

Summer music coming to Wintergreen

By **BILL LOHMANN** Richmond Times-Dispatch | Posted: Saturday, June 27, 2015 10:30 pm

In her first year as artistic director of Wintergreen Performing Arts, Erin R. Freeman has the somewhat complex task of overseeing the Wintergreen Summer Music Festival and Academy in the organization's 20th-anniversary year, but she has a fairly straightforward message to convey.

"The thing to know is the organization started with a small group of friends who wanted to bring music to the mountains," she said during a recent interview. "It's still that. It's just more friends."

The festival runs July 6 to Aug. 2 at the mountain resort 100 miles west of Richmond. The full calendar places an emphasis on classical music, but the wide-ranging event also celebrates other styles as well as the next generation of music-makers, taking advantage of its location in an exquisite natural setting and incorporating the food and drink of the region to provide the punctuation, even offering cooking classes.

Freeman, who also serves as director of the Richmond Symphony Chorus and previously was associate conductor of the Richmond Symphony, said the easiest way to understand the broad sweep of the festival is to look at its six categories:

Orchestral music, featuring professional musicians from across Virginia and around America.

Chamber and solo performances by the aforementioned pros as well as guest artists and students.

"Out-of-the-ordinary" concerts, such as the July 10 Bold Bach at Bold Rock: the music of Bach performed in the casual, though acoustically pleasing Bold Rock Cidery in Nellysford. The evening promises a sunset from the patio and hard cider.

Explorations, in the form of seminars and hikes. Patrons are welcome to observe orchestral rehearsals and academy master classes. Said Freeman: "The intellectual curiosity of the people that attend is astounding."

Speaking of the academy, the professional musicians serve as teachers and mentors for students attending six academy programs.

The food and spirit come through in post-concert parties and wine-tastings and help feed the sense of community, Freeman said.

A few random highlights:



WINTERGREEN

Wintergreen Summer Music Festival and Academy performance venue.

In a nod to the 20th anniversary, there will be 20 world premieres, including Daron Hagen's new score to accompany Charlie Chaplin's 1915 "The Tramp" on July 24.

The festival's fellowship string quartet, invoke, will perform July 27, incorporating elements of bluegrass, folk and rock on mandolin, banjo and dulcimer as well as violins, viola and cello.

Guest artists include John Winn and Desirée Roots celebrating Frank Sinatra and Billie Holiday on July 15, singer-songwriter Susan Greenbaum performing music from the 1970s on July 22 in honor of Wintergreen's founding in 1975, and Rootstone Jug Band presenting Americana music on July 29.

The opening performance of the festival on July 8 will feature what Freeman is calling a "surprise birthday party" with the Wintergreen festival artists and special guests re-creating some of the most popular performances of the past 20 years.

"Black Tie optional," as the festival program says, "golf attire perfectly acceptable."

"There's a lot of classical music and that's the bulk of what we do," Freeman said. "My vision is to present it in a way that's welcoming and helpful and not condescending. I guess it boils down to the fact that I love this music, and I know how fulfilling it can be, and all I want to do is share that joy with everybody."