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[Local ensembles are taking traditional music into non-traditional spaces](#)

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Federal Hill Parlor Series

Interaction with patrons is a given when the Federal Hill Parlor Series has an event, especially one held in a house.

“The Parlor Series started because I was walking my dog around Federal Hill, seeing pianos in windows, but never seeing anyone playing them,” Ihnen said. “I thought: ‘What if we performed in these houses?’”

One program Ihnen devised matches a reading of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” with vocal music from his era to complement a dinner party. Hosts are invited to collaborate with Ihnen on devising musical programs built around particular themes or culinary choices.

Typically, the musicians will perform three or four sets — “Nothing so long that girls in heels can’t stand through it,” Ihnen said — and the selections will be woven throughout a sit-down dinner or a buffet. There might be as few as eight guests, as many as 40.

“When you perform in a home, people are not sitting that far away from you,” Ihnen said. “Musicians find it very different when you can see their faces. People can see you thinking, so you need to be telling a great story through the music. I want to curate programming that is interesting enough on Friday night that you’re still talking about on Monday morning.”

Ihnen is now working on a plan to present concerts later this year at the Sobo Cafe in Federal Hill.

“There are live-entertainment issues in Federal Hill,” she said. “The new owners had to petition for a license so we could perform there. If they get it, we will probably perform on an off-night, when it is not too busy and people can listen and eat easily.”