

David Rowe Artists



Welcome to: the Jerusalem Quartet!



photo: Keith Saunders

It has been six years since we've added anyone to the roster, so I hope you will share our excitement in welcoming the **Jerusalem Quartet** to David Rowe Artists!

It was my great pleasure to be invited to hear them perform recently, and – obviously – I found their playing magnificent!

To my ears, this is among a very small handful of string quartets destined to make a significant mark over the coming decades. Though just barely into their thirties, they have

already established a regular presence in major international music centers including London, Paris, Amsterdam, Munich, Hamburg, Brussels, Zurich, and Sydney. In North America they have appeared in New York (Carnegie Hall, 92nd St. Y, and Lincoln Center), Ann Arbor, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Washington, Miami, Denver, Chicago, La Jolla, Berkeley, and Miami.

Needless to say, they have collected reams of rave reviews, most recently from *The Strad* (May, 2009): “Superlatives are inadequate in describing just how fine this playing was from one of the young, yet great quartets of our time.”

As an exclusive **Harmonia Mundi** recording artist, they have released highly-acclaimed discs featuring Haydn, Shostakovich, Schubert, and Dvorak.

We are honored to add this superb, distinctive quartet to our family, and look forward to expanding the already excellent foundation they have built in North America!

The Jerusalem Quartet will make their first tour for David Rowe Artists in October, 2010.

Neither backs, nor appendixes, nor broken canopies.....

...shall keep David Rowe Artists from their scheduled engagements!

The month between Feb 17-Mar 17 was unprecedented in my 24 years as an artist manager. The night of Feb 16 I received a call from **Wu Han** that **David Finckel** had thrown out his back and was flat in bed, clearly not boarding a flight to New Orleans for a recital the next day. A dozen calls later, and less than 24 hours before the concert, Wu Han had confirmed that violinist Arnaud Sussmann and cellist Andres Diaz could meet her in New Orleans and prepare a trio program! Needless to say, it was a smash hit with the presenter and audience.

David kept hoping for the best but on Feb 20 realized he would still not be able to play with his Emerson Quartet colleagues for

the gala re-opening of Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall on the 22nd. As chronicled elsewhere in these pages, the **Brentano Quartet** stepped in on less than 2 days notice. Happily, by the end of March David was “back” in full swing, although Wu Han, Arnaud, and Andres did have an opportunity to repeat their impromptu trio program for an (equally appreciative) Sanibel Music Festival audience in mid March.

Then it was the Brentano's turn for adventure when, following their March 8 performance in Baltimore cellist **Nina Lee** realized the sharp pain in her stomach was not subsiding. The next morning she was undergoing surgery to remove her (fortunately not yet ruptured) appendix, while her colleagues were en route to Ann Arbor for their concert. Incredibly, founding Brentano cellist Michael Kannen was available to

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St. Lawrence Quartet debuts John Adams “String Quartet”

John Adams is besieged with commissions from international operas and orchestras, which makes the delivery of his new “String Quartet” a highly significant event in the chamber music world. And for better or worse, the **St. Lawrence String Quartet** must bear substantial responsibility for the result, since it was for them the piece was composed: John heard them in October, 2007, asked backstage if he could write a new piece for them, and immediately commenced work. (Of course, it wasn’t long before a commission was in place, with The Juilliard School taking the lead, and Stanford Lively Arts and The Banff Centre also participating.)

As for the piece itself? *The Mercury News* (San Jose, CA) headline said it all:

John Adams’ brilliant, inventive ‘String Quartet’ is a stunner in West Coast premiere

Well, maybe not “all”...there was a bit more to say, such as:

“John Adams’ highly anticipated “String Quartet” received its West Coast premiere Sunday afternoon at Stanford University’s Dinkelspiel Auditorium, and it is a stunner. Performed by the St. Lawrence String Quartet, with Adams on hand to introduce it, the piece emerged as one of his most brilliant and inventive masterworks.

“In a fleet, explosive 30 minutes, it boasts all the attributes audiences have come to associate with Adams’ best music.”

“It was clear that [the SLSQ musicians] were fully invested in Adams’ score. Since giving its world premiere in New York earlier this year, the group has performed it nearly a dozen times, and this performance came off with a sense of mastery and conviction.”

“This is Adams at his most gripping, and the St. Lawrence players gave the work a fierce, go-for-broke reading.”



John Adams, left, celebrates with members of the St. Lawrence String Quartet following the world premiere of “String Quartet” at the Juilliard School in January

Needless to say, SLSQ is proud to have played so, uh, “instrumental” a role in adding a major masterpiece to the repertory. They are the exclusive performers of “String Quartet” through 09/10, and look forward to offering it for many seasons to follow.

While the Adams debut was certainly the highlight of SLSQ’s spring, they continued to impress in the standard repertory. Following their appearance in Montreal as one of many ensembles performing the complete string quartets of Haydn, the *Globe and Mail* wrote: “Celebrating 20 years, this group has matured and deepened without losing its freshness and edge. It now stands with the three or four best quartets in its field.”

And in Palm Beach, FL the *Daily News* described their concert as “Electrifying...a combination of technical perfection and risk-taking that made the audience shout many bravi after the last movement.”

Happy 20th birthday indeed, SLSQ – here’s to many more!!

Schubert Trios reconsidered

It is not often a critic in a leading international publication is compelled to re-assess his opinion of a work in the standard repertory, but such was the effect of **David Finckel, Wu Han,** and **Philip Setzer’s** recently released recording (on ArtistLed) of the Schubert trios on *BBC Music* reviewer Michael Tanner: “Listening to this account, I felt ashamed of not previously having placed this work [the Eb-Major trio] alongside the very greatest of this supreme composer’s.”

(Needless to say, the CD was awarded the maximum rating of 5 stars both for performance and recording.)

Although sidelined for a few weeks by a balky back (see other stories), David returned in late March to premiere

“Mirror Image”, a new work composed for David and Wu Han by **George Tsontakis** and commissioned by Auburn University in Montgomery, AL. The duo also performed in Livermore, CA and Sun City, AZ, and was joined by Philip Setzer for a glorious live performance of the Schubert trios in Schenectady, NY.

In addition to a series of terrific duo programs, the Schubert Trios will continue to be on offer in concert during 2010/11.

Brentano captures heart and soul

Fans of the **Brentano Quartet** will not be surprised to read the following from a recent review in Salt Lake City's *Deseret News*: "They capture the heart and soul of the music they play. But not only do they bring a keen perceptiveness to their interpretations, they also bring an exuberance that ignites the audience.

... The group's playing was lushly romantic, with long sweeping lines and large gestures, but it was also infinitely intimate and inviting. Gorgeously expressive and wonderfully lyrical, this was a polished and eloquent reading that didn't miss a thing."

And **Carter Foss** (of the Chamber Music Society of Salt Lake City) echoed this sentiment in an email following the same performance: "From the first notes of the Haydn, you knew the concert was going to be special. By any standard, this was outstanding. They seemed to go deeper into the works than any performance I remember. I kept thinking, 'Oh, that's how that should go'. No false glamour or 'showing off', they were in the service of the composer. I'm now a fan (the same way I'm a Chicago Bear fan and that's saying a lot)."

Further praise was bestowed by London's *Financial Times*, which stated: "the Brentanos imparted a wondrous vigour to Haydn's D minor Quartet, Op.76, No. 2. A performance such as this, which combines grandeur of utterance with meticulous attention to dynamics and rhythmic vivacity, is the sort of which legendary chamber music experiences are made.....Among younger American quartets, the Brentano here claimed pride of place."

It has been a customarily busy spring for the quartet, including performances with pianist **Peter Serkin** of Charles Wuorinen's Second Piano Quintet (composed for them) in Baltimore, Berkeley, Pasadena, Irvine, and Washington, DC. But their busiest day was undoubtedly February 22, when they played two concerts in one afternoon! It wasn't exactly planned that way, but Lincoln Center found themselves in a bind for the gala re-opening of Alice Tully Hall when the Emerson Quartet was forced to withdraw on 36 hours notice due to David Finckel's ailing back (since healed!). As relayed on the *New York Times* website:

"Lincoln Center officials scrambled to find a substitute for the Emerson quartet, sending out requests to 10 other quartets simultaneously. The trick was to find an ensemble that was both prominent enough for the occasion but also available for the 5 p.m. performance. The choice was the Brentano Quartet. The Brentano had a 3 p.m. performance on Sunday in Garden City, L.I. But by eliminating the intermission (the audience received an explanation), the quartet was able to make a 4:27 train from Garden City, which arrived at Penn Station at 5:11 p.m. A taxi got them to Tully in plenty of time for their scheduled appearance, which came right after intermission."

(All in an afternoon's work!)

Academy of Ancient Music delivers "experience of a lifetime"

Richard Egarr and the **Academy of Ancient Music** stormed North America with 14 performances of Bach's "Brandenburg Concertos" in March.

Presenters experienced superb sales, and reviews were extremely positive. To best communicate the typical reaction, we share the following letter – written to Judith Hurtig at the University of Iowa's Hancher Auditorium:

The Academy of Ancient Music was an experience of a lifetime. To hear the Brandenburgs for the first time played live by a world renowned orchestra was a highlight of many years as a Hancher audience member and as a music lover. In light of how challenging this season has been for all of us in the performing arts, I am especially in awe of and grateful for whatever extraordinary efforts it took to ensure their visit happened.

In addition, several students in my Arts in Performance class also had an experience of a lifetime; as one of them put it, he was never before aware of the way each instrument played its part, and now listens to all styles of music differently, hearing the piece while also hearing the parts. Such an experience for our students, as well as for the community of music lovers, is worth all the aggravations (which may be easier for me to say than for your struggles this season!).

Thank you so much for bringing us yet another group of consummate artists!

*Best,
Meredith Alexander*



Geoff Nuttall of the SLSQ, left, and **John Adams** discuss the possible merits of becoming "Dancing with the Stars" contestants.

NEITHER BACKS...continued from cover

step in, and while some program adjustments were required, the concert was from all accounts superbly received. And by week's end Nina was back playing!

Finally, on March 13 (yes, Friday) I received a call from Jeremy Ganter at UC Davis' Mondavi Center explaining that the movable acoustic canopy above the stage was stuck in an unsafe position, and the **Academy of Ancient Music's** concert for the following night would be impossible. However, rather than cancel, he asked if there would be any chance to re-schedule for later in the tour. Against my better judgment I mentioned that March 17 was the only unbooked date on the west coast, and maybe – if all the

stars aligned – we might be able to make it work. He requested I try, and assured me the canopy would be repaired by the 17th. After a full day on the phone with the orchestra (who agreed to 6 consecutive performances), Southwest Airlines (who had to re-route 3 flights for a group of 28), and various hotels and bus companies, Arielle and I were able to give him the (appropriately for St. Patrick's Day) green light!

Thanks to amazingly resourceful and accommodating artists and presenters, and against long odds in all cases, we are very proud to say the shows DID indeed go on!!

(Whew!)

Prazak gets blood to boil

And that's a *good* thing, as reflected in this review which appeared in San Jose's *Mercury News* in mid-March: "The Prazak's performance of [Janacek 1] was psychologically rich: that eerie glow of the opening measures, spreading like moonlight; the tremulous and even scorched atmospherics of the second movement, combined with a wrenching dance; the low-lying fog in the final movement's opening, like a choir of horns in a distant forest. Amazing. And then razor-cut pizzicatos and a blood-boiling gallop, led by the cello, toward whatever calamity of the heart awaits."

Reactions following the 11 other concerts on the tour were equally positive, leaving many presenters and chamber music lovers eagerly awaiting the Prazak's return!

The Prazak Quartet will next be available in North America in November, 2010, and Feb-Mar, 2011.



photo: David Rowe

NO CAPTION REQUIRED

Have a hilarious photo of your own? Email it to arielle@davidroweartists.com. We'll select one photo submission (with photographer credit, of course) to include in each issue of DRA News.