FRIDAY, JUNE 9 :: 7:30 PM

Festival Opening Night
Dover String Quartet
Joel Link, violin | Bryan Lee, violin
Julianne Lee, viola | Camden Shaw, cello
Andrew Wan, violin | Njima Grevious, violin
Barry Shiffman, viola | Desmond Hoebig, cello

QUARTET IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 33, NO. 2, (HOB.III.38) [THE JOKE] (1781)
Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Allegro moderato
Scherzo. Allegro
Largo e sostenuto
Finale. Presto

STRING QUARTET NO. 1 (1946)
George Walker (1922–2018)
Allegro
Molto adagio
Allegro con fuoco

:: INTERMISSION ::

OCTET IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 20 (1825)
Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)
Allegro moderato ma con fuoco
Andante
Scherzo. Allegro leggierissimo
Presto

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In music, what goes around comes around. Towards the end of 1781, Haydn kick-started a crowdfunding platform. There be of six "entirely newly produced quartets," he said in his pitch, "written in an entirely new special manner." In return for their pledges, backers (read 'patrons') would receive pre-publication manuscript copies and their names included in the list of subscribers to the printed edition.

HAYDN'S CROWDFUNDING PLATFORM
From one of the surviving fundraising letters for Haydn's Op. 33, dated Dec. 3, 1781, to Swiss writer Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) in Zürich:

Most learned Sir and Dearest Friend!

I love and happily read your works. As one reads, hears and relates, I am not without adroitness myself, since my name (as it were) is known and highly appreciated in every country. Therefore, I take the liberty of asking you most courteously to place a small order. Since its known to me that in Zürich and Winterthur there are many gentlemen amateurs and great connoisseurs and patrons of music, I certainly cannot conceal that I am issuing by subscription for the price of 6 ducats an opus consisting of 6 Quartets, accurately copied, for 2 violins, alto viola, violoncello concertante, of an entirely new special kind, since I have written none for ten years" (emphasis in the original).

I did not want to fail to offer these to the great patrons of music and the amateur gentlemen. Subscribers who live abroad will receive them before I print the works. Please don't take it amiss that I bother you with this request; if I should be fortunate enough to receive an answer containing your approval, I would most appreciate it, and remain,

Most learned Sir,
Your ever obedient
Joseph Haydn (signed by Haydn)
Fürst Esterházscher Capell Meister

When published, the new quartets, combining accessibility with artistic excellence, immediately created a stir. Mozart, just launching a career as a freelance composer in Vienna when the quartets were first published in 1782, admired their compactness, their perfect balance of character, form and technique, and the way in which Haydn gives all four instruments equal importance. He painstakingly composed a set of six in emulation of Haydn's Op. 33, with several of Haydn's movements clearly used as direct models.

The opening movement of the E-Flat Quartet is built rigorously on the good-natured rhythmic figure of its first few bars. Very little in the movement has to do with anything other than this thematic material. In the Scherzo, Haydn's focus moves from high culture to folk culture, to accessibility and innovation. In it, Haydn makes the first documented use of a theme which typically Viennese grossando (slid) famous shortly afterwards from the vaudevilles of the Strauss family and others. He also plays with the anticipated eight-bar phrase structure by adding a bar and upsetting any feeling of predictability. The mood shifts again in the highly sophisticated variations of the slow movement, where a transparent, eight-measure melody is shared among the instruments in every possible permutation. The E-Flat Quartet is often called The Joke because of the witty 'false ending' of its rondo finale. Here, in a touch of self-mockery perhaps, Haydn deconstructs the much-repeated theme, giving us the melody phrase by phrase, each separated by a bar of silence. Three more bars of silence and he now gives us the opening phrase again, pianissimo—and with it, a good chuckle.

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WHERE DID MENDELSSOHN COMPOSE HIS OCTET?

Mendelssohn's family life at the time of composition was not without its adventures, as anyone who has undergone a house move and renovations might agree. On February 18, 1825, Mendelssohn's father Abraham had purchased a big pile at No. 3 Leipzigerstrasse, Berlin. The mansion, imposing though run-down, had earlier served as a silk mill and was next door to the royal porcelain factory. Abraham Mendelssohn's plan was to return the mansion to the grand family home that Heinrich von der Groeben had designed it to be nine decades earlier, around 1735.

It was here, living in the Gartenhaus (Garden House), with renovation work in full swing, during the summer and fall months that Mendelssohn wrote his earliest masterpiece, the Octet Op. 20. His ability to focus on a project and to multi-task was exceptional.

At the end of 1825, Mendelssohn moved from the summer house at Leipzigerstrasse 3 into a room on a mezzanine level in the left-hand wing of the main house. But he was to return to the Gartenhaus with what his nephew Sebastian Hensel referred to as its 'deep loneliness of a forest,' steps away from the bustling city of Berlin, the following summer. Then, in the space of just a month, July 7 to August 6, 1826, his imagination conceived another perfectly shaped composition.

The Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream follows the lead of the Octet in exploring the boundaries between absolute and program music. Mendelssohn never again brought the same spontaneity, certainty of touch and vividness of imagination to a composition as he did in his teens in the Octet and music to A Midsummer Night's Dream, free to explore his private world in the seclusion of the Gartenhaus...in the former hunting grounds of Frederick the Great...which now form the site of the present-day German Bundesrat, or Federal Council.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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Scan this QR code with your smart phone and tap the provided link.

CLASSICAL CABARETS

FRIDAY, JUNE 16 :: 9:45 PM

VIOLINS, PIANOS & WATCHES, OH MY!

This eclectic program will take concertgoers on quite a ride, traveling from stately Halvorsen violin/viola duos to earthy jazz and Americana pieces to a six hand piano piece before ending in delightfully esoteric compositions by composer-in-residence Mark Applebaum using wristwatches and…metaphysics?