

THE CARTHAGE 2002-2003

CHAMBER

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MUSIC
SERIES

Ames piano quartet
sunday, february 16, 2003, 3 p.m.



Carthage

2001 Alford Park Drive
Kenosha, WI 53140-1994
www.carthage.edu

PROGRAM

February 16, 2003 - Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis.

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 16 Ludwig van Beethoven
Grave-Allegro, ma non troppo (1770-1827)
Andante cantabile
Rondo: Allegro, ma non troppo

Quartet in A minor, Op. 1 Joseph Suk
Allegro appassionato (1874-1935)
Adagio
Allegro con fuoco

Intermission

Quartet in G minor, Op. 45 Gabriel Fauré
Allegro molto moderato (1845-1924)
Allegro molto
Adagio non troppo
Allegro molto

The Ames Piano Quartet is managed by:
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Ames piano quartet

Mahlon Darlington

Violinist

Jonathan Sturm

Violist

George Work

Cellist

William David

Pianist

The Ames Piano Quartet holds a unique position in the chamber music field as one of the few piano quartets in the world. The combination of their lush string sound, blended with the orchestral quality of the piano, produces an exquisite and rare sonority. The *Washington Post* aptly described it as "one of the most heavenly combinations of instruments around."

Members of the Ames Piano Quartet include Mahlon Darlington, violinist; Jonathan Sturm, violist; George Work, cellist; and William David, pianist. As individuals, they each are master teachers and superb soloists. The ensemble has toured throughout the United States, including concerts in New York City, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Washington, D.C. Internationally, they have performed in Canada, Mexico, the Far East, and most recently at the Hellbrunn Festival in Salzburg, Austria.

At their debut in New York City, Tim Page of the *New York Times* called them, "skillful...obviously adept musicians..." He went on to say, "the best playing...came with the Fauré...which was imbued with appropriate languor and luminous Gallic warmth." The *Washington Post* said, "Their concert yesterday evening at the National Gallery of Art was a mesmerizing...affair." The *Los Angeles Times* wrote of a recent concert, "The four generated nearly limitless excitement...arching lyricism, poetic eloquence, and great accuracy." The French magazine *La Cotedes Arts* commented, "The Ames Quartet has a full vigorous sound, which deeply touches the soul."

The Ames Piano Quartet has recorded six compact discs for the Dorian label, featuring well-known works by Brahms, Fauré, and Schumann, as well as less frequently heard piano quartets by composers such as Charles-Marie Widor and Richard Strauss. The ensemble's most recent Dorian release includes two virtually unknown, late romantic masterworks by Russian composers Sergei Taneyev and Paul Juon. The respected Internet classical music Web site *ClassicsToday.com* awarded this CD a rare perfect-ten score on both its artistic quality and sound quality. All of their recordings have received national and international critical acclaim. *Fanfare* called the group's recording of the Dvořák quartets, "one of the best chamber music recordings of the century." The British journal *Gramophone* wrote of the Ames Quartet's Fauré CD: "Its musicality and profundity of feeling are most appealing."

Since its formation in 1976, the Ames Piano Quartet has been in residence at Iowa State University and has been awarded numerous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Recently, the ensemble has been featured on the popular, nationally syndicated radio programs "The Listening Room" and "St. Paul Sunday."

Violinist **Mahlon Darlington**, a native of Ohio, holds degrees from the Baldwin-Wallace Conservatory and Columbia University. After studying with George Poinar in Cleveland and Oscar Shumsky in New York City, Darlington served in the Basel Chamber Orchestra in Switzerland. He later became a member of the Manhattan String Quartet and artist-in-residence at Grinnell College prior to his appointment at Iowa State University.

Violist **Jonathan Sturm** is a graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory, Eastman School of Music, and Indiana University. In addition to his duties at Iowa State University and the Ames Piano Quartet, he is concertmaster of the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra. He formerly held the position of associate professor of violin and viola at Drake University. The *Des Moines Register* has said of Sturm's performance, "A mastery of technique and a marvelously warm tone." He has appeared as soloist with Midwestern orchestras and as guest artist with chamber ensembles including the Pioneer String Quartet and Cassatt Quartet. An established string pedagogue, Dr. Sturm frequently publishes articles and presents lectures and master classes.

Cellist **George Work** holds bachelor's and master's degrees and the Performer's Certificate from the Eastman School of Music, where he also served as teaching assistant to Robert Sylvester. His other principal teachers included Paul Katz, Ronald Leonard, Gabor Rejto, and Carol Work. He has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras in the Midwest, as well as in Taiwan, R.O.C. In addition to concertizing with the Ames Piano Quartet, he was a long-time faculty member at the National Lutheran Summer Music Program, and was a founding member of the Omega String Quartet, its resident string quartet. He has taught at the University of Minnesota's Bravo! Summer String Program and currently is a faculty member at the Brevard Music Festival in North Carolina.

Pianist **William David**, a native of Detroit, earned a doctor of musical arts degree from the University of Michigan, where his major teachers were Gyorgy Sandor and Eugene Bossart. Among the many honors he received while at the University of Michigan is the Stanley Medal, awarded to the school's outstanding music student. Of his two performances with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Arthur Fiedler, the *Detroit Free Press* wrote, "...David displayed that rare combination of youthful vitality and mature artistry." The Soviet press agency TASS, reviewing his appearance in Moscow, praised him as "a complete musician." The *Washington Post* wrote of a recent performance with the Ames Quartet: "David played with the complete confidence and taste in the outer movements and perfect lyricism in the Andante."

PROGRAM NOTES

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 16 *Ludwig van Beethoven*
Composed in 1796, Beethoven's Quartet in E-flat Major, Op.16 for piano and strings stands beside his three piano trios Op.1 and six string quartets Op.18 as the master's first chamber music masterpieces. Beethoven simultaneously wrote a version of this work for piano and four wind instruments. They were published concurrently under the same opus number. A close examination of the two reveals few differences. Indeed, the piano part is identical. Most noticeably different are the string solos in the second movement, which are far more florid than their counterparts in the wind version.

The Quartet opens with a dignified and stately Grave that gives way to a spirited sonata-style first movement. The Andante cantabile is a remarkable rondo in which the theme returns three times in the piano, each time more florid and ethereal, and which alternates with deeply expressive and plaintive solos for the respective string instruments, mentioned above. The third movement is another rondo, emphasizing the virtuosity of the pianist.

Quartet in A minor, Op. 1 *Joseph Suk*
At the age of seventeen, Czech composer Joseph Suk (1874-1935) wrote his Quartet in A minor, Op. 1 for piano as his final project before graduating from the Prague Conservatory. Dvořák had joined the conservatory faculty less than a year before and Suk dedicated the work to him. A few years later, Suk married Dvořák's daughter.

Suk's career in music centered on his role of violinist in the Czech Quartet, which performed more than 4,000 concerts between 1893 and 1933. He also remained active as a composer, primarily of piano, chamber, and orchestral music. In 1922, he returned to the Prague Conservatory to teach composition. His students included Hlobil and Martinů.

The three movements of the Piano Quartet are traditional in form. They are characterized by attractive thematic material and harmonic language, and, above all, youthful exuberance. Dvořák's influence is apparent, along with that of Smetana and even Wagner.

The Ames Piano Quartet's newest CD, to be released in April, will feature three Czech piano quartets, including Suk's composition.

Quartet in G minor, Op. 45 Gabriel Fauré

Gabriel Fauré's Quartet in G minor, Op. 45 for piano shares many characteristics with its precursor, the beloved Quartet in C minor, Op. 15. Both pieces feature soaring, glorious melodic lines, tight, organic structures, and of course, the ubiquitous Fauré piano arpeggios. At the same time, the G minor Quartet is a significant departure from the earlier Quartet in a number of ways. First, there is an almost Wagnerian avoidance of conclusive cadences—a characteristic shared by many of Fauré's later compositions. The emotional spectrum of the G minor Quartet also is wider—the C minor Quartet spans a considerable range of feeling, from tender lyricism to impassioned drama, but it contains nothing comparable to the violent, almost savage Scherzo of the G minor. Finally, the almost "programmatic" opening of the Adagio movement makes the G minor Quartet an absolutely unique composition among Fauré's mature works. Ordinarily, Fauré was among the most devoted composers of "absolute" music, a passionate champion of music for its own sake. But the slow, oscillating piano figure, which opens the Adagio, is, as Fauré's described it, an "almost involuntary" recollection of the distant bells of the town of Cadirac which he heard as a child. The gentle, rocking quality of this opening is complemented by the simple beauty of the viola melody which rises from it, and this beauty continues throughout the subsequent movement, permeating it, only to give way at last to the stormy Allegro molto that concludes the Quartet.