

Vermont Virtuosi: Showcasing the state's composers, musicians and more

[Jim Lowe](#) | April 21, 2018

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STAFF WRITER



Vermont Virtuosi are, clockwise from top left, John Dunlop, Laurel Ann Maurer, Rebecca Kauffman, Karen Luttik, Letitia Quante, Stefanie Taylor and Brook Quiggins. (Courtesy Vermont Virtuosi)

Vermont Virtuosi, now in its fifth season as one of the state's finest chamber music series, was created to showcase the music of flutist Laurel Ann Maurer and her husband, composer David Gunn. But they see it also as an opportunity to showcase other Vermont composers and musicians.

"We feel it's very important to be a part of the musical community and nurture other composers," Maurer said. "That's part of our mission, to support Vermont composers and Vermont performers."

And they will be doing just that when Vermont Virtuosi closes its 2017-18 season with "Mainly Maurice," a program centered on the music of French composer Maurice Ravel, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 28, at the Montpelier Unitarian Church, and 3 p.m. Sunday, April 29, at Burlington's First Baptist Church.

Maurer, artistic director, clarinetist Karen Luttik, violinists Letitia Quante and Brooke Quiggins, violist Stefanie Taylor, cellist John Dunlop and harpist Rebecca Kauffman, will perform a four-part arrangement of Ravel's "Mother Goose" Suite, his Introduction and Allegro for harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet.

They will also perform music of Vincent Persichetti, Rebecca Clarke, and the world premiere of “Cestodomov,” a clarinet quintet by Gunn.

Vermont Virtuosi was pretty much a product of Maurer and Gunn’s marriage.

“We had the goal of doing something more musically,” Maurer said during a recent interview in their Barre living room. “I wanted for him a regular group that would play his music, because his music is so excellent and needs to be performed often.”

And Maurer was somewhat new to Vermont.

“I felt like I needed more of a platform as a performer and be part of the music community,” she said. “So we put our heads together and came up with this idea of Vermont Virtuosi.



Founders of Vermont Virtuosi are flutist Laurel Ann Maurer and composer David Gunn, pictured at their Barre home. (Jim Lowe / Staff photo) Item 2 of 2

The first official Vermont Virtuosi concert was in June 2013. Maurer was joined by pianist Claire Black and violist Tatiana Trono in Gunn’s new trio “Les Visions de Bellimar,” and other works.

“And we’ve been going strong ever since,” Gunn said. “The next concert will be our 27th program.”

“I had no idea we had done so many, actually,” Maurer said. “The wonderful thing has been that it has been an incentive for David to write more fabulous chamber music. For the last few years, he’s written a treasure trove of ensemble music for different groups. We’ve premiered them, and it’s just been glorious.”

The April 28-29 program will add to the clarinet quintet repertoire, including the justly famous Mozart and Brahms.

“He has written one of his best pieces,” Maurer said. “It’s absolutely gorgeous.”

“I was not invited to the first rehearsal,” added Gunn, who is notorious for his attention to detail.

Sticking to the mission, all of the musicians save for Luttik of Boston are Vermonters. In fact, Luttik and New York virtuoso violinist Arturo Delmoni have been the only non-Vermonters on the series.

“It’s been wonderful to work with fabulous Vermont musicians,” said Maurer. “It’s a testimony to say we have great musicians here. We don’t have to import, and it’s a great thing to be able to showcase them.”

Gunn is finding that having a regular outlet for his compositions is helping him to grow as a composer.

“I’m learning more about each instrument each time I write something,” he said. “With each piece I feel a little more comfortable. My compositional style, counterpoint, is very important to me and I think I’m getting to be really good at it.”

Although one of Vermont's finest flutists, with an amazing history of performances and recordings, Maurer is less known here. She was born in Stockton, California, and spent much of her youth in Seattle. In New York, she developed into the professional she is today, studying the likes of Jeanne Baxtrasser and Samuel Baron, but it is Julius Baker, longtime principal of the New York Philharmonic and one of the great flutists, that she calls mentor.

"I think I learned almost everything (from him)," Maurer said. "The impression of his sound and his style is still so strong in my musical psyche that I don't think I could get rid of it if I wanted to.

"His style of playing was beauty, imagination and a big orchestral sound," she said. "He had a gorgeous sound – and he could be as funny as all get out too."

At the same time, Maurer's studies to become a Suzuki flute teacher taught her analysis.

"The whole Suzuki flute method is based on the playing of (Marlboro Music Festival co-founder) Marcel Moyse, dissected by Japanese flutist Toshio Takahashi.

"Throughout our training, we learned all the nuts and bolts and taking technique apart," Maurer said. "That gave all the understanding for teaching and myself, but Baker gave the greatest examples."

From New York, Maurer moved to Salt Lake City where for twelve years she was principal in the Salt Lake Symphony Orchestra, led a contemporary music ensemble and taught. She moved to Vermont because of her then-husband's health issues.

"I stayed even though the marriage ended," Maurer said. "My friends begged me to return to Utah, but I decided to stay to see how I could manage.

"Probably if I had not met David, I would have moved back," she said. "But that's what happened and here we are."

Vermont Virtuosi

Vermont Virtuosi closes its 2017-2018 season with "Mainly Maurice," featuring the music of Maurice Ravel, Rebecca Clarke, Vincent Persichetti and Vermont composer David Gunn. Performances are:

- Saturday, April 28: Montpelier – Unitarian Church, 130 Main St., 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 29: Burlington – First Baptist Church, 81 St. Paul St., 3 p.m.

Admission is by donation (\$10 suggested); for information; call 802-881-9153, or go online to www.lamaurerflute.com.