

69<sup>th</sup> Concert Series 2022-23



FRIENDS *of* MUSIC

is pleased to present

# **The Dover Quartet**

**Joel Link, violin**

**Bryan Lee, violin**

**Hezekiah Leung, viola**

**Camden Shaw, cello**

Sunday, November 6, 2022. 3:00 pm.

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

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**Who We Are**

Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization now celebrating its 69<sup>th</sup> season of showcasing, right here in Westchester, artists chosen from among the finest in today's diverse world of chamber music. Additionally, our Partners in Education program in the public schools and free student admission to our concerts give young people enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music.

**In order to help sustain what one of our artists called this “legendary series,” we would welcome people who can join the volunteers listed above, either as Board members or equally valued off-Board committee members. People we are looking for include, but are not limited to, those with writing/publishing production and/or fund development skills. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can explore the possibilities together.**

**Acknowledgments**

We have been proud to be a grantee of ArtsWestchester with funding made possible by Westchester County government with the support of County Executive George Latimer, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), the Rea Foundation, and the Bergen Foundation. Additional support has been received from many friends of Friends of Music, including subscribers and other ticket holders listed in this program. If you, too, can contribute in this way, please send your gifts to Friends of Music Concerts, Inc., P.O. Box 675, Millwood, NY 10546.

# Program

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**Quartet in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3, Hob. III:77 (“The Emperor”)** Franz Joseph Haydn  
(1732-1809)

*Allegro*

*Poco adagio: Cantabile*

*Menuetto: Allegro*

*Finale: Presto*

**Quartet for Strings (In One Movement), Op. 89**

Amy Beach  
(1867-1944)

## Intermission

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**Quartet No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 44, No. 3**

Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809-1847)

*Allegro vivace*

*Scherzo: Assai leggiero e vivace*

*Adagio non troppo*

*Molto allegro con fuoco*

The Dover Quartet appears by arrangement with the Curtis Institute of Music, 1726 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA. [www.curtis.edu](http://www.curtis.edu).

Next concert

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**Saturday, March 18, 2023. 8:00 pm.**

**Curtis on Tour**

Program: Eugène Ysaÿe’s Sonata No 6 for Solo Violin; Francis Poulenc’s Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon; Krzysztof Penderecki’s Duo Concertante for violin and double bass; Igor Stravinsky’s L’Histoire du Soldat.

# Program notes

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## Quartet in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3, Hob. III:77 (“The Emperor”)

Franz Joseph Haydn

In 1795, Joseph Haydn returned from his second visit to London and settled in Vienna to live out his remaining years as music’s grand old man, the greatest living composer. Mozart, whom he had so greatly admired, had died too young four years before, and Beethoven, who was to lead the next generation, was still only the musical season’s best debutant. England had showered wealth and honors on Haydn; he had lingered there for two months after his last concert before going home to the continent.

By the measure of those times, Haydn had enjoyed unusual longevity, since he had reached the age of sixty-three. By then he had written more than a hundred symphonies but, after the dozen masterpieces that he had composed expressly for his London audiences, he never wrote another. Yet with the new knowledge of Handel’s oratorios that he had acquired in London, Haydn modernized and revitalized that form in his own *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. He also composed six masses and some other sacred music for the princely Esterházy family, for whom he had served as staff conductor and composer for thirty years.

In his last years, he wrote almost nothing except a few string quartets, music that sums up a lifetime of invention of the highest order. In 1797 he wrote the six quartets we know as Op. 76 and then, in 1799, the two of Op. 77. He began another in 1803 but gave up after two movements that he allowed to be published in 1806 with the apologetic message “All my strength is gone; I am old and weak.” The last eight completed quartets were written with the kind of controlled freedom that comes only with great maturity. Their rich instrumental texture anticipated the future.

Count Joseph Erdödy, Chamberlain and Privy State Counselor to the Emperor, commissioned the six quartets of Op. 76, so of course Haydn dedicated them to him. The Erdödys were an important family, noble and musical, related by marriage to Haydn’s former employers, the Esterházy family. Count Ladislaus Erdödy appears on the list of subscribers to Mozart’s Vienna concerts in 1783, and Beethoven dedicated his two *Trios*, Op. 70 (1808) and two *Cello Sonatas*, Op. 102 (1815), to his pupil, the Countess Maria, Count Peter Erdödy’s wife.

There are no virtuoso passages in this quartet, and the writing does not yet have the full independence of parts that Beethoven was to achieve, but the instruments are all actively involved. The seeming simplicity Haydn was able to achieve in the quartet is here its most creative feature. The first movement, *Allegro*, has distinctive rhythms that are repeated in the third movement, *Minuetto: Allegro*, when Haydn reverses the long-short into a short-long pattern, adding brightness to the Minuet.

The melody Haydn introduces in the beginning of the first movement prevails throughout, but it undergoes many transformations in character. The *Poco Adagio: Cantabile* second movement is the spiritual center of the work. It is based on the variation of one of Haydn’s own songs, which became the Austrian national hymn “*Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser*,” (“God Save Franz the Kaiser”) and then the national anthem of Germany. This composition of great simplicity and dignity includes four variations in each of which a different member of the quartet carries the melody.

The third movement, *Minuetto: Allegro*, begins with a loud peasant dance. There follows a more polished and quieter contrasting Trio, before the recapitulation of a shortened Minuet.

The *Finale, Presto*, is substantial, opening in a minor key and reverting to the major before the end. As Paul Griffith explains in his book, *The String Quartet*, this “pushes the center of gravity towards the end of the work in a way Haydn had previously achieved by means of fugue, and prominence of major and minor within a single movement can be used to achieve expressive extremes.” Much of this energetic movement is based on a triplet rhythm that the instruments quickly pass back and forth.

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## Quartet for Strings (in One Movement), Op. 89

Amy Beach

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach was the first American woman to succeed as a composer of large-scale works of serious music. She was celebrated during her lifetime as the foremost woman composer of the United States. Her mother, a gifted pianist and singer, provided her first exposure to piano. Her early feats included improvising duets before the age of two, playing by ear in full harmony at four, and giving public recitals at seven. She taught herself composition by studying the great masters. When her family moved from New Hampshire to Boston, she studied with experienced professional teachers interested in helping her develop her talents. She made her Boston debut as a pianist in 1883 at sixteen, and in 1884, she played Chopin's *Concerto No. 2 in F minor for Piano and Orchestra* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which had been organized only three years earlier. She learned orchestration and fugue techniques by translating Berlioz and François-Auguste Gavaert's musical treatises.

In 1885 she married H.H.A. Beach, a distinguished Boston surgeon and Harvard professor slightly older than her father. Following the mores of Victorian society, he restricted her concert appearances, although he encouraged her composing.

Beach completed more than 300 works, including the *Gaelic Symphony*, a *Piano Concerto*, a large-scale *Mass*, numerous songs and choral works, and many other compositions for chorus, including *Festival Jubilate*, commissioned for the dedication of the Women's Building at the Chicago World's Fair in 1897. She gathered numerous honors, and was twice received at the White House. Major orchestras premiered many of her works; often these were the first times these orchestras performed music by a female composer.

Much of Beach's work shows the influence of American late Romantic composers Horatio Parker, Edward MacDowell, Arthur Foote, and George Chadwick, but her music also is indebted to that of Brahms and Debussy. The majority of her compositions, however, display her own idiomatic style and her gift for melody.

The author of an important history of music in the United States once asked Beach if she resented being called an American composer. Her reply, he reported, was, "No, but I would rather be called a composer." There is little doubt that she frequently gave the same answer when asked about being called a woman composer.

She was widely known for the broad range of her strong musical mind, which led her to translate European music theory works to English, for example, and to mount a campaign in favor of the work of Brahms when his music still was considered to be difficult and modern. She was engaged as soloist eleven times by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which also premiered her *Gaelic Symphony* on October 30 1896. It is believed to have been the first symphony by a woman performed in the United States.

After her husband's death in 1910, Amy Beach spent four years in Europe, where her *Piano Concerto*, her symphony, and her shorter works were widely performed. She returned at the outbreak of World War I, and, for most of the rest of her long and fruitful life as a busy composer, lived in New Hampshire.

Several of her works incorporate elements that she adapted from the musical folklore of the Bostonians of her time. The stylistic diversity that she found and transmitted to us is extraordinary; it includes material from native Eskimo and Native American sources and others. In sometimes choosing Irish music, Beach tapped into a rich heritage that had been part of the American musical mainstream for at least a century and, by the 1890s, was assimilated into the new genre called popular music. Beach's rare gift for clothing these musical ideas in Brahmsian garb made her an important figure in American musical life.

In the 1920s, Beach used two well-known Inuit songs, "Summer Song" and "Playing at Ball," as inspiration for the first section of her one-movement string quartet. Although it was sketched out in 1921 when Beach was at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, it was completed in Rome in 1929.

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The quartet, a very successful integration of art and folk music, begins with a slow, chromatic, and somewhat dissonant introduction, *Grave*. All four voices move along the chromatic scale, creating a shifting sequence of tensions that fade without having been resolved. Emerging from out of the unclear tonality of the opening, the viola introduces the work's first Inuit theme, "Summer Song." Soon after, another folk song, "Playing at Ball," makes its entrance in the first violin and cello. The other strings join the viola in the second theme, which is very lyrical and also based on an Inuit melody. The first theme returns before the end of the slow section.

In the central *Allegro Molto* section, two Inuit themes dominate the melodic lines and the texture: "Ititaujang's Song" is set as triplets, playing against the "Playing at Ball" theme with a adventurous dotted rhythm. The two become extensively developed in a fugue, in which "Ititaujang's Song" dominates the texture. Throughout the piece, chords punctuate the music; the dissonances they articulate are resolved when various ideas from the initial slow section return to round out the end of the work.

This unusual, beautiful quartet, which has been deemed one of Beach's finest works, was performed several times during the 1930s. The first was at a performance in New York in January 1931 by the Society of American Women Composers, a group founded by Beach, who was its first president. The last performance during Beach's lifetime was at the Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington, DC, in November, 1942, for the composer's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **String Quartet No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 44, No. 3**

Felix Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn was one of music's great prodigies. Although he began to compose as a little boy, his compositions did not seem childlike. His father was a wealthy banker who sought opinions of his son's gifts from the most distinguished musicians of the time. When they assured him that the boy was an authentic genius, he spared nothing to bring him to artistic maturity.

No touring performer wanted to miss the musicales held on alternate Sunday mornings in the Mendelssohns' great house in Berlin. Chamber music always was performed, but sometimes a work for orchestra, occasionally even an opera, was scheduled. The guests frequently played and, on almost every occasion, young Felix composed one of the works on the program. He learned his craft, developed his skills, and polished his art in this privileged workshop.

This quartet, composed in late 1837 and early 1838 and dedicated to the Crown Prince of Sweden, was not well known until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it began to be played with more frequency, as interest revived in Mendelssohn's quartets in general. However, it had been premiered on April 3, 1838, by the violinist Ferdinand David and his friends.

Mendelssohn's so-called "middle" quartets hearken back to Haydn and Mozart. Published in a set like their historical forerunners, the Opus 44 quartets are regarded as Mendelssohn's most classical works, poised, balanced, and well crafted. Some have suggested that they reflect the composer's sense of professional and personal well-being at this point in his life: enjoying a successful career, a new wife, and a first child.

The third quartet of Opus 44 is the richest in content of all the quartets bearing this opus number. Wilhelm Altmann praised the power and energy of the opening theme of the sonata-form first movement, *Allegro vivace*, that gives each quartet member an opportunity to articulate the initial idea. The first theme, a melodic gesture or motif made up of four notes as an upbeat to a long note, carries passion in its repetitions even though it begins as a rather small but distinctive recurring figure. This compact motif is developed with intensity. The second theme, which is somewhat mysterious with its unusual accompaniment figure, does not at first in any way match the passion of the initial subject, which continues throughout the movement, even saturating the development section. Although generally the four instruments participate equally, in this first movement there are moments when the first violin stands out from the other three, creating a "concertante style" feeling. Mendelssohn includes a meaningful pizzicato coda at the end of the exposition.

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The second movement, a brilliant *Scherzo: Assai leggero e vivace*, is particularly fleet of foot and energetic; it has vehemence as well as vigor. Many critics think it is one of Mendelssohn's greatest scherzos as well as the finest movement in this work. Its qualities are lightness and magic, but with a hint of mystery. Mendelssohn uses a form more complex and subtler than that found in most scherzos: he actually writes a rondo with episodes that are little fugues which blend into the continuous, forward-moving structure. The second of the two is a double fugue. At the movement's conclusion, the texture becomes rich, with the four instruments joining together for a climax.

The expressive, lyrical *Adagio non troppo*, placed slightly unusually as the third movement, is warm, gentle, and tender, longing and mournful, resolving lusciously. At the beginning there is a dissonance with chromatic inflections that is heard again each time the main theme is repeated. Each of the players contributes to the skillful, luxuriant polyphony, as Mendelssohn allows each voice to share the limelight and contribute to emotive depth in a smooth musical discussion with strong harmonic counterpoint.

By contrast, the brisk, exuberant *Molto allegro con fuoco* finale demands a lot from the first violinist. It opens furiously and, like the second movement, it is constantly moving, with an almost nervous fervor. It also makes occasional forays into a dark minor key, although the good spirits triumph as the work ends buoyantly. Two themes, one dance-like and the other more lyrical, contrast with the melody articulated by the second violin and viola in the coda, while the first violin indulges in some final virtuoso display.

---notes provided by Susan Halpern.

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## About the Artists

Named one of the greatest string quartets of the last 100 years by *BBC Music Magazine*, the Grammy-nominated **Dover Quartet** has followed a “practically meteoric” (*Strings*) trajectory to become one of the most in-demand chamber ensembles in the world. We are very pleased to welcome them for their third appearance on our series.

In addition to its faculty role as the Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence at the Curtis Institute of Music, the Dover Quartet holds residencies with the Kennedy Center, Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University, Artosphere, at the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival. The group's awards include a stunning sweep of all prizes at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, grand and first prizes at the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition, and prizes at the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition. Its prestigious honors include the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award, and Lincoln Center's Hung Family Award.

The Dover Quartet's 2022-23 season includes collaborations with Edgar Meyer, Joseph Conyers, and Haochen Zhang. The group's two European tours include a return to London's renowned Wigmore Hall and a debut performance in Copenhagen. Other recent and upcoming artist collaborations include Emanuel Ax, Inon Barnaton, Ray Chen, the Escher String Quartet, Bridget Kibbey, Anthony McGill, the Pavel Haas Quartet, Roomful of Teeth, the late Peter Serkin, and Davóne Tines.

This month Cedille Records releases the third and final volume of the quartet's recording of the Beethoven Complete String Quartets. *Strad* described the highly acclaimed recordings as “meticulously balanced, technically clean-as-a-whistle, and intonationally immaculate.” Their Grammy-nominated recording, *The Schumann Quartets*, was released by Azica Records in 2019.

Violinist Joel Link plays a very fine Peter Guarneri of Mantua, 1710-15, kindly loaned to him by Irene R. Miller through the Beare's International Violin Society. Violinist Bryan Lee plays instruments made by Riccardo Antoniazzi (Milan 1904) and by Samuel Zygmuntowicz (Brooklyn 2020). Violist Hezekiah Leung plays an instrument made by Jürgen Manthey (Leipzig 2014) and one by Samuel Zygmuntowicz (Brooklyn 2020) on loan through the El Pasito Foundation. Cellist Camden Shaw plays an instrument made by Frank Ravatin (France 2010).

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