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Oratorio Society's April 20 Gala Features Ani Kavafian

Founded in 1997, the Westchester Oratorio Society will celebrate its 16th season with a Gala Spring Benefit on Saturday evening, April 20, at Le Château in South Salem. Entitled, "String Romance," the event will feature a performance by the acclaimed violinist, Ani Kavafian, accompanied by students of the Yale School of Music in the intimate chamber music setting of the former estate home, recently voted one of the top three most romantic venues in the Metropolitan area.

Ms. Kavafian, a Lewisboro resident, is an acclaimed violinist who has performed with virtually all of America's leading orchestras. She is also a renowned chamber musician, a founding member of the Chamber Society of Lincoln Center and Professor of Violin at Yale University.

Honorees for the evening are Elisabeth McDonald, and Tina & Fred Cowles. The three are among the original group of South Salem residents who joined together with their neighbor, choral director, Harold Rosenbaum, to form the Westchester Oratorio Society. Since 2007, Westchester Oratorio Society has been under the direction of Brooklyn resident, Benjamin Niemczyk, a founding member of C4, the nation's largest new music choral ensemble and conductor of the New Westchester Symphony Orchestra. The society continues to fulfill its core mission of bringing high level performances of choral masterworks to local audiences with professional soloists and orchestras. The Spring Gala is a key component of the group's annual fundraising.

The 16th season began with a performance at Temple Shaaray Tefila in Bedford that featured Schonberg's "A Survivor from Warsaw." During the year the group's outreach has included free performances by its chamber choir at Muscoot Farm in Katonah and the Chappaqua Library. Upcoming is the Robert C. McDonald Memorial Concert on June 2, in the Theater at John Jay Middle School in Cross River, featuring Beethoven's "Choral Fantasy" performed by the internationally renowned pianist, Hélène Grimaud.

Bob McDonald was a much respected, active community volunteer and also among the oratorio society's original founders, serving as treasurer. After his retirement from IBM, he was also bookkeeper for the Wolf Conservation Center, which was co-founded by Ms. Grimaud. The center is a popular environmental education organization located in South Salem and the preeminent facility in the northeast for the captive breeding of wolves for reintroduction into the wild.

The oratorio society's accompanist, John Alan Rose, an accomplished composer and concert pianist in his own right, is also well-known locally. He and his wife, soprano, Sing Rose, work with the choir at Stevens Memorial Church in Vista. The Chorus rehearses on Tuesday evenings at Katonah United Methodist Church, a walk from the Metro North station. Competent singers in all voices with an ability to read music are welcomed to join.

“String Romance” begins at 7 pm, with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, and, following the performance, by dinner from a special menu prepared by Le Chateau’s award-winning Executive Chef, André Molle.

A limited number of tickets remain available at \$175 per person and may be purchased by calling 914 763 9389, emailing westchesteroratorio@gmail.com or through the group’s website, www.westchesteroratorio.org. Find WOS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/westchesteroratorio and follow on Twitter at [@westchesterora](https://twitter.com/westchesterora).