

Chamber Music Wilmington Names New Artistic Director

Chamber Music Wilmington has named Oskar Espina-Ruiz its new artistic director. Espina-Ruiz begins his appointment on May 1, while retaining his current positions as clarinet artist-faculty at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and serving as artistic director of Treetops Chamber Music Society, in Stamford, CT, and Music Mountain, America's oldest continuing summer chamber music festival, in Falls Village, CT.

The Board of Directors of Chamber Music Wilmington is delighted to announce the appointment of Oskar Espina-Ruiz who will replace Founder and Artistic Director Barbara McKenzie when she retires at the end of the current season, after 25 years of visionary leadership.

Like Barbara McKenzie, Oskar Espina-Ruiz is a highly accomplished classical musician. He has been described by the press as a “masterful soloist” and a “highly expressive” clarinetist “with an energy that reaches down to one's soul.” Charles Neidich, with whom Espina-Ruiz studied for over 10 years, calls him “an unusually gifted musician who has already made a mark in the musical world and is becoming one of the most distinguished clarinetists in the U.S.”

Espina-Ruiz has performed at major concert halls and festivals to critical acclaim, including concerto performances at the Philharmonic Hall in St. Petersburg, Russia, and recitals at Carnegie's Weill Hall in New York, the Corcoran Museum in Washington D.C., the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, Oji Hall in Tokyo, the Madrid Royal Superior Conservatory, the Beijing and Shanghai Conservatories and Radio Television Hong Kong. He has been a soloist with the St. Petersburg State Academic Symphony, St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, Orquesta Sinfónica de la Ciudad de Asunción and the Bilbao Symphony. His chamber music collaborations include the Shanghai, Escher and Calla quartets, the Quintet of the Americas, pianist Anthony Newman, cellist David Geber (founder, American String Quartet) and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra artists. He was featured as soloist at the 20th Tokyo Summer Festival, the European Mozart Academy, the St. Petersburg Palaces XIII International Music Festival and the VI Festival Internacional de Música Clásica Contemporánea de Lima. Espina Ruiz has recorded for the Bridge, Kobaltone and Prion labels.

Originally from Bilbao, Spain, he holds a Doctorate in Musical Arts from Stony Brook University and a Masters in Fine Arts from Purchase College Conservatory of Music. Espina Ruiz devotes much of his time to musical research. His work on Spanish Post-Romantic composer Julián Menéndez brought him the first prize of the International Clarinet Association Research Competition in 2006, and he later wrote an article *The Clarinet* magazine (March, 2007), which led to the acquisition of one of Menéndez's clarinets by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for its Musical Instruments Galleries.

In an effort to bring important works and revisions into the clarinet repertoire, Espina-Ruiz performed the South American premiere of the original Copland Clarinet Concerto, reconstructed from the manuscripts at the Library of Congress. His orchestrations and adaptations include Ravel's *Sonate Posthume*, works by Arriaga, Sarasate, Turina, Granados and Falla, and Menéndez's *Clarinet Concerto No. 2*. He is deeply involved with the music of our time and has premiered works written for him by Chinese composers Ao, Hu and Chen, Spanish

composers Bageneta and Villasol, French composer Gaigne and American composers Weymouth and Spinei.

The CMW Board is thrilled to have recruited such a highly accomplished artist, music scholar and successful administrator. CMW Board President Beverley Dean says "Oskar has proven himself to be a brilliantly talented classical musician and an experienced administrator who has the contacts, knowledge and skills necessary for the multi-faceted job of CMW's Artistic Director. The Board is indebted to Barbara for recruiting him." Barbara adds: "I have worked closely with Oskar over the years and he and I share a common vision and passion for excellence in classical music performance. I cannot think of anyone better to replace me, and I look forward to future collaborations with Oskar as he leads CMW forward!"

"I am immensely honored and thrilled to join CMW, a true gem in North Carolina," says Oskar, "I have had the opportunity to meet with some of CMW's core supporters at the last concert and I am looking forward to working with the Board and the entire community. CMW is a vital arts organization today and working closely together, we will see it continue to blossom. I come to this position with an open mind and much appreciation. I hope that my association with other arts organizations will help us stay current as we set goals to realize our vision."

Bravo Oskar! We at CMW couldn't agree more!