

Preview**Oberlin String Quartet Intensive:
"Trying new things during Winter Term"**

by Mike Telin



For Michael Strauss, Oberlin's associate professor viola and chamber music, "Winter Term is all about trying new things, things that are of interest to students that they may not get to immerse themselves in during a regular semester."

Strauss is in charge of organizing one of those New Things, Oberlin's first Winter Term String Quartet Intensive and Festival, which runs from January 7 through January 29. The idea is to give student quartets and other groups a taste of the dynamics of a professional chamber ensemble as well as to allow faculty members to coach groups

they wouldn't ordinarily have time for in their normal studio schedules.

"Three quartets signed up, one of which is trying to make a go of quartet playing and two of which are new, although they did come together during the first semester," Strauss said. "We also have a couple of chamber groups that are involved in the project, including an established piano trio. I wanted a mix of people who enjoyed playing together with people who wanted to be part of creating something from the beginning."



The three weeks will be heavily scheduled with rehearsals, master classes and free performances both by student quartets and distinguished guest artists, including the Jupiter Quartet (Oberlin's current artists in residence, above), the Wasmuth Quartet, the Cavani Quartet, violinists Areta Zhulla and Timothy Lees and cellist Zuill Bailey.

"We've tried to set up a realistic and professional situation," Strauss said. "Basically, they'll be living the life of a professional string quartet for three weeks. Professional quartets, when they're together, rehearse every day. Here, mornings will be spent rehearsing and afternoons in coachings with rotating faculty — someone different every day. One reason for so many guest coaches is that we're hoping for a lot of dialogue.

For example, Areta Zhulla can talk with them about what it's like to be playing with Lin-

coln Center Chamber Music Two and cultivating a career in the New York chamber music scene. They can also discuss these topics with the Jupiters, the Wasmuths and the Cavanis."

Repertory to be heard during the Festival includes CIM graduate Daniel Visconti's *Ramshackle Songs*, commissioned by the Fromm Foundation for the Jupiter Quartet, who will perform them on January 29, but which will also be performed by the Wasmuth Quartet on January 14. "I think it will be very interesting to hear a quartet that finds the piece fascinating," Strauss said, "and then to hear it played by the quartet that they were written for. And to get the two musical points of view."

Everyone in the Festival will participate in a performance of Gustav Mahler's transcription of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*, part of a program that also includes Max Bruch's *Octet*.

Here is the complete schedule. Most of the concerts will be streamed on Oberlin's *Listen Live Web* page.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7:

Guest recital by violinist Areta Zhulla of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society Two, with James Howsmon, piano (8 p.m., Kulas Recital Hall)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10:

A Viennese Evening, featuring Oberlin faculty and Areta Zhulla (8 p.m., Kulas Recital Hall)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14:

Wasmuth Quartet, silver medalists in the 2013 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, featuring Oberlin Conservatory alumni (8 p.m., Stull Recital Hall)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16 and 23:

Two concerts featuring student chamber music quartets and other ensembles (8 p.m., Kulas Recital Hall) For information on the January 23 performance, [click here](#).

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17:

Guest master class and performance by the Cavani Quartet, two-time winner of Chamber Music America's Guarneri String Quartet Award for Artistic Excellence (3 p.m. master class, David H. Stull Recital Hall; 8 p.m. performance, Kulas Recital Hall)**SATURDAY,**

JANUARY 25:

Gala Concert, featuring Oberlin artists-in-residence Jupiter Quartet, Oberlin faculty and students, and guest violinist Timothy Lees, concertmaster of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (8 p.m., Warner Concert Hall)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29:

Guest master class and recital by renowned cellist Zuill Bailey (4 p.m. master class and 8 p.m. recital, David H. Stull Recital Hall)