

Preview

Jupiter Quartet to perform final Oberlin Residency concert

by Mike Telin



On Thursday, March 20 at 8:00 pm in Kulas Recital Hall, the [Jupiter Quartet](#) will perform the final concert of the group's two-year residency at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. The program includes quartets by Beethoven and Bartók.

Over the last two academic years, the Jupiters, Meg Frievogel and Nelson Lee, violins, Liz Frievogel, viola and Daniel McDonough, cello, have served at Oberlin as Quartet in Residence. They have come to Oberlin three weeks each year to teach lessons, coach chamber music, and perform. “It’s been wonderful and we’re all a

little bit sad that it’s coming to an end,” Daniel McDonough said in a recent telephone conversation. “The students are such a joy to work with. They’re so inquisitive, bright and curious, so it’s really been a lot of fun.”

For their final residency concert, the Jupiters have chosen Beethoven's Quartet No. 12 in E-flat, Op. 127, a work McDonough describes as “very grand, and since there are only the two pieces we thought it would be nice to end with something substantial like Op. 127.” McDonough also feels Op. 127 pairs perfectly with the Bartók. “The wonderful thing about Bartók quartets is that they are so carefully constructed. Like Beethoven, there is so much attention to detail, so the challenge is finding clarity in the texture and making sure the evolution of the musical motives are really clear to the audience without ever becoming too cerebral-sounding. We are always looking for an emotional way to bring clarity to the music. Again, like Beethoven, I think the combination of head and heart is what makes Bartók's quartets so great, but also so difficult.”

Although their Oberlin residency is winding down, the Jupiters will continue to serve as Quartet in Residence at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. As young players, the ensemble was mentored by the Cavani Quartet as well as the Takács Quartet “When we first started out as an ensemble we attended the Takács Quartet’s seminar in Boulder, Colorado, and that experience was very important to our development.” Now that they are serving as mentors to young players themselves, has that experience changed their ap-

proach to playing? “That’s an excellent question. I think that teaching and coaching has been a wonderful complement to our performing career. From my perspective and probably for the others as well, it has made me think more about how I bring the music to life. And having to explain that in a way that is clear to a young chamber music musician really helps you to fine-tune what you want to say about the music yourself.”



McDonough also points out that teaching keeps him and his colleagues continuously involved in music. “Even if we’re not coaching the same pieces that we’re playing, we’re living with a lot more music. We’ll coach a Brahms quartet in the morning, listen to someone play the Dvořák cello concerto and then we’ll have rehearsal. So you start to draw on all of this and you bring that into the interpretation of the piece you’re playing at that moment — which is quite nice. You might not have that opportunity if you weren’t so immersed in the music in that way. Having to really inspire people and to try to teach them how to inspire the audience helps you gain deeper understanding into the music. So I think that teaching has been a wonderful addition to our concert career.”

During their Oberlin residency, the Jupiter quartet has been presented with the opportunity to be involved in a varied menu of activities all of which McDonough said have enriched their musical lives. But in the end he says, it is all about the students. “The Winter Term String Quartet Intensive was a wonderful project for the students and we had a lot of fun interacting with them. The opportunity to join them in a performance of Mahler’s arrangement of Schubert’s *Death and the Maiden* was a highlight. We’re used to playing the piece as a quartet, so to have sixteen string players joining us, including basses, was really fun. The students were incredibly prepared, adaptable and they responded so immediately and rose to the challenge. So yes, the entire experience has just been really nice.”

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