



'Moonlight, Music, Magic' to benefit CSO

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A little boy, captured in bronze as he plays his cello; a girl frozen with a violin tucked under her chin. Both sculptures by artist Mitch S. Billis were commissioned by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra League to be sold at the "Moonlight, Music and Magic" Gala on Sept. 23 at the Gaillard Auditorium.

Last year, the CSOL donated \$353,955 to the orchestra, money raised through the gala, the designer showhouse and other activities held by the all-volunteer organization, according to league President Bobbie Greenebaum.

Gala Chair Margaret Strauss, who chose the theme, says the auditorium will be transformed into a romantic moonlit garden under the stars for the evening.

"As guests leave the orchestra's Masterworks Concert season-opener, they will come down the stairs, where waiters will greet them with trays of moonlight martinis. As they go into the ballroom, they will see the garden setting, the walls lighted with aubergine color and lights simulating a starlit sky," says Strauss.

Each table centerpiece is described by Greenebaum as a fabulous concoction of a Victorian gazing ball nestled in a bed of deep purple roses and acanthus leaves on a low pedestal and accented by votive candles.

"The David Archer Band will play again this year. Last year, people enjoyed them so much and stayed much later than usual and danced and had a wonderful time. The band is the first thing I booked this year," says Strauss.

The evening also will feature a cocktail hour, a silent auction and dinner catered by Charleston Place.

The two commissioned Billis sculptures "Tomorrow's Music -- Boy" and "Tomorrow's Music -- Girl," are small bronzes, one of a boy playing a cello and one of a girl playing a violin. The sculptures will be available for purchase the night of the gala and through the end of the year. Billis will donate 20 percent of the proceeds of the sale of the limited-edition sculptures to the CSOL. The pieces can be previewed at the Martin Gallery at 18 Broad St.

"Mitch offered to do the sculptures. He is very community involved, and it

was his suggestion to do an original piece," says Candace Martin, owner of the Martin Gallery, through which Billis' work is available locally. Billis is a Montana artist.

Other Billis sculptures on display and for sale that evening are "Merbaby," a little mermaid catching a ride on the tail of a sea turtle; "Stepping Stone," depicting a young girl lithely skipping through a stream; and finally, a fountain titled "Ahlea," featuring a mermaid astride a leaping bronze dolphin.

"Last year's attendance was a record high sold-out crowd. We anticipate the same for this year. We encourage you to respond quickly," says Strauss.

Greenebaum praises the volunteers for the work that has gone into this year's gala.

"This event doesn't just spring up overnight like a mushroom. Margaret and the other devoted volunteers started planning this in November of last year," says Greenebaum.

Although invitations have gone out for the gala, Strauss says tickets and benefactor tables are available to those without an invitation, also. Tickets are \$150 per person for the gala.

"But tickets are sold separately to the concert and the gala for those people who only want to attend one or the other," says Strauss. For more information, log onto www.csolinc.org or call 768-3070.

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