For a quarter of a century, Close Encounters with Music has presented chamber music with commentary to both entertain and inform audiences in the Berkshires and beyond. Under the guidance of founder and Artistic Director Yehuda Hanani, the organization has offered more than 200 thematic concerts that put the composers and their time periods in perspective with additional context.

“That’s the underlying principle: Thematic programming with the best performers,” said Vice President Hannah Hanani, who is Yehuda’s wife. Over the years, they’ve commissioned work from distinguished composers, including Osvaldo Golijov, Paul Schoenfield, Robert Beaser, John Musto, Kenji Bunch and Lera Auerbach. Actors such as Sigourney Weaver, Richard Chamberlain and Jane Alexander have appeared as guest narrators.

“There’s always something adventurous about our program,” Yehuda said. “Expect the unexpected.”

In celebration of its 25th anniversary season — which kicks off on Oct. 15 at 6 p.m. with a performance by the Chamber Orchestra Kremlin at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington — Close Encounters with Music is marking the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage in New York state. In fact, this is the start of a three-season initiative to highlight works by women composers.

“This area is so connected to history and American culture and artists and writers, it’s so plugged in to all that, that we try to mine the local connections,” Hannah said. “A lot of the ferment was right here. Susan B. Anthony was born in Adams. There was a march from New York City to Albany along the Hudson River. Ethel Smyth’s opera ”Der Wald” is the only piece by a woman the Met has performed in the last 100 years.”

As part of this theme, the Hananis have commissioned Thea Musgrave, Tamar Muskal, Joan Tower and Judith Zaimont to each write three-minute profiles for a “quilt” that focuses on “women of valor,” including Smyth, Emma Lazarus and Sojourner Truth. This quilt will be performed during a season-ending gala at the Mahaiwe on June 10.

“These stories really have to be told, whether through music, art or schools,” Hannah said. As part of this three-season program, the Hananis hope to create an arts curriculum unit that will be taught in high schools. They’re certainly familiar with education initiatives — the Catskill High Peaks Music Festival, a program of Close Encounters with Music, attracts approximately 50 students every summer.

“It has lectures, nature tours and a superb faculty. It’s an inspiring 10 days in the mountains,” Hannah said. “It’s amazing to see people bonding through music.”

Close Encounters with Music’s 25th anniversary season will feature concerts at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center and Saint James Place in Great Barrington, Mass., as well as two talks at The Mount in Lenox, Mass., and the Hudson Opera House in Hudson, N.Y. For the full schedule, go to www.cewm.org. To purchase tickets for the Oct. 15 season opener at the Mahaiwe, which features Chamber Orchestra Kremlin performing the music of Tchaikovsky, Shostakovitch and Haydn, go to www.mahaiwe.org or call 413-528-0100.

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