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Envoy's Album

learning through the universal language of music

When he took over as president of the University of Ottawa, Allan Rock told his faculty and staff he wanted the university to become a vital part of the Ottawa community. Too often universities look inward to enrich life on campus instead of outside their walls to enrich the larger life of the city, he told them.

One of the initiatives the school took was to broaden its mandate of long-term education. The Centre for Continuing Education has provided professional development courses for a few years but recently added general interest courses for adults to its offerings. Some are for credit towards a degree and others aren't; some run for the whole term, others for a few evenings. And still other opportunities are more about community outreach than formal education.

"The idea was to open the school to people beyond the usual age group of 18 to 24," explained Serge Blais, the centre's director. "The doors are wide open. People can come in without any pre-requisites or previous learning."

Enter the diplomatic corps. In a three-part series this fall, the centre, in conjunction with the university's Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory, offered a free evening of information and music hosted by an ambassador at his or her residence.

British High Commissioner Anthony Cary, Jordanian Ambassador Nabil Ali Barto and German Ambassador Matthias Höpfner hosted evenings.

The diplomatic hosts provided the wine and snacks and the university provided



Pianist Elaine Keillor, the first woman to get a PhD in musicology in Canada, performed at all three of the University of Ottawa's musical evenings hosted by heads of missions.

the period instruments – clavichord, harpsichord and pianoforte – and the musicians. For each event, music professor Gilles Comeau came up with a program that was inspired by the host country's musical history and provided a one-hour lecture about the period's social trends and artistic developments.

"What more elegant setting could you get than the ambassador's residence for an evening like this?" asked Mr. Blais.

The three-part series was followed by an evening concert of period music at Freiman Hall on campus.

Those interested could sign up for one or all of the evening performances with food and wine provided at the residences. They were free on a first-come, first-served basis, though the final concert cost \$20, which went to support the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory.

Mr. Blais is working on a winter session and has had interest from the embassy of Burkina Faso. He said they'd like to start incorporating some young talent into the events as well. "They might be our students, but not necessarily. We might also draw from the community," he said.