The Expert Musicianship of the Dover Quartet Returns

When the immensely talented Dover Quartet debuted with Friends of Music in 2016, our audience said, “Bring them back, please.” Therefore, they will be opening our milestone 65th season on Saturday, September 22, 2018 at 8 pm in Sleepy Hollow High School. Their program will include Tchaikovsky’s Quartet No. 3 in E-flat minor, Op. 30; From Amber Frozen, by the young American composer Mason Bates; and Schubert’s Quartet in G Major, Op. 161 (D 887).

The Dover Quartet catapulted to international stardom following a stunning sweep of the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, becoming one of the most in-demand ensembles in the world. The New Yorker recently dubbed them “the young American string quartet of the moment,” and The Strad raved that the Quartet is “pulling away from their peers with their exceptional interpretive maturity, tonal refinement, and taut ensemble.”

The Dover has continued to receive accolades. For two consecutive years the group was awarded the highly prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award. Shortly thereafter, Lincoln Center awarded the Quartet the annual Hunt Family Award, as part of the organization’s Emerging Artist Awards; it then received Lincoln Center’s prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. In 2013-14 the Quartet was the first ever Quartet-in-Residence for the venerated Curtis Institute of Music. It now is faculty Quartet-in-Residence at Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music.

Violinists Joel Link and Bryan Lee, violist Milena Pajaro-Van de Stadt, and cellist Camden Shaw formed the Quartet in 2008 at Curtis Institute. Their subsequent performances have taken them throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Middle East, as well as to some of this continent’s most prestigious music festivals. The first of three planned CDs, Tribute: Dover Quartet Plays Mozart, was released in the fall of 2015 to universal acclaim.
How often do critics say, of a chamber group, “Their exquisitely blended tone is amber-rich, like a cognac cask-ripened to maturity?” Just once that we know of, and our audiences in 2007 and 2012, when the Takács last appeared on our series, have agreed. More recently *The New York Times* has commented “Even in the most fiendish repertoire these players show no fear, injecting the music with a heady sense of freedom.” We look forward to the group’s return to our stage on **Saturday, October 20, 2018**. Their program will include Haydn’s String Quartet in D minor, Op. 76, No. 2; Shostakovich’s String Quartet in D Major, No. 4, Op. 83; and Mendelssohn’s String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80.

In 2014 the Takács became the first string quartet to win the Wigmore Hall Medal, which recognizes major international artists who have a strong association with that London venue. In 2012 the group became the only string quartet to be inducted into Gramophone’s Hall of Fame, taking its place with such legendary artists as Jascha Heifetz, Leonard Bernstein, and Dame Janet Baker. Their many other awards have included the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London. Now based in Boulder at the University of Colorado where they are Christoffersen Faculty Fellows, the Quartet performs eighty concerts a year worldwide, throughout Europe as well as in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. During the 2017-18 season those included a six-concert Beethoven cycle in Wigmore Hall, at Princeton, the University of Michigan, and U.C., Berkeley.

The Takács brings fresh insights to the string quartet repertoire, as illustrated in their many award-winning recordings for both Decca/London and Hyperion labels. Releases for Hyperion include string quartets by Haydn, Schubert, Janacek, Smetana, Debussy, and Britten, as well as piano quintets by Cesar Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-Andre Hamelin), and viola quintets by Brahms (with Lawrence Power). Their CDs for Decca/London have included one of Schubert’s magnificent String Quintet in C Major, Op. 163.
Beyond Concerts

From its outset, Friends of Music Concerts has been almost as much about bringing music to children as it has been about providing excellent live music experiences for adults. Its first concert, by the then young Juilliard String Quartet, was preceded by a JSC day-time concert for students, with commentary by the artists. Over the years that developed into a program that brought young professional musicians into the public schools, led for a while by Board member Bill Altman. Most recently this Partnership in Education program has been overseen by Board member Rosella Ranno, whose own background as a piano teacher included many years teaching in public schools in New York City. Last spring before one of our concerts she described it for the audience:

“Our Partnership in Education grant provides a unique opportunity for extraordinarily talented young professional musicians to connect with dedicated music students and faculty throughout the Westchester County school system. And by ‘connect’ I mean performance through guided listening and workshops for both small ensembles and large, from elementary school through high school orchestras. The workshops take varied forms but always include instruction on instrumental technique, musical interpretation, performance evaluation, and, most interesting lately, improvisation and composition.

“All of us are enthralled by the talented musicians who grace our concert stage but to see them in action as enthusiastic, engaging teachers, and to enjoy the response from the students and faculty is a rewarding experience for everyone involved.”

Ms. Ranno said that the Partnership program not only nurtures those students who might continue a performing path but also helps develop all participating students into audiences of the future. She pointed out that, since chosen partner/school districts incur no charge, increased funding to Friends of Music would help us expand the program beyond its current limit of two school districts per year.

Last spring the Zorá String Quartet spent a day-long residency at Sleepy Hollow High School and the PUBLICQuartet spent one at Ossining High School, both free of charge to those school districts, as part of the Partnership program. The school districts had been chosen after describing in their applications their own music programs and what schedules they anticipated. Applications now are open for next spring’s residencies. Application forms and more information about the program are available on FOM’s website, www.friendsofmusicconcerts.org.

Still Time to Subscribe

Subscriptions for this landmark 65th season have been rolling in all summer and of course we now are accepting orders for tickets to individual concerts. If you haven’t yet gotten your subscription orders in, you still can do so.

Most people have been taking advantage of the traditional subscription, which, at $140 each, admits each concert goer to six concerts for the price of four at the single ticket price of $35. This year we’re trying out the additional option of purchasing three tickets for $90 (a lesser discount) that can be used for in different ways, e.g. all three for one concert, one ticket for whichever of three concerts you prefer, etc.

Whatever option you choose, send your orders now to Friends of Music Concerts, Inc., P.O. Box 675, Millwood, NY 10546, or subscribe online via our website, www.friendsofmusicconcerts.org.

While you’re at it, bring students with you. If they are ages 18 or under, they will be admitted free of charge, as they have been for several years. But this year we have an additional option: college students with appropriate i.d.s can pay just $15 per concert. This is all part of our effort to enhance students’ musical experiences and build audiences of the future. You can help us spread the word.

If you have any questions about ticket availability, you can call 914-861-5080, leave a message, and your call will be returned promptly.
There’s a lot more to classical music than orchestra music…including everything from solo piano works to Gregorian chant to contemporary instrumental sextets with electric guitar. She mentions favorite string quartets (all those of Beethoven and Shostokovich and some from living composers such as Elena Ruehr and Jefferson Friedman. She goes on to talk about trios: stringed trios by Mozart and piano trios (a piano and two string instruments) by Shubert. And the septet Stravinsky used in “L’histoire du soldat” and the quartet of clarinet, violin, cello, and piano that Olivier Messiaen used in “Quartet for the End of Time.”

Classical music is relaxing. By that she doesn’t mean “elevator music,” but rather works like Erik Satie’s piano music, “languid and quirky, drifting across the ear;” Lou Harrison’s Suite for Violin and American Gamelan; and Bach’s unaccompanied suites for solo cello, which she describes as “pieces you can return to throughout your life.”

Classical music does amazing things for the human voice. She’s not talking about opera here, but rather Orff’s “Carmina Burana;” Richard Strauss’s “Four Last Songs;” John Adams’s “Harmonium,” luminous settings of poems by Emily Dickinson. She also mentions two recent Pulitzer Prize winners: David Lang, whose “Little Match Girl Passion” retells the Hans Christian Anderson story, and Caroline Shaw’s “Partita for 8 Voices.”

Speaking of the Bach cello suites, you can make classical music with only one instrument. Of course, here the piano is the instrument par excellence. For it, she mentions Bach’s Goldberg Variations, Beethoven’s sonatas, all of Chopin’s piano works, Shostakovich’s preludes. But Bach also wrote for solo violin, as did Paganini and Ysaye.

She closes with this: “Classical music can do things that no other music can…[it makes] a particular kind of musical statement, often immersive, often longer than other forms and often in a particularly complex manner that involves the juxtaposition of different voices. Like a novel, it’s not something that can be apprehended quickly or conveyed in any other form; like a novel, you have to meet it halfway and think about what it is or isn’t saying to you, listening to the different sounds it offers, recognizing the reemergence of earlier themes, weighing the pauses and the crescendos…..Comparing and contrasting, and debating preferences, is a big part of any music-lover’s experience.”

The Washington Post’s chief classical music critic, Anne Midgette, recently mused about the genre and provided what she called a field guide about how to exercise one’s classical music muscles. Here are some of her thoughts. – Ed.
To Nathan Lee, the extraordinary young pianist who will join us on Saturday, November 3, 2018, at Sleepy Hollow High School. He is the ninth recipient of our Performance Award, which is given to a winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York City. His program for us will include Bach’s Partita No. 4 in D Major, BWV 828; Mozart’s Adagio for piano in B minor, K. 540; Kapustin’s Variations for piano, Op. 41; Chopin’s Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58; and Grünfeld’s Soirée de Vienne, Op. 56.

The Champaign, IL, New Gazette, when reviewing his “well-balanced and challenging recital,” described him as “hugely talented.” A Washington Post reviewer went into further detail: “Lee is immensely self-assured, with a relaxed demeanor,” with “playing [that is] virtually note perfect,” while giving the “sense of an original voice.” When FOM Board members heard him play at the YCA Audition, they thought he was enjoying the music, having fun.

A native of Sammanish, Washington, Lee has made his Kennedy Center debut in Washington DC, and has performed at the University of Illinois’ Krannert Center, at Rockefeller University, on the Harriman-Jewell Series in Missouri, and as soloist with the Seattle Symphony in Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 1 and with the Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle in Beethoven’s Concerto No. 5.

Lee has been heard with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra on NPR’s From the Top, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Minnesota Orchestra, and he shared the stage with Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Lang Lang on the Seattle Symphony’s Gala Evening. He has given recitals in Korea, for Radio France, and in Perugia, Italy where, to a sold-out audience, he performed in a “Three Generations Concert” featuring his instructor Sasha Starcevich, pianist, and Ilana Vered, pianist.
2018 Fall Concerts

Dover Quartet
September 22, 2018 – 8 pm

Takács Quartet
October 20, 2018 – 8 pm

Nathan Lee, piano
November 3, 2018 – 8 pm

2019 Spring Concerts

Juilliard Baroque Ensemble
March 30, 2019 – 8 pm

Jerusalem Quartet
April 13, 2019 – 8 pm

Trio Solisti
May 4, 2019 – 8 pm

Good News!

In honor of this 65th Anniversary Season, a generous anonymous donor has graciously offered up to $5000 as a matching gift for all increased or new contributions. Therefore, if you are not already a contributor to Friends of Music Concerts, we urge you to become one now. If you already are, please consider increasing your commitment.

As you probably know, income from all ticket sales and small government grants does not cover the expenses we incur in bringing our concerts to you and in fulfilling the rest of our mission, such as our Partnership in Education program (see p.3). By far the largest proportion of our expenses goes directly to our artists; as a non-profit all-volunteer organization without an office or paid staff, most of our other expenses also are directly mission-related. So, when you write your check for subscription or tickets orders, don’t forget that those subscription costs and ticket prices are as reasonable as they are because of the tax-deductible gifts from many of our subscribers and other good friends of Friends of Music Concerts. Names of all contributors are listed on the back of each concert program.

If your gift can be matched by an employer, don’t forget to send us the appropriate form; it will add to your personal contributor category.

Thank you for choosing this way of helping us continue to bring the very best chamber music to Westchester County.