

Desert Symphony Fundraiser - April 15, 2010

Violin Virtuoso Elizabeth Pitcairn performs with her Red Violin



Nancy Tapick, Brett Deubner, Elizabeth Pitcairn and Gary Berkson

PHOTO BY PAT KRAUSE

BY GLORIA GREER

Sponsors and patrons of the Desert Symphony were given a tremendous treat when Iris and Tom Smotrich opened their Rancho Mirage estate for a special supper and concert featuring celebrated violin virtuoso Elizabeth Pitcairn and her Red Violin plus violist Brett Deubner and guest conductor Gary Berkson. The supporters of Desert Symphony were given a brief preview of the magnificent concert performed the following night, April 16, at the McCallum Theatre with the entire Desert Symphony performing a program that featured the Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor and Sinfonia Concertante in E flat Major that showcased Pitcairn's artistry. It was part of the Sinfonia Concertante that Pitcairn and Deubner performed at the pre-concert fundraiser. Pitcairn also gave a brief history of her historic Stradivarius violin crafted in 1720 by Antonio Stradivari – a violin that became the speculative narrative for the film, "The Red Violin."

Guests gathered for cocktails before being seated in front of the exquisite terrace with wide steps that was an ideal stage for the performers. Nancy Tapick, president of Desert Symphony, welcomed arrivals and thanked them for their continuing support. Following the magical musical presentation, supper was served outside on a balmy evening that was ideal for the occasion.

After the death of Desert Symphony founder and conductor, Maestro Edwin "Ben" Benachowski, violinist Marilyn Benachowski who co-founded Desert Symphony with her late husband, handed the baton to Thomas E. Hartley, assistant conductor. Pop artists appearing next season with Desert Symphony conducted by Hartley are Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, The Texas Tenors, Marilyn McGoo & Billy Davis Jr, the music of Michael Jackson, John Novacek who joins the symphony for an evening of Gershwin and other American composers, and Tito Puente, Jr. The last concert for this season will be on May 1 at the McCallum Theatre when Mariachi Champaña Nevín joins the Desert Symphony for a festive celebration combining the beauty and passion of traditional Mexican music rhythms.