

Preview

Rocky River Chamber Music Society to present the Capitol Quartet on March 4

by Mike Telin



In the words of the late Marvin Hamlisch, “I have had the great pleasure of performing with the Capitol Quartet. Their fabulous sound, professionalism and innovative program all combine for a wonderfully entertaining musical experience.” If you are not familiar with the quartet, they’re not a string quartet, they are a quartet of saxophones. On Monday, March 4 beginning at 7:30 pm in West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, the Rocky River Chamber Music Society presents [The Capitol Quartet](#), Christopher Creviston, soprano, Joseph Lulloff, alto, David Stambler, tenor and arranger & Andrew Dahlke, baritone.

Since its formation in 1991, the Capitol Quartet has performed regularly at major concert venues throughout the United States, earning acclaim for their musical versatility and innovative style. “The Rocky River performance is what I would call a cross-over recital; a little bit of classical, a little bit of jazz, but leaning toward to classical chamber music side of things,” David Stambler told us by telephone from Erie, PA where the group was starting their current tour. “We’ll be playing Ligeti’s *Six Bagatelles*, and a piece by the Jeanjean brothers who noone has ever heard of except saxophone players. There’s Ellington’s *It Don’t Mean a Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing* as well as the classic hymn *Simple Gifts*. We also have a French Conservatory piece by Desenclos and John Anthony Lennon’s *Elysian Bridges* that he composed for us last year. It’s a wide variety of straight-ahead contemporary classical music.”

Another piece on the program is *A Fugue Well-Tampered*, based on Bach’s g minor and C major fugues. “We refer to it as a twisted fusion of material by Bach. It has some jazzy counterpoint and an improvisation section. It’s funny because presenters are always changing the title to Well-Tempered.”

Considered among the most exciting chamber ensembles performing today, the Capitol Quartet was founded by two members of the Marine Band and two members of the Army Band in Washington D.C. performing recitals in the DC area between commitments with their military service jobs. Stambler joined the quartet in 1998 and was the first civilian member. “I was free-lancing at the time but very interested in having the group take off.

Also at that time Anjan Shah was running the quartet and he was a master at marketing. We were booked with symphony orchestras as well as recitals which eventually landed us an agent.”

The quartet's current membership has been together for seven years and is comprised of saxophonists who are teaching faculty at outstanding music schools that are not within driving distance of each other. “You've hit upon a great challenge that we have to face.” The members teach at the University of Northern Colorado, Penn State University, Michigan State University, and Arizona State University, “which is about as far apart as you can get,” Stambler jokes. But as the saying goes, where there's a will there's a way. “What we do is have rehearsal retreats. We schedule a time and place and we all go and stay for a week and we'll literally play eight to ten hours a day and prepare for upcoming performances.”

Stambler says the quartet began preparing for the current tour back in October. “We also rehearse when we are doing other performances and at that time we were performing with the Fort Smith Symphony in Arkansas. In December we played a couple concerts with the Imperial Symphony in Florida, and then we had a rehearsal retreat in January.” Stambler adds that once the current tour is finished they'll have another retreat to prepare for the spring and summer performances. “It takes a lot of planning, and we're always looking pretty far ahead especially when it comes to choosing repertoire.”

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