



Colorado State University

School of the Arts

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Press Release

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COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC RECEIVES GENEROUS DONATIONS FROM LOCAL BENEFACTORS

Fort Collins, CO – The Department of Music in School of the Arts at Colorado State University is proud to announce that it has received a generous donation from local arts supporters and university benefactors Jim and Wendy Franzen to establish a Graduate String Quartet Program and to recruit gifted piano students.

Jim and Wendy Franzen are long-time supporters of Colorado State University and the arts in Fort Collins, and with their recent retirement, they are sharing more of their time and resources to promote the arts.

The Franzens have gifted \$40,000 to establish a new Graduate String Quartet Program at Colorado State. Graduate String Quartet fellows will study under the Department of Music's String Faculty – Margaret Miller, Assistant Professor of Viola. Ron Francois, Associate Professor of Violin, Leslie Stewart, Director of String Pedagogy, and Barbara Thiem, Assistant Professor of Cello.

Students will have the opportunity to take master classes and seminars from visiting guest artists as part of a curriculum that develops the strong artistic and business-related skills required for a successful quartet career. Fellows will hold principle positions in the Colorado State University Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra, and the Quartet will serve as a teaching and recruiting instrument for regional high school string musicians.

Dr. Michael Thaut, Chair of the Department of Music, Director of Colorado State's Center for Biomedical Research in Music and Co-Executive Director of the School of the Arts, believes the Graduate String Quartet is a vital addition to the Department as it builds its programs to become a world class music program.

"The establishment of the Graduate String Quartet will attract talented students to Colorado State and advance our reputation as an outstanding music program," he said.

In addition to being a valuable curricular addition to the music program, the Quartet will also be of great benefit to the broader community, which is important to the Franzens. They foresee

that the Graduate String Quartet could be a cornerstone of the new UniverCity project which links the Poudre River, downtown, and Colorado State, as well as a group that provides classes and concerts to the broader region.

“This particular instrumentation is ideal for collaboration and outreach in our community. String quartets have a well-established and remarkably rich repertoire. They are a manageable size for remote concerts, yet they provide musically robust and complex performances” said Jim Franzen.

Jim and Wendy recently took some time to listen to Beethoven string quartets that Jim had studied as a music student, along with the quartets of Bartok, Ravel, Debussy, and found it to be a wonderful introduction to the styles of the many composers who have contributed to the repertoire. They believe the Graduate String Quartet will be valuable in introducing and attracting new audiences to classical music.

“String quartets are accessible to a wide audience who may not be quite ready for larger ensembles. It allows members of the general public the opportunity to approach their introduction to Western art music in smaller bites,” said Jim Franzen.

With an additional donation of \$10,000, the Franzens are also supporting efforts to recruit gifted music students to the Department’s piano studies area. Their interest stems the fact that they have a newly rebuilt 1916 Steinway B, which Jim says, “demands more of a performer than I can supply.” They have created a performance space in their home to be available for local musicians and for them to host fundraising events for the University and local nonprofit organizations.

“The Franzens’ continued support of music at Colorado State has made critical differences in our progress towards excellence, and we owe them great thanks,” said Thaut.

The Franzens interest in the arts results not only from their personal pursuits of art and music, but also because they believe that Fort Collins has a unique value proposition as a creative city and a place that attracts and encourages creative people, contributing to the quality of life and economic health of the area. They also believe that it is critical for children to develop a strong and positive sense of self in their early years, and while Fort Collins offers multiple avenues of support for students who excel in athletics and scholarly pursuits, they would like to build stronger support for the arts and creative activities to complete a third leg for local educational opportunities.

For more information on the Colorado State University School of the Arts and the Department of Music, visit www.CSUSchooloftheArts.com.

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The School of the Arts at Colorado State University provides an enriched venue in which the study and practice of Art, Dance, Music and Theatre are nurtured and sustained by building the skills and knowledge needed by future generations of arts professionals to become contributors to the essential vitality of our culture and society. For more information, visit www.CSUSchooloftheArts.com.