

SMF35 Blog: The annual donor lunch

We pay a lot of attention to the Festival Artists and the Festival Fellows here at the Colorado College Summer Music Festival. Their audience is also doted upon- we are treated like royalty by being gifted with outstanding performances throughout the three weeks of the festival.

One other group does get called out from time to time for what they do; but at the annual donor luncheon, those who support and make the festival possible are the stars.

This past Sunday, June 9, the Cornerstone Arts Center's cavernous main space was turned into a grand ballroom. 18 tables with eight guests each filled the space for the annual donor luncheon.

Here's where it gets special. Since 2007, the festival's students have become fellows. Through the generosity of individual members of the community, every musician who comes to the college in June for the festival has their tuition, room, and board fully paid for. Each fellow has one or two sponsors that ante up the funds to make this free ride possible. At this luncheon student meets benefactor; fellow dines with donor.

Devised by the festival's head honcho- Sue Grace- this event pays the kind of dividends money cannot buy. Supporters of the festival have not only great music as a reward for their investment, but get to know the aspiring artist whose presence at the festival they have made possible.

There's another part to this plan that is not as obvious. The sooner these talented young musicians learn how to honor those who make their art possible the better. More than ever, arts funding comes from individual donors. The days of exceptional corporate and predictable government funding have long passed. Knowing how to nurture relationships with willing philanthropic folks is essential in these uncertain times of arts funding. This ends up being part of the training they receive here in the Springs.

This season's Donor Lunch took place on Sunday, June 9 and was followed directly with the second Festival Artists concert. All donors were invited, not just the fellow sponsors. The college's resident caterer, Bon Appetit, did a lovely job with a make your own salad and wine was pouring thanks to local donations.

Sue Grace hit all the right notes as master of ceremonies and set up the afternoon's entertainment: music by four of the fellow chamber ensembles that had been coached by festival artists: a brass sextet brought us Bach; a woodwind quintet some tropical

spice thanks to Paquita D' Rivera; a welcome assault from the three percussion fellows; and the opening movement of the great Brahms *Quintet for Piano and Strings*. If words hadn't done their job of making donors feel honored the music made sure the point was made... as it should be here at the festival.