

THE BUFFALO NEWS

String break

Weeklong seminar immerses young talents in chamber music

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Bill Wippert/Buffalo News Roman Mekinulov, principal cellist of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, organizes "Bravo: An International Music Workshop" with piano instructor Mary Handley.

"Bravo: An International Music Workshop," planned for July at Niagara University, is gathering speed.

The weeklong seminar for talented high school and college string players will take place July 25 through July 31. It's being organized by Roman Mekinulov, principal cellist of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and piano instructor Mary Handley, who has worked extensively with the Greater Buffalo Youth Orchestra.

The week will center on chamber music.

"I saw the need a long time ago," Mekinulov says. "Even being at Juilliard, I felt that every major city has a youth orchestra, but to do chamber music, it either has to be promoted from school or it's too big of a commitment. Four kids who play in a quartet need to be driven somewhere, then dropped off, every week or else it doesn't produce results."

The Bravo festival will immerse kids, for a week, in the world of chamber music.

"We want them to stew in their own juices," Mekinulov laughs.

The festival has gained influential sponsors. The Cameron Baird Foundation is now on board, as well as the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

"The interest generated is wonderful, and the Philharmonic has been wonderfully supportive," Mekinulov says.

Individuals are also encouraged to lend their support.

"We are totally not bashful as far as donations go," Mekinulov jokes in his Russian accent. "There are no expectations. There is no requirement of minimum amount. We are very, very laid back."

He points out, though, that donations can be tax-deductible. For information, check out the festival's Web site, www.bravoworkshop.com.

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