

The Times of Chester County, ON STAGE, January 12, 2017



The Serafin String Quartet

An interesting concert of an entirely different sort will take place on January 12 in Philadelphia when the Serafin String Quartet performs a free show at Drexel University's Mandell Theater (3250 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, <http://www.conductorsguild.org>).

The Serafin String Quartet includes Kate Ransom and Lisa Vaupel (violins), Sheila Browne (viola) and Lawrence Stomberg (cello) — all of whom are current or former professors at the University of Delaware. The foursome is UD's "Quartet in Residence."

The show at Drexel is part of The Conductors Guild's 2017 National Conference. "One of the organizers knew about Serafin String Quartet and said they had a performance slot open for us," said Ransom, during a phone interview Tuesday afternoon.

Ransom, who is president of the Music School of Delaware was traveling from the school's campus in Milford, Delaware to its campus in Wilmington. "We said we'd be glad to play for the Conductors' Guild," said Ransom, a founding member of Serafin String Quartet who holds master's and bachelor's degrees in violin performance from Yale University and University of Michigan.

"We always try to bring our very best to every performance – to shoot for a peak performance in every concert. With the string quarter, we tend to play for very seasoned fans. With the conductors, they're aficionados. It's always an honor to play for our peers

– other professional musicians. And, there is a special excitement about playing in a major metropolitan area.”

The program features Samuel Barber’s “Adagio for Strings from String Quartet in B Minor, Op. 11,” Joseph Haydn’s “String Quartet in G Major, Op. 77#1” and Felix Mendelssohn’s “D Major String Quartet, Op. 44#1.” Barber, a world-famous composer who was born in West Chester, finished the arrangement in 1936. It was performed for the first time in 1938.

“We open with the Barber piece,” said Ransom. “It’s a very famous piece of classical music. It’s very somber and has been referred to as a national hymn of mourning. Barber only wrote one string quartet.

“It’s a very compact piece. The heart is the adagio – so moving and so sublime. It’s often played as a free-standing piece – often by chamber orchestras. It’s so profound with a very slow-moving harmonic expansion. It’s almost a suspension of time. We recorded it on our first album which was on Centaur Records in 2010.”

The piece has been very popular in films and television shows ranging from David Lynch’s film “The Elephant Man” to two different episodes of “The Simpsons.”

“The second piece in the first half of the show will be the ‘String Quartet in G Major, Op. 77#1’ by Haydn,” said Ransom. “Haydn was the originator of the string quartet as high art. He had a lot of wit. This piece is almost like an aria for first violin. There are a lot of character changes – four distinct movements each with their own quality and character.

“After the intermission, we will play Mendelssohn’s ‘D Major String Quartet, Op. 44#1.’ It’s extremely brilliant – charming and lilting. The first and fourth movements (“Molto allegro vivace” and “Presto con brio”) are rip-roaring – like a full gallop. This piece really shows the genius of the composer.”

Video link for Serafin String Quartet – <https://youtu.be/pfc3meXrY6k>.

The concert at Drexel University’s Mandell Theater will start at 7:30 p.m. The show is open to the public and admission is free.