

JACK LONDON PARK PIANO CLUB

REVIEW of CONCERT, September 14, 2014

On a lovely warm day in September, the Piano club and friends brought all of us into the spirit of fall, with musical autumnal delights.

Vocalist Laura Benward, accompanied by Deborah Knapp on the piano and Jud Goodrich on the French horn, led off with one of Jack and Charmian's favorites, *In the Valley of the Moon*. Laura then performed a delightful version of *The Lonely Goatherd* from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Sound of Music*. She then sang *Moon River*, in honor of Jack and Charmian, who were truly "two drifters off to see the world." She charmed everyone with *This Place Is Mine*, also called *The Diva*, from the "other" version of "Phantom of the Opera". Complete with red wig, red sparkly boa and tiara, she charmed us with the lusty song of a powerful woman of 19th century Paris.

Zinaida Milavsky, another second-time performer and already a favorite, played Schubert's *Sonata in E Major*, which she described as his unfinished "teenager sonata" because of the many mood changes and tempo changes, just like the life of a teenager.

Introducing the autumn theme of the concert, club member Jim Wittes ("the piano man") played four jazzy, sometimes haunting, themed selections – *Autumn Leaves*, *Autumn Nocturne*, *Autumn in New York*, and *Early Autumn*. In his inimitable style, he played them as an evocative, seamless medley.

Rubina Mazurka, a student from the Bay Area, and a talented new Piano Club volunteer, sang a sweet, touching version of a lullaby popular in Jack and Charmian's time, called *Sing Me to Sleep*, which she said that Jack and Charmian were reported to have sung to each other. She then performed *Night* by famed pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein.

Deborah Knapp again showed her prowess on the accordion as she and favorite Esfir Ross paired up to play two tangos by Astor Piazzolla: *Milonga sin Palabras*, a langorous "song without words," and *El Penultimo*, a lively syncopated interchange between piano and accordion.

Finally, Esfir Ross played the *September (the Hunt)* and *October (Autumn Song)* selections from Tchaikovsky's "The Seasons". She said that autumn is the saddest time of the year for Russians, and the *October* piece perfectly captures that melancholy. She also played *Album Leaf – Song Without Words*, by Mendelssohn, and *A la Albeniz*, by Rodion Shchedrin, Russian's greatest living composer. She entertained everyone with her story of how Shchedrin wrote the piece in the style of Albeniz, a well-known Spanish composer who also lived in San Francisco in a bordello.

The next concert featuring the talented players of the Piano Club will be held a holiday-themed concert on December 7th. **All proceeds from the concerts benefit Jack London Park.**