



Above: Michele Harding, chairperson of the Fort Town Concert Association, holds up the 2016-2017 Concert Series.



Top Left: Romeo & Juliette Cast from April/2016 Performance (photo courtesy Fort Town Concert Association)

Bottom Left: Fandango Guitar Quartet February 2015 Concert (photo courtesy of Fort Town Concert Association)

MUSIC IN THE AIR

By Joan Rupert-Barkley

The Fort Town Concert Association (FTCA) has been instrumental in bringing quality classical music to Prescott for the past 33 years. This voluntary committee has partnered with Jeunesses Musicales of Canada (JMC) from Montreal. JMC is a non-profit organization that encourages young performers to get exposure at national and international levels. JMC organizes fall and winter tours and sends promotional material (brochures and posters) to their various centres across Canada. Once the tour dates are set, the FTCA decides what concert dates would best work for them. They put their sticker on the back of the brochures. Prescott is the only Jeunesses Musicales Centre in Ontario.

“It is a huge learning curve for these musicians. We get the benefit of their talent, at an affordable price and they get the experience of what it is like to be on tour,” explained Michele Harding, chairperson of the FTCA.

Part of the musicians’ performance is introducing the piece they are playing as well as explaining where the music came from

and who composed the piece. Therefore the audience has a better appreciation for the music once they hear it played.

The concerts are held at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church on Centre Street in Prescott. This venue has fantastic acoustics, circular seating and a layout that is perfect for artistic performances.

Harding commented that there are approximately 100 – 120 people who attend the concerts. During the night of the concerts, an exhibiting artist from the South Grenville Guild of Fine Art showcases their work in the church lobby.

One of the four concerts in the series is usually adapted to children and is performed at one of the local schools in the afternoon; or sometimes the FTCA buys a JMC Youth concert. May Court Club in Brockville sponsors the children’s program. The concerts usually run approximately 45 minutes. These concerts are always interactive. There is usually a storyline which introduces instruments to the students.

“We like to bring the concerts in and put it in the school. It is in their environment. It is fun

to watch the children’s expression. These students are the musicians of tomorrow,” said Harding.

Presently there are nine members on the FTCA committee. They meet three weeks prior to each concert as well as hold an Annual General Meeting. Harding stressed they are always looking for new people to join the committee.

“I have always been interested in classical music and the Jeunesses Musicales of Canada (JMC) because, when I was a child it was very much a part of my upbringing,” said Michele Harding.

The FTCA relies on grants and donations from the town, area businesses and local residents. They launch their new season in the spring, after the last concert, and encourage people to purchase season tickets that same night. Series tickets are \$60.00 for adults; \$15.00 for students and all concerts are free for children 12 years and under. LH

The upcoming concert series dates are:
November 25/2016 - The Voices of Women
February 24/2017 - The Belle Epoque
March 31/2017 - La Traviata by Verdi
This year a fifth concert will be held on May 5/2017.

For more information on the Fort Town Concert Association and the upcoming concert series, please visit www.ftca.ca.