

65th Concert Series 2018-2019



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is pleased to present

The Dover Quartet

Joel Link, violin

Bryan Lee, violin

Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt, viola

Camden Shaw, cello

Saturday, September 22, 2018

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 65th 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. Specifics we are looking for include, but are not limited to, people with networking, editorial, business development, and/or fund-raising skills. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can explore the range together.

Acknowledgments

Our concerts are made possible, in part, by an ArtsWestchester Program Support grant made with funds received from Westchester County Government. Additional support is received from many friends of Friends of Music who include subscribers and other ticket holders listed in this program.* **(This year a generous donor has offered to match new and increased contributions up to \$5,000.)** If you can help us in this way, please send your contributions to Friends of Music Concerts, Inc., P.O. Box 675, Millwood, NY 10546.

Program

String Quartet No. 3 in E-flat minor, Op. 30

Andante sostenuto; Allegro moderato
Allegro vivo e scherzando
Andante funebre e doloroso ma non moto
Allegro non troppo e risoluto

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

From Amber Frozen

Mason Bates
(b. 1977)

Intermission

String Quartet No. 15 in G Major, Op. 161 (D 887)

Allegro molto moderato
Andante un poco moto
Scherzo, Allegro vivace
Allegro assai

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

The Dover Quartet appears by arrangement with MKI Artists, One Dawson Lane, Suite 320, Burlington, VT 05401. www.mkiartists.com

Next concert

Saturday, October 20, 2018, 8:00 pm at Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

Takács String Quartet

Program: Haydn: String Quartet in D minor, Op. 76, No. 2; Shostakovich String Quartet in D Major, No. 4, Op. 83; Mendelssohn: String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80.

Program notes

String Quartet No. 3 in E-flat minor, Op. 30

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

In January 1876 Tchaikovsky set off on one of his periodic trips to the West, carrying with him some ideas for a new string quartet, his third. He began to work on the composition in Paris in January, and on March 1st it was done. Two weeks later, after a private reading of the music at the Moscow home of his mentor, Nicolai Rubinstein, the composer wrote to his brother, "It seems that I have written myself out. I can't think of anything new. Is it possible that my song is over?" We who love the three great symphonies, the operas, and the ballets that he was still to write know how wrong he was. And this quartet, after its first public performance on March 30, was immediately successful, so much so that it was performed twice more in the next two weeks.

The quartet is Tchaikovsky's memorial to his close friend, the great Czech violinist Ferdinand Laub, who had died early in 1875 at the age of forty-three. Laub came to Moscow in 1866 as head of the violin department in the newly organized Conservatory and concertmaster of its principal orchestra, having earned a great reputation in Germany as soloist and chamber music player. Indeed, he led the ensemble that initially performed Tchaikovsky's first two string quartets. His playing tended somewhat toward expressive exaggeration, which went over well in Russia. In a letter to a friend in 1878, Tchaikovsky recalled that "every time Laub played the *Adagio* of Mozart's D minor String Quartet I had to hide in the farthest corner of the room so that others not see how deeply I was affected." The composer's tribute to Laub in this quartet is evidence by the predominance of the first violin part and by the work's generally elegiac tone.

The quartet is a substantial piece, nearly as long as Tchaikovsky's symphonies and almost orchestral in its full, complex texture. The first movement is framed by a slow prologue and an epilogue, *Andante sostenuto*, that surround the richly developed *Allegro moderato* main section in which funeral-march-like rhythms come and go. Next comes an *Allegro vivo e scherzando* movement, a light interlude in this dark-toned work, but rather grim for a scherzo.

The tragic slow movement, *Andante funebre e doloroso ma non moto*, in which Tchaikovsky reaches down to great emotional depths, is the quartet's musical climax. It was the immediate effect of this profound elegy that led to the work's early success. Tchaikovsky later arranged it as a violin solo with piano accompaniment. It is a moving dirge, a requiem for a truly beloved friend. In the last movement, *Finale: Allegro non troppo e risoluto*, the anguish and gloom are lifted, but dramatic tensions still are present. Near the end, the music slows for a brief recollection of the earlier sadness; the quartet ends with a brisk coda.

From Amber Frozen

Mason Bates

In a 2004 interview with the Los Angeles Times, Mason Bates said, “Music, for me, is not a mental exercise, not an abstract construction. It’s intuitional. It needs to have the power to viscerally move people and to communicate strongly, across a broad reach.” Communicative crossing of boundaries has become standard for Bates, giving his music strength and dynamism.

A native of Virginia, where he initially studied piano and composition, he then moved to New York, where he majored in composition at Juilliard, studying with John Corigliano, David Del Tredici, and Samuel Adler while exploring the city’s underground music scene. After completing a Ph.D. in composition with Edmund Campion at the University of California, Berkeley, he spent 2003-4 in Italy sponsored by the American Academy in Rome and 2004-5 in Berlin where he won the Berlin Prize from the American Academy, thereafter winning fellowships at Tanglewood and receiving additional honors.

Bates recently was named the most-performed composer of his generation, and the Composer of the Year 2018 by Musical America. He is the first composer-in-residence that Washington’s Kennedy Center has had. His symphonic music is the first to receive widespread acceptance for its unique integration of electronic sounds. As both a DJ and a curator he is a visible advocate for bringing new music to new spaces, whether through institutional partnerships such as his former residency with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, or through his club/classical project called Mercury Soul, which transforms commercial clubs into exciting hybrid musical events. He is on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Bates has written the following to describe **From Amber Frozen**: “This quartet forms itself gradually, growing its melodic and textural ideas at an evolutionary pace in a rose-colored world as if viewed by an insect from the Jurassic era, forever sealed in a crystal of dried amber on a tree.

“So the ensemble hatches from its shell in embryonic form, a lopsided groove of plucked out-of-tune notes and woody rustlings, with bell-like sustained notes foreshadowing the coming melody. This texture of shattered lines that weave in and out of each other is as much informed by today’s electronica as it is from Indonesian gamelan – all passed through the prism of the string quartet’s rich and varied textures.

“As the ensemble evolves from rhythmic pointillism to more sustained lines, a melody asserts itself. This lyrical urge very gradually infects the group, melting the crystalline beats into warmer, more emotive thoughts – and by the work’s center, the core of animal warmth has succeeded in fusing the shattered lines of the opening into a single lyrical expression. The long-lined melody that follows reaches its expressive peak at the exact moment that the work begins to devolve, as bowed lines become dancing, detuned grooves dispersed throughout the group. By the work’s end, it has morphed well-beyond full-circle – having returned to its initial rhythmic space, it ultimately loses pitch altogether.” In Bates’ musical imagery, the insect itself never alters, even though the world evolves drastically over time.

This single movement work for string quartet follows the style of contemporary classical music in many ways, with dance music rhythms immediately apparent in the pizzicato interplay at the opening. The music grows, beginning in an essentially percussive manner, with textures building and changing throughout until the melodic material becomes predominant, then finally is deconstructed at the work's end.

String Quartet No. 15 in G Major, Op. 161 (D. 887)

Franz Schubert

Schubert's thousand or more compositions are the product of an extraordinarily full life that was somehow condensed into less than thirty-two years. It was only toward its end that Vienna's musical society, which still revolved around the aging Beethoven whom Schubert worshipped from afar, became aware of his existence and of his genius. When Schubert died, the poet Franz Grillparzer, who had so eloquently eulogized Beethoven sixteen months earlier, wrote his epitaph: "The art of music has buried a precious possession – but even fairer hopes. Franz Schubert lies here."

Schubert's friends were not members of the great families, noble and wealthy, who for several generations were involved in the Viennese careers of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Instead, they were almost without exception people of his own age, many of them talented, who lived as simply and poorly as he. In the spring of 1826, Schubert and two other young men went off to spend some time in a country village not far from Vienna. The weather was terrible, and his friends' preoccupation with their unhappy love affairs of the moment bored him. He tried to put together ways to realize his great ambition to write a major opera, but this was not to be. Between June 20 and 30 he composed this great string quartet instead and, having used up all his expensive ruled music paper, he went on in the next few days to write some songs ("Who is Sylvia?" and "Hark, Hark, the Lark" among them) on whatever scraps he could find. Ten days after the quartet was finished, he wrote to a friend, "I have absolutely no money and things in general are going very badly for me, but I don't mind and am in good spirits."

By early 1828, musical Vienna had begun to realize that there was a curious young man of extraordinary gifts in town, and his friends decided that he should give a concert of his works. They somehow arranged for the use of an important hall and the participation of some musicians who had been members of Beethoven's circle. The first movement of this string quartet was among the pieces played, and the entire concert was a huge success with its standing-room-only crowd; however, the critics ignored it because they were more interested in the fact that Paganini had graced Vienna with his presence. Rather than give a repeat performance, Schubert used his profits to buy a new piano; the quartet was not published until 1851.

Some scholars have commented on this quartet's heavy, orchestral writing, on its harmonic restlessness, and its somber agitation. Light and dark are seen or heard in its constant major-minor shifts. Idiosyncratic rhythmic features that turn up in his other important late works are particularly prominent here as well.

The first movement, *Allegro molto moderato*, opens with an introductory statement that is almost a piece of powerful prose declamation with an orchestral accompaniment, and the second theme, with its repeated, quirkily off-beat rhythm, persists, as do similar figures in some of the piano sonatas. The second movement, *Andante un poco moto*, alternates serene grace with outbursts of dramatic, passionate agitation. *The Scherzo, Allegro vivace*, is based on the kind of repeated-note figure that Schubert liked so much, set here in a spectral version of the rhythmic pattern he had used in the scherzo of his huge and still relatively unperformed (then) great Symphony in C Major. The finale, *Allegro assai*, is a fiercely whirling tarantella in the form of a rondo, a wild dance whose beat is almost never abandoned through its entire great length.

— Notes provided by Susan Halpern

About the Artists

The Dover Quartet's rise from being an up-and-coming young ensemble to occupying a spot at the top of their field has been meteoric. Catapulted to prominence after sweeping the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, the group has become a major presence on the international scene. Named as Cleveland Quartet Award winner for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons, the group was awarded the Avery Fisher Career Grant in April 2017.

For this second appearance on our roster, The Dover comes to us following an active spring and summer season. Three April/May concerts in Canada with the Pacifica Quartet included Mendelssohn's wonderful Octet in E-flat, Op. 20. They then performed at the Peoples' Symphony and Subculture: GatherNYC in New York City, at the Robin Hixon Theater in Norfolk, VA, at St. John's Episcopal Church in Portsmouth, VA; at the La Jolla Music Society in California; and were in residence in Chicago at Northwestern's Bienen School of Music. During June and July, audiences welcomed them in Fayetteville, Arkansas; Portland, OR; Rockport, MA; Woodstock, NY; and Fishtail, MT. Last month they appeared at the Edinburgh (Scotland) Music Festival; the Rosendal (Norway) Chamber Music Festival; the Grand Teton Music Festival in Wyoming; and the Santa Fe (New Mexico) Chamber Music Festival.

Members of the Dover Quartet met as students at the Curtis Institute; the group's name pays tribute to Dover Beach by fellow Curtis alumnus Samuel Barber. In addition to their work together, they all have active lives as soloists and musical collaborators around the world. As an ensemble, they are dedicated to sharing their music with under-served communities and are actively involved with Music for Food, an initiative enabling musicians to raise resources and awareness in the fight against hunger.

The Dover Quartet plays on the following instruments:

Joel Link: a violin made by Jean-Baptists Vuillaume in Paris circa 1857, on loan by
Desiree Ruhstradt

Bryan Lee: a violin made by Riccardo Antoniazzi in Milan, 1904

Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt: a viola made by Michele Deconet in Venice 1780,

generously on loan from the grandson of Boris Kroyt of the Budapest Quartet

Camden Shaw: a cello made by Sam Zygmuntowicz in Brooklyn 2010

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