



## Freer House Pulses with Music, Art and Drama

- by William Colburn  
*Director, Freer House Project*

Art, music and song filled the Exhibition Gallery (also known as Hoobler Lounge) of Charles Lang Freer's historic home as friends gathered in support of plans to restore the adjacent former Whistler Gallery. A consummate art collector, Freer built his first private gallery in a major addition to his home in 1906, filling it with natural light and dozens of his prized Whistler paintings. Since the 1950s however, the gallery has suffered several alterations to convert it into office space, changes that negatively affected its historic design and character. At one time, it was home to the Kresge Historical Library with dozens of book stacks lining the floor.

The Friends of the Freer House and MPSI have launched a fund-raising campaign to restore this room to its original design. The cubicle offices and drop ceilings would be removed and the room returned to its open plan as a space for meetings, conferences and exhibits. The Friends announced this exciting project with the March benefit,



Clockwise from bottom left: Students from the WSU Theater Department, Alexandre Bleau (l) and George Abud, read letters between Freer and Whistler. The talented Scarab Club Music Ensemble sets the mood for the restoration benefit. Chris Felcyn (l), host of Detroit Public Television's WRCT FM joins new Friends of the Freer House member Louise Papista and her guest Thea Kavadas (seated). WSU Interior Design students appreciate the restoration's challenges.



drawing a capacity crowd for a creative multi-sensory immersion into Freer's life and the former glory of the Whistler Gallery.

*Whistler and Freer through Art, Music and*

*Letters* highlighted the remarkable friendship between these two men and the priceless Whistler works that Freer once displayed in his gallery. Guests viewed projected images of select paintings from Freer's collection,

while Detroit's Scarab Club Ensemble played music carefully selected to accompany each work of art. Special guest tenor Damien Top from Paris sang. Personal letters between Freer and Whistler were dramatized by two talented actors from the WSU Theater Department. The blending of art, music and theater won rave reviews from the rapt audience and raised more than \$2,000 toward the cost of a professional plan needed to guide future restoration and fund-raising.

2011



Whistler Gallery as it currently exists as office space divided into small rooms and cubicles.

1906



Whistler Gallery circa 1906 with original art hanging.

*If you would like to donate to this important project, please make out your check to FOFH/WSU and mail to Rose Foster, Freer House Restoration, 71 E. Ferry Street, Detroit, MI 48202. We appreciate all levels of support. To learn about other ways to donate or to be notified about future Friends of the Freer House events, please email Rose at [rmfoster@wayne.edu](mailto:rmfoster@wayne.edu).*