



Joann Freeman, concert pianist, founder and artistic director enjoys searching for and programming obscure works by well-known composers.

Presenting rare treats

Joann Freeman's five-concert American Artists Series opens its season at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 12, at Kingswood Auditorium, Bloomfield Hills.

Those who look forward to hearing rarely performed works by outstanding composers on this series will be pleased to know that the energetic Freeman, series founder, artistic director and pianist, continues her search for lost masterpieces.

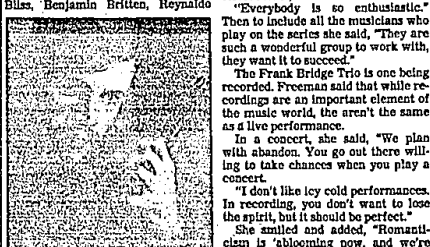
And this year she will again have surprises. To prevent these works from again falling into oblivion, Freeman and the AAS Chamber Players are recording some of the best in Orchestra Hall. They often work after the traffic has subsided to avoid any outside noise.

"Each program," said Freeman talking about the season ahead, "will have one monumental work." These are:

- Jan. 12, Quintet for Piano and String Quartet by Robert Schumann;
- Feb. 16, the Quintet for Piano and String Quartet by Anton Dvorak;
- March 9, Quartet, Opus 15 for Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello by Gabriel Faure; and
- May 4, The Quintet for Piano and String Quartet by Johannes Brahms.

Freeman called these "the block-busters."

PROGRAMMED WITH these on the four instrumental programs will be works by Frank Martin, Arthur Bliss, Benjamin Britten, Reynaldo



Hart Holman

Ronald Fischer

John Thurman

DOING LITTLE-KNOWN classical works often requires time and dedication from the musicians. For instance, "It took two hours to read through the Frank Bridge Trio (March 9), but it's such a good piece, they were all willing to put a lot of effort into it," Freeman said.

"Everybody is so enthusiastic." Then to include all the musicians who play on the series she said, "They are such a wonderful group to work with, they want it to succeed."

The Frank Bridge Trio is one being recorded. Freeman said that while recordings are an important element of the music world, they aren't the same as a live performance.

In a concert, she said, "We plan with abandon. You go out there willing to take chances when you play a concert."

"I don't like icy cold performances. In recording, you don't want to lose the spirit, but it should be perfect."

She smiled and added, "Romanticism is 'abandoning now, and were right in step."

Speaking of Christmas

Author, illustrator share their skills

By Corinne Abbott
staff writer

Cynthia Holt Cummings' newest book for children, "Christmas Surprise," is receiving as warm a welcome as a batch of oatmeal cookies fresh from the oven.

Cummings, who started this second career when most people are kissing their goodbyes, has built a new lifestyle as well. Now, with four self-published books and 86 years to her credit, she not only writes, publishes and markets the books, but she makes personal appearances for school and community groups.

Cummings and her illustrator, Danna Clark of Oxford, may be a few decades apart chronologically, but they are of one mind when it comes to the books.

Clark, who did "Christmas Surprise" and "Christmas Love," appreciates Cummings' poetry and stories, and Cummings marvels at the detail and interest Clark puts into the illustrations.

Clark was unfamiliar with book illustration when Cummings found her, but Clark, who said she has always liked challenges, plunged in and learned quickly.

LIKE CUMMINGS, she is self-taught, tuned in to children, determined, open and friendly. Both draw on experience and the world around them.

Cummings, who grew up on a farm in New England, brings a kind of small-town naive charm to her work. The books are filled with a childlike idyllic vision of love. She has happy memories of Christmas in New England, and those are reflected in her writing.

Clark said, "I won a coloring contest at 7. My name was announced on the local TV, and I knew I wanted to be an artist."

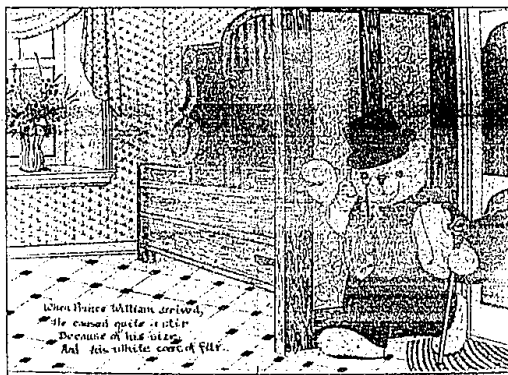
Clark, too, visits lots of schools to talk about book illustration. "The key when talking to children is to keep it simple. I tell them to start drawing what you're familiar with."

And she's as good as her admonition to the kids. The rooms in "Christmas Surprise" and "Christmas Love" will look very familiar to her friends, relatives and family.

Her drawing of the Little Gift Shop in "Christmas Love" is really the Sign of the Marmalade where she and Cummings met. She said she wanted each of the bears in "Christmas Surprise" to look unique.

And indeed they do — Prince William (bear) has a monocle, top hat and cape to protect his white fur. The sad-eyed Muffy wears an Indian design deer skin suit and beaded moccasins. Surprise is a bomey, but dapper, Clifton Webb-type (for those who remember the father in "Cheaper by the Dozen"). Mandy is a pert little thing with bows in her hair (fur).

"I couldn't do this without the help of my husband," Cummings said. The books are selling in 27 states. She has signed 15,000 copies of "Christmas



Cynthia Holt Cummings, above left, and Danna Clark have found a common, mooring ground in their skills and their delight in sharing their work with children as well as adults. At left, is a page from their latest collaborative work, "Christmas Surprise."

Staff Photos by
Mindy Saunders

Surprise." "Christmas Love," already in its second printing, is doing well.

Cummings wrote her first poem, "Convey," when she was a Navy nurse during World War II. It was about an American convoy ship who was on that was rammed by a tanker. She read it for the men aboard a second ship, and "Convey" was later included in the history of the 77th Field Artillery.

SHE CONTINUED to write poetry, but it wasn't until she published

"Christmas Ribbons" in 1980 that her life changed. That book was followed by "Christmas Memories," 1982, "Christmas Love," 1984 and now "Christmas Surprise."

Cummings is as likely to be hopping out of her car with an armload of books to show a store manager in Topika, Kan. or St. Louis Mo., as she is in Naples, Fla., Livonia or Birmingham.

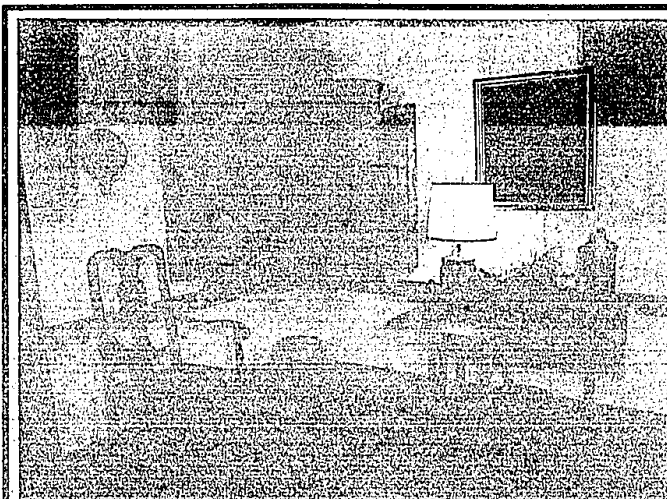
She gives them a friendly smile, talks about her books, herself and her

second career and usually talks them into selling her books.

That's because she believes in what she does, likes what she does and just wants to share a little love and happiness.

Locally, her books are available at the Mole Hole and Jabberwocky of Birmingham and Country Lane of Royal Oak.

For information on where to find them in other communities, call Holt-Peterson Press, 626-3403.



Sponsoring Christmas walk

The annual Westside Christmas Walk, sponsored by the Detroit Symphony League, will be held 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 5. The tour of five homes and Kirk-in-the-Hills, includes two historic homes in Franklin Village. At left is a sample of the interior of one of the Franklin homes, complete with antique Santa statue and Santa pull toy. Tickets are available at the Kirk on tour day or by calling Judy Gavor, 851-0022; Barb Guhney, 842-8514 or Judy Harri, 623-0534.