

APPLAUSE

**Belladonna at 30:
a personal perspective**

Ran Blake, a jazz improvisation teacher of mine, once told me that when we meet the right people to play with, we should never leave them. I am so fortunate to have had many musicians, friends and musical partners throughout my life and career, but one is very special—Belladonna.

I moved to Minnesota in 1992, and soon after looked for a harpsichordist to play a recital with. To my surprise, I found an amazing Baroque Opera Company in St. Paul called Ex-Machina, with artistic director James Middleton and music director Barbara Weiss. Soon after meeting Barbara, we planned a recital; she suggested inviting two very talented sisters who also lived in Minneapolis to join us—Margaret and Rebecca Humphrey, Baroque violin and Baroque cello respectively.

Our love and musical trust for each other developed immediately. After that first concert in January 1993,



▲ **Belladonna.** Left to right: Barbara Weiss, harpsichord; Margaret Humphrey, Baroque violin; Cléa Galhano, recorder; Rebecca Humphrey, Baroque cello.

30 years later we are still going strong. Our lives have changed, and some of the members moved to other countries or states, but our profound trust and love for each other has never waned.

In our three decades of beautiful music making, discoveries, and friendship, the quartet has toured all over the U.S., Brazil, Canada and Europe. We recorded two CDs on Dorian and Ten Thousand Lakes labels. Composers have written for us; we have had musical collaborations with a pipa player, with singers, actors and theater directors. Belladonna was also ensemble-in-residence at the prestigious Schubert Club in Saint Paul for 11 years.

Some of our reviews express better than I can say what we have felt for each other and what we have worked together to achieve. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in Wisconsin wrote, “Belladonna’s success is due in great part to an unfailing attention to detail. Every aspect of their performance is united. The musical character of a piece is expressed in the phrasing, dynamics and even in the character of the articulations, which they execute in perfect unison...” The *Boston (MA) Globe* described us like this: “The four-woman chamber ensemble Belladonna presented a program of 17th century folias in witty arrangements ... in performances that were high profile, fantastically colored and just plain hot. Their flashy rhythmic play and daredevil divisions drove the audience into fits. Belladonna reminded us that early music, however historically informed, is as quirky, improvisatory and fresh as jazz.”

Now when I see my recorder students developing their careers all over the world, and I help many college and university students to start

their own musical journeys, I always advise them to expose themselves to new musical opportunities and trust their intuition. Sooner than they think, lifelong musical partners will come their way. ✨

Written by Cléa Galhano

Belladonna’s 30-year anniversary celebration includes performances in Florida, New York and St. Paul, MN, where the journey started: www.belladonna-baroque.com

**Scholarship endowment
created to honor Peter Seibert**

On November 16, Peter Seibert was honored at a luncheon at The Lakeside School in Seattle, WA. The event was attended by several members of the school’s classes of 1970 and 1971, whose alumni had raised money for an endowed music scholarship in his name. Seibert taught various music classes, ranging from brass choir and glee club to tonal counterpoint, from 1965-93 at the independent school (whose students included during those years the young Paul Allen and Bill Gates of Microsoft).

The Peter Seibert Endowment for Music Education supports private lessons for students; as incoming fifth-graders, all are required to take either violin or cello lessons for a year, even if they play other instruments.

The former ARS Board member and *American Recorder* author (whose article on William Byrd appears in this *AR*) is also the 2012 recipient of the ARS Presidential Special Honor Award. ✨

The Lakeside School:
www.lakesideschool.org/arts/arts-overview