, the sisters grew up in the San Francisco Bay area before heading to the East Coast (due to the engineering job of their father, Mike) and settling in Ardsley. Mimi started at Concord Road School, Sakiko began at Ardsley Middle School, and Harumi went to the high school. While enrolled in the Ardsley schools, the sisters spent their Saturdays at the Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division.

“As three sisters playing three different musical instruments, we decided to do chamber music,” Sakiko noted. “Back then, we heard the recording of Jascha Heifetz’s trios of Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky and loved the magnificence of the music and the performance.”

Although neither parent is a profes-



Mimi, Sakiko and Harumi Furuya

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sional musician, the girls' mother, Atsuko Shidehara Furuya, was a lover of classical music who took piano lessons and played violin at school on an amateur level. She wanted to share this love with her daughters, and began offering them opportunities to play quite young so they could develop their musical skills.

"She intended from early on that we all play different musical instruments so that we could play together," Harumi said.

Starting to learn their instruments set them on the path to experience the richness of classical music and provided a channel for creative and emotional expression. They are skilled as soloists or can play a duo or trio covering a wide range of repertoire. They consider composers from "Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and onward" as their musical influences. The Furuya Sisters have recorded 14 CDs showcasing a wide range of classical pieces they've performed during the course of their career.

"The composers of classical music are just super," Mimi exulted. "Playing their pieces brings joy to life, and we want to convey the beauty and excitement reflected in these great composers' works."

In addition to being talented, the Furuya Sisters are also highly educated.

Upon graduating from Juilliard's Pre-College Division, Harumi received a B.A. in history with highest honors from Harvard University, a master's in European studies from Cambridge University, and then returned to Harvard for her Ph.D. in government.

After earning her high school diploma in three years, with a 4.0 GPA, Sakiko obtained bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Juilliard, acquiring both in five years. She spent two years in Austria studying at the Mozarteum and the University of Salzburg.

Mimi holds a pre-college diploma from Juilliard, where she studied for eight years, and a bachelor of music from the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music. The recipient of a DAAD Fellowship (German Academic Exchange Service), she studied at the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf, Germany.

Since the Furuya Sisters' Nyack performance on Friday, Nov. 21, will be live-streamed, audiences around the globe can watch that concert at home.

Tickets for the Furuya Sisters' fall concert series cost \$35 in advance/\$40 at the door (there's a discounted price of \$25 for the Nov. 22 concert in Yonkers). Tickets can be purchased online at www.furuyasisters.com or by calling 200-3622.