

Review

Rocky River Chamber Music Society: The Capitol Quartet (March 4)

by Mike Telin



In the crowded world of chamber music, finding an accomplished group of players who easily transverse a myriad of musical styles with technical proficiency, astute musical sensibilities and who can be downright hilarious entertainers is rare.

On Monday, March 4, during their concert for the Rocky River Chamber Music Society at West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church before a large and thoroughly attentive audience, the members of the Capitol Quartet proved they are one of those rare ensembles.

But there's an important detail: the Capitol Quartet is not a string quartet; it is a quartet of saxophones.

The saxophone is a versatile instrument. Adolphe Sax's invention plays a prominent role in almost all musical genres, and the Capitol's program was certainly diverse. But what was so impressive about this performance was that, like the best string quartets, Christopher Creviston (soprano), Joseph Lulloff (alto), David Stambler (tenor) and Andrew Dahlke (baritone) played with such a cohesive sound, seamlessly passing musical lines from player to player as if it were one instrument on stage, not four.

Following a lush performance of a movement from Alfred Desenclos's *Quatuor*, Stambler proved himself to be a comedic scholar, something he did throughout the evening while acting as the group's MC.

Musical inventiveness was in abundance during Mike Crotty's arrangement of *Simple Gifts*. His use of jazzed harmonies at just the right places shed new light on the Shaker hymn. John Anthony Lennon's, *Elysian Bridges*, commissioned and premiered by the Capitol Quartet, was a beautiful mix of minimalism and romanticism.

No saxophone concert would be complete without a work by the brothers Jeanjean — Faustin and Maurice — aka the Gilbert and Sullivan of saxophone music, at least that is what Stambler told the audience. The Capitol players tossed off the four-movement work with aplomb, especially during the battle of cadenzas during the final *Concert Sur La Place*.

Originally for piano, Gyorgy Ligeti's *Six Bagatelles* were given a brilliant reading, and Stambler's *Fugue Well-Tampered* offered an insightful mix of classic Bach with a sprinkling of classic jazz licks.

Stacy Garrop's *The Flight of Icarus* tells the mythological tale of Icarus's attempt to escape from Crete by using wings made from feathers and wax. The Capitol players, who had premiered the piece the night before at Bowling Green State University, gave a superb reprise of the dark and brooding two-movement work.

Following a rousing performance of Stambler's arrangement of Duke Ellington's *It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*, the audience made it clear they wanted more. The Capitol Quartet did not disappoint and offered up a fast and furious *Flight of the Bumble Bee*. Hats off to the Rocky River Chamber Music Society for not being afraid to present something just a little different.

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