

## Three Rivers to Host Renowned Violinist

Summer Camp will Feature  
Teachers, Performers and Students

*By Rick Elkins*

*Three Rivers* - Thanks to the collaboration of Three Rivers resident Bill Haxton and solo violinist Danielle Belen, the foothill community will play host to some of the world's top string players and also to young string players striving to become world renowned as well.

Violinist Danielle Belen, first prize winner of the 2008 Sphinx Competition, has put together the camp – Center Stage Strings – for June 14-20 in Three Rivers. She is also an instructor at the prestigious Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles, a school for aspiring, but accomplished, string soloist.

The camp will bring six students from Colburn and two other students - one from Seattle and the other from the prestigious Idyllwild Arts Academy Theatre in Southern California. The students range in age from 9 to 20.

Belen did not rule out local students from attending, but they would have to be playing violin at a high level already. The school is definitely not for beginners. “We'd love to have local students, those on track to professional careers.”

Why Three Rivers? “I wanted an intensive place for my students to go to study for the summer,” said the impressive 27-year-old soloist. “Of course, I immediately thought of Three Rivers. It's so beautiful.”

Belen's connection to Three Rivers is a good story. When her father retired her parents looked for a place out of Southern California in which to live. They looked out of state and in northern California before discovering Three Rivers, where they obviously settled.

On a recent visit to her parents, Belen met Haxton, a realtor and an arts advocate in Three Rivers. The two got to talking and the next thing she knew, the music camp was in place and rolling.

“Within days he had people interested and a venue for our performances,” smiled Belen. He has also helped to set up host families for the students and some of the guest artists and teachers. “He's taken this above and beyond my wildest dreams,” she added.

“It is not just for students. We're also bringing in world class performers because of my connections,” she said.

Among those is Robert Lipsett, another member of the Colburn faculty and a world class violinist. William Hagen, a 17-year-old violin virtuoso who has played with some of the major orchestras in America and Jennie Jung and Diego Miralles will also take part in the camp.

Four performances are planned. Hagen will perform at 7 p.m. on June 15. The faculty trio – Belen, Jung, Miralles – will perform at 7 p.m. on June 19 and a wrap-up concert featuring the students of 5 p.m. on June 20.



**Accomplished violin soloist Danielle Belen will hold a camp for aspiring violinist in Three Rivers this June.**

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up concert featuring the students at 5 p.m. on June 20.

In addition, said Belen, Lipsett will hold a “master class” on June 18 that is open to the public as a “glimpse of what these young virtuosos go through.”

All of the concerts, as well as the summer camp, will be held at the Three Rivers Community Presbyterian Church in the main chapel.

#### **Accomplished Artist**

Belen began playing the violin at age 5, and realized about age 13 that it was something she really wanted to pursue. By age 15, she started to focus intensely, practicing four hours a day.

It paid off. She recently performed as soloist with the Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Nashville and San Francisco symphonies, the Boston Pops and the Florida and Cleveland Orchestras.

She is a graduate of the USC Thornton School of Music and the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles, where she is now a member of the faculty. However, she has been giving violin lessons since she was in high school.

She enjoys teaching master classes and leading community engagements across the country in conjunction with her professional performance appearances, but said performing is equally rewarding.

“I couldn't do one without the other,” she said.

#### **Hopes for School**

Belen hopes to see the summer camp grow both in numbers of students and with more sessions.

“We'd love to turn this into a month-long camp like I went to as a kid,” she said. She hopes to see it grow to as many as 40 students at a time.

“Our mission is to really focus on these talented students on their instruments to become the best soloists they can be, also to enjoy the outdoors.”

The world of classical music has become so competitive, she pointed out, that even if one's goal is to be an orchestra performer, they almost need the same skills as a soloist.

Cost for the camp is \$800 and Belen's parents will serve as the main hosts, feeding the students during their stay

Belen, who plays on a 1709 Alessandro Gagliano violin from the Mandell Collection of Southern California, said she hopes to bring recitals to Three Rivers during the year as well.

For more on the school go to [www.centerstagestrings.com](http://www.centerstagestrings.com) or call 561-4078.

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