FINE ARTS QUARTET

Ralph Evans | Efim Boico | Robert Cohen | Juan-Miguel Hernandez
with special guests Gil Sharon & Niklas Schmidt

JAN 27 & 28 at 3pm | free admission

Two-day chamber music festival celebrating the end of a 55-year residency at UW-Milwaukee

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Presented by
The UW-Milwaukee Peck School of the Arts

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JANUARY 27, 2018 | FINE ARTS QUARTET, ZELAZO | 3 P.M.

String Quintet in C minor, Op. 104 .................................................. Ludwig van Beethoven
Allegro con brio
Andante cantabile con variazioni
Menuet: Quasi allegro
Finale: Prestissimo

with Gil Sharon, viola

Allegretto
Lento
Allegro
Allegretto

--- INTERMISSION ---

String Sextet No.2 in G major, Op.36 ........................................ Johannes Brahms
Allegro non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro non troppo
Adagio
Poco Allegro

with Gil Sharon, viola & Niklas Schmidt, cello

JANUARY 28, 2018 | FINE ARTS QUARTET, ZELAZO | 3 P.M.

String Quintet in G minor, KV 516 ............................................ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Allegro
Menuetto: Allegretto
Adagio, ma non troppo
Adagio - Allegro

with Gil Sharon, viola

String Quartet No.1 (1995) ......................................................... Ralph Evans
Moderato
Andante espressivo
Allegro scherzando

---INTERMISSION---

String Sextet, Op.70 ("Souvenir de Florence") .......................... Peter Tchaikovsky
Allegro con spirito
Adagio cantabile e con moto
Allegretto moderato
Allegro vivace

with Gil Sharon, viola, & Niklas Schmidt, cello
Beethoven, String Quintet in C Minor, Op. 104

Beethoven had a lot on his mind in 1817. Beyond his own health concerns, the composer was caring for his 11-year-old nephew, Karl, the custody of whom he had gained through considerable litigation after the death in 1815 of the boy’s father, and Beethoven’s younger brother, Caspar Anton Carl. For these reasons, Beethoven’s compositional output was relatively small in that year. But then a fellow we know only as Herr Kaufmann (an individual who has never been identified) created a string quintet arrangement of an early piano trio of Beethoven’s, the Op. 1 No. 3 in C minor, and presented it to the composer. Beethoven was not satisfied with it, and proceeded to revise it, thereby composing his own quintet arrangement of the trio, which we hear today. He wrote that, by writing this revision of Kaufmann’s attempt, the work was “raised from the most abject misery to some degree of respectability.” It is noteworthy that Kaufmann included some original ideas, figures that do not appear in the original trio. And as Beethoven revised his arrangement, we are rightly surprised to realize that he retained, even built upon, these new ideas, seemingly approving them. Thus, Op. 104 is not wholly the work of Beethoven. However, the famous trio upon which is it based is a very fine and powerful work, and listeners familiar with it, and those who are not, will find tremendous musical interest in this rare and historically curious work.

Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 7 in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 108

Dmitri Shostakovich’s first wife, Nina Vasilyevna, died of cancer in December of 1954, and the composer’s Seventh Quartet was dedicated to her memory. His mother was to pass less than a year later. The seventh and eighth quartets were written in close succession in 1960, soon after the completion of the First Cello Concerto. The seventh was completed in March and was given its premiere in Leningrad the following May 15 by the Beethoven Quartet.

Shostakovich’s original conception was to write twenty-four quartets, one in every major and minor key. While he did not live to see the completion of this project, the fifteen he composed were carefully organized by their keys, and the seventh is the first in the minor mode. The briefest of his quartets (it has been called his “shortest masterpiece”), about twelve minutes in duration, the work is set in three movements, played without pause. The first movement makes prominent use of a three-note figure, and its clean texture and prominent pizzicato passages lend the music a clarity that has been described as “Haydnesque.” The mournful middle movement is structured in an ABA shape, and is played with mutes. In the finale, we hear recalls of ideas from the previous movements, most prominently the three-note figures that opened the work. The order of the first movement seems to dissolve into disorder in the finale, and some have viewed this as representative of Shostakovich’s reactions to the loss of his wife. The finale, like the first two movements, ends softly.
**January 27 Program Notes || Timothy Noonan Cont.**

**Brahms, String Sextet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 36**

Brahms's Second Sextet was composed in 1864-65, a highly creative period that also yielded the First Cello Sonata, the Horn Trio, and the Waltzes for piano four hands, Op. 39. In the first movement's opening section the first viola offers a slow-trill accompaniment figure as the first violin sings the opening theme. Beginning in G, it turns to E-flat and back to G, a feature that gives it a unique and memorable quality. The first cello soon takes up this theme in a passage of transition to the second theme. The first cello offers this as well—a fine, long, lyrical line. Textures of the opening return at the end of the exposition. The slow-trill figure is present in much of the development, accompanying Brahms's reworking of his themes. The recapitulation enters quietly and proceeds regularly to a coda, written at a somewhat slower tempo. The scherzo is placed second. While it is cast in the traditional scherzo-trio form, the scherzo section, in 2/4 time, is slower than most scherzi and in G minor. The trio is much faster and in the major, and syncopations make its melody particularly memorable. The movement ends with a return to the faster tempo. The third movement is a slow theme with five variations. The theme is in E minor and, while the variations are only subtly related to the theme melodically, phrase lengths and tonal plans are retained. In the last variation, which turns to the major key, pairs of instruments imitate horn calls. The sonata form finale presents two contrasting ideas: first, a quick passage moving from A minor toward G, and then a lyrical idea in G played by the first violin. The first idea returns before the first cello presents the second theme, soon taken up in the second violin part. Much of the development centers around the quick opening idea. Thus, at the recapitulation, Brahms omits it, beginning rather with the lyrical theme, again sung by the first violin. The coda initially develops a portion of the second theme, and then, at a faster tempo, addresses the quick opening passage that brings Brahms's final sextet to an exciting close.

**January 28 Program Notes || Timothy Noonan**

**Mozart, String Quintet in G Minor, K. 516**

Critics and audiences have long hailed Mozart's six string quintets as high points in the composer's output. Mozart enjoyed playing the viola part in chamber music, and thus these works, essentially string quartets with a second viola, were ideal for home music-making. Mozart's friend Abbé Stadler reported in 1829 to the publisher Novello that "Mozart and Haydn frequently played together with Stadler in Mozart's Quintettos." Two of them, the third and fourth, were composed consecutively in the spring of 1787: K. 515 in C and K. 516 in G minor (compare the final two symphonies, K. 550 in G minor and K. 551 in C). The second of these, which Daniel Heartz calls "the dark twin of K. 515," was completed on May 16, less than two weeks prior to the death of his father, Leopold.

To quote Heartz again, the G-minor quintet "is as full of pathos as anything Mozart composed." The work begins with a trio texture, the second viola and cello initially silent. The initial gesture is a triadic ascent, but this immediately gives way to a chromatic descent, establishing the work's darkness from the outset. This initial trio gives way to a second one, this time played by the two violas and the cello, who repeat and expand this theme. A new theme in the first violin follows, still in G minor, that features a poignant leap of a minor ninth. A fragment of this theme is used extensively at the end of the development section. The movement concludes with a developmental coda.

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Fine Arts Quartet 5
The minuet is placed second. This remarkable movement features startling off-beat chords and considerable chromaticism, prompting Charles Rosen’s comment that “it is difficult to go further than the opening of the minuet without destroying the contemporary musical language.” The trio section, in contrast, turns to the major mode, with perhaps the brightest music in the work thus far. The slow movement, too, is in a major key, and is organized as a sonata form without development. Throughout, Mozart directs that the instruments be muted. And when it ends, we are surprised as the finale begins at a slow tempo. Slow introductions were not uncommon in first movements in Mozart’s time, but examples of finale introductions are scarce. Here, the first violin carries the melodic line while the cello provides harmonies, largely in pizzicato, as the three middle voices fill out the texture with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The ensuing Allegro turns to G major, with a cheerful rondo theme—which is quite a surprise after the darkness of much of the music that came before. Perhaps the finale’s introduction served to blow away the clouds, since the finale’s optimism carries through the sectional nature of the form to a rousing conclusion.

Evans, String Quartet No. 1

Ralph Evans, first violinist of the Fine Arts Quartet since 1982, leads a distinguished career as a solo and chamber musician. He is also a successful composer, a pursuit begun in his youth. The creation of his First String Quartet, completed in 1995 and recorded for the Naxos label in 2008, spanned many years, as we read in this account written by Mr. Evans.

“Some of the greatest composers, Mozart among them, are famous for having written masterpieces in just a few days. By contrast, it took me 29 years to complete my First String Quartet. To be fair, it did not really take me that long; I wrote most of it in 1966-8, then essentially neglected it until 1995, the year I finally got around to its completion.

“By the age of thirteen I had written quite a few short pieces, but since I planned to enter America’s National Federation of Music Clubs’ 1967 National Composition Competition, I was hoping to compose a concise three-movement work, one which was modernistic yet distinct from the academic serialists then in vogue. Already a veteran concert-goer, it seemed to me contemporary composers were writing music that sounded like dry exercises, devoid of an aesthetic sensibility. Thus I challenged myself: could I, a novice composer, write in a non-derivative style, with tuneful melodies, lively counterpoint and piquant harmonies, to create work of analytical interest that people might enjoy hearing?

“As the competition deadline loomed, however, I realised I was in over my head. I had melodies and ideas galore, but could not decide which instrumentation would be best for them. Might it be more effective to score my work for full orchestra, for violin and piano, or for chamber ensemble? I experimented with different versions, but finally settled on violin and piano for a practical reason: I would then have the possibility of playing the piece in my violin recitals. But I had another pressing problem: although I had completed a slow movement, and made good progress on a final movement, I only had sketches to show for the planned first movement. Unwilling to wait another year, I entered the completed movement in 1967 as an independent piece, with the idea of entering the other movements, one at a time, in consecutive years. As it turned out, the slow movement (now the second) won First Prize in the 1967 Competition, and the fast movement (now the last) won First Prize in the 1968 Competition. But the planned first movement was to remain unfinished as my focus shifted full-time to the violin.
“Although back in 1966, a scoring for string quartet was one idea I had considered, it was not until 1995 that I could resist the idea no longer. Perhaps years of performing in the Fine Arts Quartet had given me the confidence to finish the missing first movement and also to arrange the other two movements for quartet, based on the ideas and sketches I had been contemplating ever since 1966, thus completing and revising a miniature quartet almost three decades in the making.”

The quartet is in three movements. The first incorporates the basic elements of traditional sonata form in its contrasting ideas, development, return, and coda. The slow movement presents two impassioned themes, first presented separately, and later varied in alternation with one another. Evans alludes to the traditional four-movement plan of many quartets as the finale combines the styles of both scherzo and finale, with a return of its initial theme serving to provide an optimistic close.

Tchaikovsky, Sextet in D Major, Op. 70 “Souvenir de Florence”

After completing his Fifth Symphony in August 1888, Tchaikovsky's next large project was the second of his three celebrated ballets, *The Sleeping Beauty*, composed between December 1888 and September 1889. Then, after the ballet had its first performance in early 1890, he set off for Florence to compose his opera *The Queen of Spades*. Upon its successful debut, the composer returned home to Frolovskoye and composed the present string sextet, “Souvenir de Florence,” in June and July 1890, scored for two violins, two violas, and two cellos (and sometimes performed by string orchestras). The work proved to be his last chamber composition and his penultimate multi-movement instrumental work—only the Sixth Symphony would follow. Upon hearing a private performance, Tchaikovsky made significant revisions before it received its public premiere in 1892. Though the title of the sextet is not meant to imply specifically Florentine content, he did sketch portions of the slow movement while there, and the title refers to the positive climate for composing that he experienced during his stay. Indeed, the initial genesis of the work came some four years earlier as the St. Petersburg Chamber Music Society requested a new work from him, which he began and then set aside. Cast in four movements, the work begins with a finely structured sonata form in which a three-note figure, an element of the opening theme, also impacts the transition and the second theme. The slow movement presents its melodies in the form of duets, in an ABA shape; the middle section exploits the sonorous potential of the large chamber ensemble. The third movement, a scherzo, adopts the flavor of a Slavonic folk idiom, with the main theme announced by the first viola and the middle section at a faster tempo. And the vigorous finale, in sonata form, again suggests a Slavonic dance. Its soaring second theme is particularly memorable, and Tchaikovsky offers a fugato passage based upon the opening theme. A coda brings the movement to a dazzling close.
They have been called the “The Dream Team” and were declared by the *Washington Post* “one of the gold-plated names in chamber music”. But these statements seem inadequate when you consider that American first violinist Ralph Evans was a prizewinner in the International Tchaikovsky Competition, the “fiercest, most nerve-shredding competition in the classical world”; that Russian-born second violinist Efim Boico was chosen by Daniel Barenboim to be concertmaster of the Orchestre de Paris, that Canadian violist Juan-Miguel Hernandez recorded with Norah Jones and Chick Corea, and the British cellist Robert Cohen, in the words of *New York Stereo Review*, “plays like a God”.

Despite their unique and diverse musical makeup and the individual impact each artist has had on the world of music, there is an overwhelming force that drew them together and marks the Fine Arts Quartet as a musical entity like no other. They have an instantly identifiable sound, an intense beauty, a deeply warming, fluent communication that envelopes their audience. It has been called a sound from the Golden Era, a sound that restores and enriches.

The Fine Arts Quartet holds an extraordinary and legendary history of its own. Founded in Chicago in 1946, now celebrating its 70th anniversary season, the Quartet has recorded over 200 works and continues to tour throughout the world. The thirty-three year membership of Evans and Boico has created a unity of violin sound like no other. Four years ago, Cohen brought his extraordinary musical passion to the Quartet, followed shortly by Hernandez with his dynamism and heartfelt warmth.

The Fine Arts Quartet are an inspiration to young chamber ensembles and have nurtured many of today’s top international quartets whilst teaching as guest professors at the major conservatoires of Paris, Lyon, Lugano and London. They are Artists-in-Residence at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and give masterclasses at summer schools in the US and throughout Europe. They also go into the heart of communities, introducing music with flair, humour and passion to school children, demonstrating close-up their excitement and love for the music and their instruments.

The Quartet’s recordings have received numerous distinctions. Most recently on the Naxos label:
- Fauré Quintets with pianist Cristina Ortiz “Gramophone award-winner and recording of legendary status” (Gramophone Magazine).
- Franck Quartet “Editor’s Choice” (Gramophone Magazine).
- Glazunov, Mendelssohn and Fauré CD’s were each “Recording of the Year” (Musicweb International).
- “Four American Quartets” album “BBC Music Magazine Choice”.
- Schumann “one of the very finest chamber music recordings of the year” (American Record Guide).
- CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming ((contemporary music), given jointly by Chamber Music America and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers.

Many of the Quartet’s Naxos recordings have been selected for Grammy® Awards entry lists in the “Best Classical Album” and/or “Best Chamber Music Performance” categories.

Recent special projects have included the release on Naxos of two of Mozart’s greatest piano concertos in Ignaz Lachner’s 19th century chamber transcriptions of the orchestra parts for string quartet and bass, with pianist Alon Goldstein; a monthly WUWM National Public Radio series by Cohen called ‘On That Note’; and the creation and development of ‘Musical Heights Foundation’ by Hernandez, a nonprofit foundation bringing high-level musical teaching into developing countries. For more details, visit: www.fineartsquartet.com
Ralph Evans, violinist, prizewinner in the 1982 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, concertized as soloist throughout Europe and North America before succeeding Leonard Sorkin as first violinist of the Fine Arts Quartet. Evans, who has toured worldwide with the Quartet since late 1982, has recorded over 100 works. A complete discography is listed at: fineartsquartet.com/evansrecordings

Evans, a cum laude graduate of Yale University and Fulbright Scholar in London, studied with Szymon Goldberg and Nathan Milstein in Europe, and subsequently won the top prize in a number of major American competitions, among them, the Concert Artists Guild Competition in New York.

Evans has also received international recognition for his work as a composer. His award winning composition “Nocturne” has been performed on American Public Television and his String Quartet No.1, released on the Naxos label, has been warmly greeted in the press (“rich and inventive” - Toronto Star; “whimsical and clever, engaging and amusing” - All Music Guide; “vigor and tuneful” - Montreal Gazette; “seductive, modern sonorities” - France Ouest; “a small masterpiece” - Gli Amici della Musica).

Efim Boico, violinist, enjoys an international career that has included solo appearances under conductors Zubin Mehta, Carlo Maria Giulini, Claudio Abbado and Erich Leinsdorf, and performances with Daniel Barenboim, Radu Lupu and Pinchas Zuckerman. After receiving his musical training in his native Russia, he emigrated in 1967 to Israel, where he was appointed Principal Second Violin of the Israel Philharmonic - a position he held for eleven years. In 1971, he joined the Tel Aviv Quartet as second violinist, touring the world with guest artists such as André Previn and Vladimir Ashkenazy. In 1979, Boico was appointed concertmaster and soloist of the Orchestre de Paris under Daniel Barenboim, positions he held until 1983, when he joined the Fine Arts Quartet. Boico has been guest professor at the Paris and Lyons Conservatories in France, and the Yehudi Menuhin School in Switzerland. He is also a frequent juror representing the United States in the prestigious London, Evian, and Shostakovich Quartet Competitions. As music professor at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, he has received numerous awards, including the Wisconsin Public Education Professional Service Award for distinguished music teaching, and the Arts Recognition and Talent Search Award from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts.

Juan-Miguel Hernandez, violist, was born in Montreal in 1985. He began studying the violin at the age of seven and switched to viola five years later. He received a bachelor’s degree from the Colburn Conservatory and graduate diploma from the New England Conservatory. Hernandez was a first prize winner of the 16th International Johannes Brahms Competition in Austria, as well as prize winner in both the National Canadian Music Competition and the 9th National Sphinx Competition. He has appeared as guest soloist with orchestras in Atlanta, Seattle, Colorado, Rochester, and Chicago, and has performed in the US, Canada, South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. He is a founding member of the
Harlem Quartet, with whom he performed from 2006-12, as well as the Trio Virado and Boreal Trio. He has appeared on NBC’s Good Morning America, the Today Show and the Telemundo Network. His discography includes three quartet CDs as well as multiple collaborations with Chick Corea, Gary Burton and Norah Jones. In 2010 he was honored with the medal of the National Assembly of Quebec.

Robert Cohen, cellist, made his concerto debut at the age of twelve at the Royal Festival Hall London and throughout his distinguished international career, he has been hailed as one of the foremost cellists of our time. “It is easy to hear what the fuss is about, he plays like a God” (New York Stereo Review). “Cohen can hold an audience in the palm of his hand” (The Guardian). Invited to perform concertos world-wide by conductors Claudio Abbado, Kurt Masur, Riccardo Muti, and Sir Simon Rattle, Cohen has also collaborated in chamber music with many eminent artists such as Yehudi Menuhin and the Amadeus String Quartet, with whom he recorded the Schubert Cello Quintet on Deutsche Grammophon. At age nineteen, Cohen recorded the Elgar Concerto with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for the EMI label, and since then, he has recorded much of the cello repertoire for Sony, Decca, DGG, EMI, and BIS. Cohen, who studied with the legendary artists William Pleeth, Jacqueline du Pré, and Mstislav Rostropovich, is an inspirational teacher who has given masterclasses all over the world. He is a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London and is director of the Charleston Manor Festival in the south of England. He joined the Fine Arts Quartet in January 2012. For further information about Robert Cohen, including links to his monthly radio show, lectures and latest news, please go to his website: www.robertcohen.info

Gil Sharon / violin
The violinist Gil Sharon was born in Bucharest, Romania and immigrated as a child to Israel. In 1971, after moving to The Netherlands, he won the first prize at the “International Emily Anderson Violin Competition” in London which marked the beginning of his international career. Gil Sharon’s reputation as a soloist leads him to perform frequently with various orchestras and to give recitals in Europe, Israel, Canada and the United States as well as participating in numerous chamber music concerts. In 1992 Gil Sharon founded the Amati Ensemble, a chamber music ensemble that performs at the highest possible level and in many different formations, from duo to full-scale chamber orchestra. The Amati Ensemble has released numerous CD’s and recorded a series of television-productions. Since 1995 the Amati Ensemble features in its own chamber music series in the city of Maastricht (The Netherlands). Gil Sharon is a frequent guest at international Music festivals including the Pablo Casals festival in Prades (France), Chamber Music Festival in Giverny (France), Festival of the Sound (Canada), Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, etc. He gave master-classes at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Fontainebleau (France) and in Santiago de Compostella (Spain) and is currently guest professor at the Maastricht Academy of Music. In 1997 he was honoured with the Dutch Royal Award “Knight of the Order of Orange Nassau” by HM Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands for his outstanding merits in the domain of chamber music.
Niklas Schmidt
Cellist Niklas Schmidt studied in Hamburg and later in Cologne and was a regular guest at the Menuhin Academy in Gstaad. In 1980, together with violinist Michael Mücke and pianist Wolf Harden, he founded the Trio Fontenay. The ensemble recorded nearly the entire literature for this genre on CD for Teldec, EMI and Philips; most of the recordings received national and international awards, including the Deutscher Schallplattenpreis 1994 for the complete recordings of the Beethoven Trios and the Diapason d’Or. The Trio Fontenay performed at the most prestigious concert halls in the world including Carnegie Hall in New York, the Salle Gaveau in Paris, Wigmore Hall, Queen Elisabeth Hall, Royal Festival Hall in London, and the Herkulessaal in Munich and appeared at international festivals such as the Salzburg Festival, the Festival de Montpellier, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and the Festival de Montréal as well as at the Kissinger Summer and the Schubertiade in Austria. Since its American debut in 1986, the ensemble also undertook one or two major USA tours each year. A special honor for the three musicians was the ensemble’s appointment as Trio en Résidence au Châtelet in Paris. At the end of 1997, Niklas Schmidt resigned from the ensemble as cellist.

Since then, he has been appearing frequently as a soloist as well as in various chamber music formations. Together with Menahem Pressler, he performed the “Arpeggione” Sonata in Washington D.C. and the Beethoven Sonatas in Hamburg, and performed the Schubert String Quintet with members of the Alban Berg, Cleveland, Guarneri and Juilliard quartets. With orchestra, he has, of late, frequently performed the Schumann and the two Haydn concertos. His many musical partners include Nobuko Imai, Michel Lethiec, Ralf Gothóni, the Auryn Quartet and the Fine Arts Quartet. In 2012, his CD The Singing Cello was released, presenting Schubert’s Arpeggione and Beethoven’s complete Variations for Cello and Piano in a recording with his piano partner John Chen. This was followed 2013 with works by Richard Strauss and Sergei Rachmaninoff and 2014 with the Cello Suites by J.S. Bach No. 1, 3 and 6.

Since 1987, Professor Schmidt has taught chamber music and cello at the Hochschule for Music in Hamburg. He is also regularly invited to conduct master classes throughout the world, from Paris, Helsinki, Nice, Montréal and New York to Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Since 1999, Niklas Schmidt has directed the prestigious Hamburg chamber music series Fontenay Classics which presents world renowned ensembles and soloists. After a successful Schubertiade in 2011 and a Brahmsiade 2013, a second Schubertiade 2014, Schmidt founded the International Mendelssohn Festival which takes place every year in September. He is also director of the International Mendelssohn Summer School and the International Chamber Music Competition Hamburg ICMC. In 2010, he founded his own label with the name Fontenay Classics International FCI which has already released nine CDs. Niklas Schmidt performs on a Rogeri cello (Brescia) from the year 1700.
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