

# Andrea Clearfield's Musical Salon

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Devotees of live and original music gather nearly every month at the Center City home of Andrea Clearfield, award-winning composer, to hear performances at her salon, a musical performance series which she curates in an intimate private setting. Modeled after 19<sup>th</sup> century European salons, Clearfield's salon includes music of all genres—chamber, opera, jazz, folk, choral and world music, as well as dance, visual arts and poetry. Clearfield invites performers and composers, nationally and internationally known, and she occasionally presents emerging artists. In 2008, *Philadelphia Magazine* awarded the salon Best of Philly for Best Highbrow Fun.

Clearfield, a vibrant and enthusiastic musician, feels her salon uplifts the spirit. "My salon in Philadelphia is a 26-year tradition. I started it in 1986 as a way of creating and building a vital and joyful community around music and the arts in the heart of Philadelphia. As a native Philadelphian, I want to give back something to the city I love."

The audience is diverse, intergenerational, open-minded and sophisticated. They listen enthusiastically to new performers, composers, instruments, or types of music. Clearfield says, "It opens their ears." She tells the audience, "You're on a journey of the eyes, ears, and spirit, an adventure into music of different countries and different times." *City Paper* wrote that salon performers have told Clearfield they enjoy performing at her salon because "the audience is truly listening."

In Clearfield's first salon in 1986 she and her friends performed for each other in her former apartment. Clearfield moved into her current space in 2003. *All About Jazz* said, "Clearfield's salon is a musical feast in a huge, high-ceilinged living room with a balcony and full stage lighting and sound equipment! What a treat!"

Clearfield plans her programs nine months in advance and often has many performers on the waiting list. Each salon consists of 10 ensembles or soloists, each playing for 10 minutes. Performers and composers say a few words to the audience about their work and creative process, and discussions



Andrea Clearfield, pianist and composer, holds performances in an intimate setting modeled after 19<sup>th</sup> century European salons.

continue after the performances. According to Clearfield, "The performances and conversations in this intimate space break down barriers and create a dynamic exchange."

Clearfield holds a doctorate of musical arts from Temple University, where she twice received the John Heller Memorial Award for excellence in composition and was the first composer to receive the Presidential Fellowship. She has composed more than 90 musical works for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles, dance and multimedia collaborations, works that have been performed in the U.S. and abroad. Organizations that want to start salons have hired her as a consultant. This year Clearfield hosted salons in Aspen, CO, Rye, NY and at the Main Line Reform Temple in Wynnewood, PA.

Her treks through northern Nepal, documenting Tibetan music, inspired her to write a cantata based on this fieldwork. This cantata, *Tse Go La (At the Threshold of This Life)*, commissioned by the Mendelssohn Club and the Pennsylvania

Girlchoir, premiered with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia in 2012 and was subsequently performed in New York City and at the University of Texas at Austin. Her Himalayan visits inspired her to compose other musical works commissioned and premiered by the Network for New Music as well as her first opera, now in progress. The Philadelphia Orchestra and acclaimed flutist Carol Wincenc have commissioned her compositions.

*The New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *L.A. Times* and *Opera News* have praised Clearfield highly, and various foundations and academies in Italy, Spain, and the U.S. have given her awards and fellowships. She was a visiting composer at the International Conservatory Week Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia, and at several universities in the U.S. She served on the faculty of the University of the Arts, where she taught composition and interdisciplinary arts. More information about Andrea Clearfield and her salon is available at [www.andreaclearfield.com/](http://www.andreaclearfield.com/)