

STRING QUARTET TRIP

by Sue Jan Bryant
Seattle Symphony

Day one in the Grand Canyon is a glorious display of sunshine, spectacular rock walls, and shimmering water. Once we are fitted with life jackets and given a short briefing by the crew leader, we embark on the adventure of a lifetime, travelling 226 miles on the Colorado River.

Picture this; sleeping on sandy beaches and rock ledges, hiking up wondrous side canyons, swimming in aquamarine pools and frolicking in waterfalls, constantly in awe of the beauty that surrounds us. From the monumental sheer rock walls and ever changing sky, to the delicate desert flowers and creatures, through the massive thundering rapids, the Grand Canyon is an astounding and life affirming experience.

North Canyon is our destination for the first string quartet concert on day two, a somewhat formidable hike of forty five minutes carrying instruments, music, stands, water and buckets, which will serve as our chairs.

The concert includes Bach's perfect Art of the Fugue, Haydn's last completed quartet, Op.77/2, Australia's living composer Ross Edwards' meditative piece, 'Enyato', ending with the vibrant Dvorak Op. 96 'American' quartet.

In the last six years, seven Seattle Symphony players have been members of the yearly string quartet river trip for the Canyon Explorations/Expeditions company, including Bruce and Mariel Bailey ('03), Walter Gray ('04 & '09), John Weller ('08), Rachel Swerdlow ('09), and Steve Bryant (all of them!). In addition, several local extra musicians who play with the Seattle Symphony have been members; Adrianna Hulscher ('04), BettyAgent ('05 & '06) and Sue Jane Bryant ('03,'08 & '09). Memorable moments with these fine and resilient musicians abound; Mariel fiddling in camp with Paul, river guide and guitarist, Bruce pumping the lion's share of the water for camp, Walter flipping in his inflatable kayak in Upset rapid, swimming the rest of the way, John entertaining the ladies with juicy violin solos, and Rachel stung by a scorpion and enjoying being on the crew of the paddle boat.

Steve Bryant continues to lead each of these river quartets, loving the varied aspects of this multifaceted wilderness trip. In addition to side canyon concerts, sunrise concerts and cocktail hour music, the quartet will even perform on the rafts in the river, the boats tied together in an eddy, or in a quiet stretch of flat water. These are always the most impossible yet vivid concert moments for the passengers, who often come away with a new respect and appreciation for live classical music. Join us for a future white water string quartet trip down the Grand Canyon, a fantastic and inspiring adventure of a lifetime!

Canyon Exploration/Expeditions (800) 654-0723 www.canyonexplorations.com

