



Dover Quartet

Joel Link violin

Bryan Lee violin

Julianne Lee viola

Camden Shaw cello

Antonín Dvořák

String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, Op. 96 “American”

Allegro ma non troppo

Lento

Molto vivace

Finale, Vivace ma non troppo

Robert Schumann

String Quartet No. 1 in A minor, Op. 41, no. 1

Introduzione. Andante espressivo – Allegro

Scherzo. Presto

Adagio

Presto

INTERMISSION

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

String Quartet No. 1 in D Major, Op. 11

Moderato e semplice

Andante cantabile

Scherzo. Allegro non tanto e con fuoco

Finale. Allegro giusto (arr. Davis)

This evening's program will run approximately one hour and 45 minutes,
including intermission.

Dover Quartet is represented by Curtis Artist Management at
Curtis Institute of Music.

An Aaron Richmond Recital

Endowed by Nancy Richmond Winsten and the late Dr. Joseph Winsten

2024/25 Season Sponsors

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

When **Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904) accepted the directorship of the National Conservatory in 1892, he understood that his new position in New York involved more than running a music school. He wrote to a Czech friend, “The Americans expect great things of me. I am to show them the way into the Promised Land, the realm of a new, independent art, in short a national style of music!” Besides teaching American composers, Dvořák incorporated American sounds into his own music from the time. After finishing the Symphony No. 9 (“From the New World”) in May of 1893, he took his family into the heartland for an extended summer vacation in Spillville, Iowa, a small farming town populated mainly by Czech immigrants. While there he composed the **String Quartet No. 12 in F Major**, known familiarly as the “American” Quartet.

Set against oscillating slurs from the violins, the viola begins the quartet with a cheerful melody constructed in a pentatonic mode, a hallmark of folk music styles found in both America and Dvořák’s homeland of Bohemia (the modern Czech Republic). For the slow movement, Dvořák found inspiration in the spirituals sung for him by his student Harry Burleigh, who had learned them from his formerly enslaved grandfather. One other source of local influence for Dvořák was Native American music, something he first encountered in edited, Anglicized songbooks. During that summer in Iowa, he had a chance to hear Iroquois songs and drumming firsthand, which may have helped shape the percussive rhythms of the quartet’s finale.

In the spring of 1842, **Robert Schumann** (1810-1856) stayed home in Leipzig for six brooding weeks while his wife toured Europe as a superstar pianist. He busied himself with the study of Bach’s counterpoint (much of it produced right there in Leipzig a century earlier) as well as string quartets by Haydn and Mozart, efforts that inspired him to compose three quartets that summer.

The *Introduzione* that begins the **String Quartet No. 1 in A Minor** evokes the feeling of a slow Haydn introduction, while the imitative counterpoint speaks to Schumann’s recent engagement with Baroque polyphony. The spirit of Bach returns when the viola initiates a syncopated *fugato*, bringing new rigor into the free-flowing, songlike material. The *Scherzo* owes its greatest debt to Felix Mendelssohn, Schumann’s friend and colleague in Leipzig and the dedicatee of this quartet. After a songlike slow movement, the rapid finale takes a page from Beethoven in making the most of a compact gesture, first heard in the rising proclamation of the opening chords.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) composed his first string quartet in 1871, when he was a young professor at the newly formed Moscow Conservatory. Even in that early stage of his career, Tchaikovsky showed a cosmopolitan streak that would soon distance him from his peers known as the “Russian Five” (including Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov), who adopted an overtly nationalistic style. In taking up a string quartet, Tchaikovsky put himself in unfamiliar terrain that had been dominated by German and Austrian composers since they invented the genre a century earlier, but his diligent study of Mozart and the other Viennese masters paid off in this breakthrough score that has earned its place in the eternal chamber music repertoire.

The **String Quartet No. 1 (Op. 11)** begins with a gentle theme voiced in rich chords over a static bass. The distinguishing trait is the 9/8 meter (using three beats per measure, each subdivided into triplets), and a main rhythmic motive that cuts against the grain of the expected emphasis, giving the music a sense of propulsion even while it retains its smooth contours.

After the formal elegance and rhythmic sophistication of the opening movement, the *Andante cantabile* is comfortable and spacious, painted with the warm hues of muted strings. The main melody quotes a folk song that Tchaikovsky overheard and wrote down in 1869, when he was visiting his sister's estate in Ukraine. This music supposedly moved Tolstoy to tears at a performance in 1876, and it continued to stand out as one Tchaikovsky's most popular excerpts, prompting him to arrange it for cello and string orchestra in 1888.

The *Scherzo* offers dance-like rhythms that again defy expectations, with lively phrases contradicting the triplet pulse. In the finale, the rondo structure operates with the crisp cohesion of Beethoven, centering on a three-note gesture that descends and then repeats the lower note.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Named one of the greatest string quartets of the last 100 years by *BBC Music* magazine and "the next Guarneri Quartet" by the *Chicago Tribune*, the two-time Grammy-nominated Dover Quartet is one of the world's most in-demand chamber ensembles. The group's awards include a stunning sweep of all prizes at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, grand and first prizes at the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition, and prizes at the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition. Its honors include the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award, and Lincoln Center's Hunt Family Award. The Dover Quartet is the Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence at the Curtis Institute of Music and Quartet in Residence at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music.

The Dover Quartet's 2024/25 season includes premiere performances throughout North America of newly commissioned works by Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate, a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and a leading composer of American Indian classical music; collaborative performances with artists including pianists Michelle Cann, Marc-André Hamelin, and Haochen Zhang; and tours to Europe and Asia. Recent collaborators of the ensemble include Leif Ove Andsnes, Emanuel Ax, Inon Barnatan, Ray Chen, Anthony McGill, Edgar Meyer, the Pavel Haas Quartet, Roomful of Teeth, and Davóne Tines. The quartet has also recently premiered works by Mason Bates, Steven Mackey, Marc Neikrug, and Chris Rogerson.

The Dover Quartet's Grammy-nominated recordings include its highly acclaimed three-volume recording, *Beethoven Complete String Quartets* (Cedille Records), and *The Schumann Quartets* (Azica Records).

The Dover Quartet was formed at Curtis in 2008; its name pays tribute to *Dover Beach* by fellow Curtis alumnus Samuel Barber. The Dover Quartet proudly endorses Thomastik-Infeld strings and is represented worldwide by Curtis Artist Management at Curtis Institute of Music.

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