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WEEKEND  
Arts & Entertainment

# Premiere night at Bravo!



Special to the Daily Chamber music specialist Elizabeth Brown will perform tonight at the Vilar Center in Beaver Creek as part of the Bravo! Vail Valley Music festival. Her piece, "Catalog of Scents in the Garden at Night for Violin and Viola," was commissioned especially for the festival.

By Chris Freud

Daily Staff Writer

Composer Elizabeth Brown was sitting anonymously in the audience before the debut of one her works at Ithaca College in New York a few years ago when she heard two college students talking over the program notes.

"In most concert notes they list the dates the composers lived," Brown said. "If you haven't died, there's a dash after the year of your birth. One of the students said, 'Look, Elizabeth Brown is still alive,' like it was a real novelty.

"I didn't have the nerve to turn around then, but after the performance when I was asked to stand up I did turn around and stared at them," Brown added with a laugh.

This light-hearted moment aside, the debut of one's work before an audience can be a nerve-wracking experience. And Brown expects it to be no different tonight when her "Catalog of Scents in the Garden at Night for Violin and Viola" premieres at 6 p.m. at the Vilar Center in Beaver Creek as the Bravo! Vail Valley Music festival continues.

"I'm usually gripping the arm rest or the arm of a friend," Brown said. "It's the scariest thing for me. If I'm playing an instrument or my own piece, I'm fine. It's not as though I'm worried about the performers — they're fabulous. It's more about baring my soul, even though I'm doing it in music and not in words. It's a little embarrassing. My inspirations are rather humble and personal and everyday."

Brown's work was commissioned for the festival and was completed a few months ago. A specialist in chamber music, Brown also will be appearing Wednesday in Vail as a part of the Linda and Mitch Hart Soiree Series. There, she will be performing her "Acadia for Flute and Shakuhachi" with Eugenia Zukerman.

"It's very exciting to this composer writing a work just for our festival," Bravo! marketing director Katie Campbell said. "She's a master of the present. Every year, we commission a work and this year we're especially excited that it is a chamber piece. It really puts the chamber series on the map."

Brown describes her music in general as "lyrical and melancholy." In her new work, she takes the listener to experience the sights, sounds and smells of one of her favorite places in the world, her garden in New York City.

"My garden, where I'm sitting now, is one of the joys of my life," Brown said during a phone interview last week. "I'm originally from Alabama, so I wasn't brought up in a city. Now I have the tiny plot of land. In fact, it smells really good now."

Bravo! fan favorites Elissa Lee Kojonen on the violin and Roberto Diaz on the viola will perform the work. That the Kojonen and Diaz are married did not escape Brown's notice.

"All my music is pretty integrated in how the parts fit together in terms of the dynamic," Brown said. "There are a lot of subtleties. I think it's ideal that for this piece, the instruments are close in register and being played by a couple in love."

The premiere of "Catalog of Scents in the Garden at Night for Violin and Viola" is part of a full evening of chamber music titled, "Favorites and a Festival First." To open the program, Kurt Niskanen on the violin, Zuill Bailey on the cello and Jonathan Biss on the piano will perform Mendelssohn's Trio in D Minor. That trio brought down the house Friday night at the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater Vilar Pavilion with its performance of the Beethoven's Triple Concerto.

After Brown's debut, Bill Jackson, Niskanen, Kojonen, Diaz and Bailey will present Brahms' Quintet in B Minor for Clarinet and Strings.

Tickets are available at the Vilar Center box office or by calling (970) 845-TIXS.