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CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY *of* UTICA

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Jan and Pat Moore

presents

Ulysses Quartet

Christina Bouey and Rhiannon Banerdt, Violins

Colin Brookes, Viola • Grace Ho, Cello

PROGRAM

Wild Summer (2017) Joan Tower (b. 1938)

Quartet No. 1 in C Major, Op. 49 (1938)..... Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Moderato

Moderato

Allegro molto

Allegro

Traditional Nordic Folk Melodies (2017) Arr. Danish String Quartet

Polska from Dorotea

Shore

Shine You No More

INTERMISSION

String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Op. 132 (1825)..... Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Assai sostenuto – Allegro

Allegro ma non tanto

Molto adagio – Andante

Alla marcia, assai vivace (attacca)

Allegro appassionato

Sunday, 12 February 2023 • 2:30 PM

Sinnott Family Bank of Utica Auditorium • Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute

310 Genesee Street • Utica, New York 13502

This concert is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, and by the generous contributions of the donors listed in this program.



PROGRAM NOTES

Wild Summer Joan Tower

Celebrated composer, pianist and conductor Joan Tower was a founding member and pianist of the Da Capo Chamber Players, an ensemble which received the prestigious Naumburg Award and premiered many of her earlier compositions. Two often noted works are her symphonic tone poem Sequoia and the series of Fanfares for the Uncommon Woman after Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man. Her symphonic work Made in America and its recording by Leonard Slatkin and the Nashville Symphony won three Grammy Awards. She has had commissions from several major American orchestras and received numerous awards including the Grawemeyer Award and the Alfred I. DuPont Award.

Tower provides these notes for her Wild Summer:

Wild Summer was commissioned by the Jasper String Quartet as part of a four-season set composed by four composers. I was asked to represent summer. The first thoughts I had about summer were memories of when I was younger and going to school. Although I was expected to get a summer job, it was also a time for a vacation to finally be free and to have a really good time. Since I was a rather wild teenager, I vividly remember being intent on as much dancing, partying, and going after the boys as possible. This goal had an intense manic side to it that bordered on an anxiety, a possible failure of actually having a good time, sort of like the vacation you fantasized about that never quite worked out the way you expected. This nine-minute piece alternates between a driving, wild, and manic type of energy with a relaxed, meditative, slow feeling in between – a breathing and recuperating space (on the beach).

String Quartet No. 1 in C Major, Op. 49 Dmitri Shostakovich

Perhaps most famous for his fifteen symphonies and his often-difficult relations with the Soviet cultural authorities, Shostakovich also composed fifteen string quartets which continue to have a substantial following. Although he was prolific in his early years, he began writing quartets rather late. He described how he wrote a brief sketch of a string quartet first movement and put it aside, thinking nothing would come of it. He returned to it after completing his fifth symphony and it became his first quartet. The piece is brief but

has the usual four movements: a sonata first movement, folk theme and variations second, a scherzo with trio, and a shorter sonata finale. Shostakovich said there was no special depth in this music, that it was somewhat naive and filled with childhood reminiscences of springtime.

Traditional Nordic Folk MelodiesArr. Danish String Quartet

Sweden, Norway, and Denmark all have extensive folk music archives, the fruit of research begun in the nineteenth century and resumed in the twentieth. Much of the instrumental music in these collections consists of fiddle tunes to accompany dancing. Having been played on the violin, these tunes lend themselves readily to string quartet arrangements. A Polska is a fast dance in triple time, an evolution of the courtly Polonaise. Dorotea is a place in central Sweden. The wonderfully atmospheric Shore is perhaps based on a sea song. Shine You No More is a very fast dance in duple time, akin to the Celtic Reel.

String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Op. 132..... Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven devoted the last thirty months of his life solely to the string quartet, writing five complete quartets and the single movement Grosse Fuge. Now totally deaf and sometimes ill, he nevertheless composed with ease and persistent innovation. Appreciation for these still very challenging works has only increased in the nearly two centuries since they were written. Many have come to regard them as the greatest of Beethoven's works, surpassing even the Ninth Symphony and Missa Solemnis. It has been said that the music of these quartets will be forever contemporary.

The intensely expressive first movement of the fifteenth quartet has the unusual feature of expositional rotation. Instead of a traditional development section, the exposition is repeated in a new key with some development, followed by a shortened recapitulation with coda. The second movement is a tonally very fluid menuetto of intricate construction. Beethoven experienced a serious illness of some months while writing this quartet. He titled the Molto adagio third movement 'Hymn of thanksgiving to the divinity, from a convalescent, in the Lydian mode'. This sublime music in close contrapuntal imitation alternates with an Andante section Beethoven labeled 'feeling new strength'. The relatively brief Alla marcia intermezzo concludes with a recitative-like passage leading into the finale in rondo form.

Notes by Raymond Zoekler.

Sources: Wikipedia, New Grove Dictionary, YouTube.

THE ARTISTS

The Ulysses String Quartet has been praised for their “textural versatility,” “grave beauty” and “the kind of chemistry many quartets long for, but rarely achieve” (The Strad), as well as their “avid enthusiasm ... [with] chops to back up their passion” (San Diego Story), “delivered with a blend of exuberance and polished artistry” (The Buffalo News).

Founded in 2015, the group won the grand prize and gold medal in the senior string division of the 2016 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, won first in the American Prize, and won second prize at the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition in 2017. Ulysses took first prize in the 2018 Schoenfeld International String Competition and received a Salon de Virtuosi 2021 Career Grant.

Hailing from Canada, the United States and Taiwan, Ulysses has performed in prestigious halls across the United States and Canada, and around the world. Performance highlights have included appearances at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Harbin Grand Theatre, Premiere Performances of Hong Kong, and Naumburg Orchestral Concerts.

Ulysses recently completed work on their debut album to be released later this year, with four more albums forthcoming in the near future. This includes collaborations with flutist Ransom Wilson and guitarist Ben Verdery. As a special project, the group will record the quartets of composer Joseph Summer at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts, over the next several years.

The members of Ulysses hold degrees from the Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, and Yale University. The musicians perform on instruments on loan from the Canada Council of the Arts Instrument Bank and the Maestro Foundation. For individual biographies, please see the Ulysses website www.ulyssesquartet.com/.

Ulysses believes intensely in the power of music to inspire, empower, enlighten, bring people together, and is committed to supporting diversity in the artistic landscape of our time. Education is a cornerstone of the quartet’s musical vision, and they will continue to provide access to these resources for young people from all backgrounds.

CMSU'S UPCOMING CONCERTS

MARCH 26, 2023 PETER WILEY, CELLO, and ANNA POLONSKY, PIANO

At just 13 years of age, Utica-native Peter Wiley was admitted to Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. His career highlights include a long-term association with the Marlboro Music Festival and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. Wiley is currently on the faculties of the Bard College Conservatory of Music and the Curtis Institute.

www.cmartists.com/artists/bios/wiley-bio.htm

Anna Polonsky made her solo piano debut at the age of seven in Moscow, Russia. She emigrated to the United States in 1990, attended Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, completed the Bachelor of Music diploma at The Curtis Institute of Music and earned her Master's Degree from The Juilliard School. Ms. Polonsky is a Steinway Artist.

www.annapolonsky.com/

The Wiley-Polonsky program includes Ludwig von Beethoven's 12 Variations, Op. 66, Robert Schumann's Fantasy Pieces, Op. 73, Samuel Barber's Sonata, Op. 6, one of Felix Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words, and César Franck's Sonata in A Major.

APRIL 30, 2023 VERONA QUARTET

www.veronaquartet.com/bio

The ensemble's "thoughtful, impressive" (Cleveland Classical) performances emanate from the spirit of storytelling; the Quartet believes that this transcends genre and therefore the name "Verona" pays tribute to William Shakespeare, the greatest storyteller of all time.

The Verona brings us a program by "Three Bs"—Bela Bartók's Quartet No. 3, Grażyna Bacewicz's Quartet No. 4, and Ludwig von Beethoven's Quartet No. 7, Op. 59, "Rasumovsky" No. 1.

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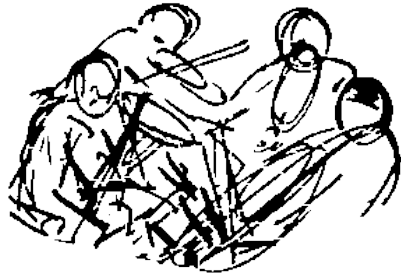
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