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## 'French Connection' closes Gold Coast Chamber Players season

Submitted by Pamela Freund-Striplen



SF Piano Trio Photos provided

The award-winning Gold Coast Chamber Players season finale, "French Connection," will feature the Piano Quartet #2, op. 45 by Gabriel Faure and piano trios of Lili Boulanger and Maurice Ravel. What makes Ravel's trio such a masterpiece, besides its immediate sensual appeal, is the blending of both a skillfully crafted structure and the indescribably fresh voice of Ravel and a new musical era.

The final of this season's five concerts will be performed twice: first at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 19 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette and then at 7 p.m. on Sunday, May 20 at Piedmont Center for the Arts, 801 Magnolia Ave. in Piedmont.

The trio includes many wonderful details of construction and expression including novelties both exotic and presciently neoclassical. Lili Boulanger was the first woman to win the prestigious Prix de Rome in composition and was undoubtedly influenced by her close family friend Gabriel Faure. Faure's second piano quartet has been called "tempestuous" with vibrant modal inflections and innovative progressions. Arthur Cohen writes, "It is a cultured music that has a freshness that never stales."

Bringing this program to life is the San Francisco Piano Trio, featuring German violinist Axel Strauss, French cellist Jean-Michel Fonteneau, and American pianist Jeffrey Sykes, with American violist Pamela Freund-Striplen. The SF Piano Trio has been praised for its virtuosic ensemble playing and the Well-Tempered Ear noted that the trio "brought a closely attentive and particularly quiet audience to its feet for a prolonged standing ovation. ... That they played with terrific virtuosity and technical fluency was easy to perceive throughout the demanding program. But the careful listener, the discerning ear, was more impressed ... by their unerring musicianship; and by their ability to blend, to dialogue with each other."

Founded in 1987, GCCP distinguishes itself by its eclectic programming and by providing community access to leading musicians from throughout the world.

Tickets are \$45 general admission, \$40 senior (65+), and \$15 for students and include a pre-concert talk by musicologist Kai Christiansen at 7 p.m. (Lafayette only). Purchase online at [www.gcplayers.org](http://www.gcplayers.org) or by calling (925) 283-3728.

Limited seating, please reserve early as these concerts usually sell out.



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[back](#)

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