

## Pitcairn adds 'Red Violin' to Toccata

BY LINDA BOTTJER, LAKE TAHOE ACTION, TAHOE.COM

Violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn plays with exuberance so potent it spills across the stage and joyously embraces her audiences.

The enthusiasm is not just for the performances, it is her standard rhythm of life.

Starting on Friday, Feb. 5, while flourishing her famed red Stradivarius, Pitcairn returns to Tahoe for three performances with the Toccata Tahoe Symphony. Her selections reflect the upcoming season of love, "Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1" in G minor and Dvorak's "Romance" in F minor.

Joking that that symphony's musical director-conductor and good friend James Rawie always plies her with the plentiful outdoor activities, she is hoping to add snow skiing to the water variety she experienced last summer when she brought Mendelssohn to the region.

Experiencing life with zeal is a trademark for the native of Bucks County, Penn. A trait she has never lost and one she urges all to adopt.

"Whatever struggles life presents it is up to you to succeed if you put the work in."

Despite her acclaim, Pitcairn's dedication to craft means hours of pre performance practice, both solo and then both separate and collectively with Rawie and Toccata. The latter's acronym stands for the orchestra and community choral artists of the Tahoe area. The group's mission to offer affordable performances of classical music to the Reno-Tahoe area.

Applying oneself is an ongoing trait on both sides of Pitcairn's family, as her Web site [www.elizabethpitcairn.com](http://www.elizabethpitcairn.com) proudly states.

From a brave English soldier to a grandmother who earned her doctorate during the Depression, Pitcairn comes from a long line of achievers. Since her earliest memory her parents, a Julliard-trained cellist mother and a father who combined a love of business with the arts had supplied music. At age 3 she began to play the violin. Two years later, in the early 1990s, her grandfather, noted arts patron Reverend Theodore Pitcairn, gave her a gift that would define her life. The legendary 1720 "Red Mendelssohn" Stradivarius, bought at the famed auction house Christies in London.

If film lovers think this sounds like a screenplay, they are correct.

The 1998 film "The Red Violin" was inspired by the auction.

Possessing such a valued instrument causes many to question Pitcairn how she is able to traverse the world with the instrument she jokes is like a 2-year-old child as she can never take her eyes off it.

"It is cursed," she confides.

Some, knowing the violin's history might think the ghost of a former owner the granddaughter of composer Felix Mendelssohn tragically killed in a car crash haunts the fingerboards and scroll of the red stained stringed instrument.

Pitcairn's infectious good humor again bubbles over when she says the curse is having to practice up to five hours daily.

Confessing that the chances between playing in tune as opposed to out of tune is as thin as the width of a human hair, her perseverance is a present she enjoys sharing with all.

Recently, she faced a huge semicircle of 200 children gathered in celebration for raising enough pennies to build a playground in war-torn Iraq. Instead of remaining stationary she strolled among them literally bringing the music into the audience and learning first hand how it applies to every life.

Pitcairn's deep understanding of music's ability to heal both soul and mind has been formed by a lifelong journey with it.

Her upcoming performances with Toccata allow all to share a bit of the musical voyage to calming peace.

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