The German Society of Pennsylvania
Founded in 1764

presents

The Wister Quartet

Sunday
April 27, 2008
at 3:00 p.m.

Albert and Hete Barthelmes Auditorium
611 Spring Garden Street   Philadelphia, Pa.

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In Memoriam Gunda Hack

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History of the German Society of Pennsylvania

In 1683 thirteen families from Krefeld under the leadership of Frankfurt lawyer, Franz Daniel Pastorius, founded the first German colony in America: Germantown — today part of Philadelphia. Many of these immigrants formed clubs that enabled them to preserve their cultural heritage. They also formed clubs that emphasized a specific geographic area, such as the Swabians, Bavarians, Saxons, Danube Swabians, Plattdeutsche, Tyroleans, and many others.

The German Society of Pennsylvania, founded in 1764, is the oldest German organization in the United States. It was founded to protect German immigrants from unscrupulous shipping agents and to ensure just treatment on their arrival here.

Since that time, the German Society has dedicated its efforts to preserving German heritage. This it does, for instance, by offering a full-fledged German language program as well as scholarships and prizes to students of German. In addition, the Society is a source of cultural programs, lectures, film series, and seminars. These events build bridges and strengthen relations among individuals, organizations, businesses and governments.

The fine arts program also includes presentations that feature European music and literature as well as access to the Joseph P. Horner Memorial Library for education and research. The newly restored Library, holding over 70,000 volumes, is the largest private German library outside the Federal Republic of Germany.

In serving its members and the community, the Society strives to benefit anyone in need of its resources.

Since the time of Pastorius, more than 8,000,000 Germans reached these shores. Today, 29% of the total population in the United States claims German ancestry.

It may be time to consider a membership for yourself, your family or a friend.

Calendar of Events at the German Society of Pennsylvania

April
Sun. April 27 “Wister and More!” Concert Series, The Wister Quartet, 3:00pm
Mon. April 28 Konversationsabend, “Das multi-kulturelle Leben in Deutschland”, 7:00pm

May
Sat. May 3 Women’s Auxiliary Anniversary Luncheon, 12:00 noon
Sun. May 4 Annual Members’ Meeting/Election of Directors, 3:00pm
Fri. May 9 Friday Film Fest, “Witness”, 6:30pm
Sun. May 18 “Wister and More!” Concert Series, The Philadelphia Trio, 3:00pm
Mon. May 26 Closed for Memorial Day holiday
Wed. May 28 Konversationsabend, “Der deutsche anti-Hitler Regime Widerstand aus Sicht der USA”, 7:00pm

June
Sat. June 14 Saturday Film Fest, Beginning at 11:00am
We will show a mix of German films that are old favorites and those we have never shown before. Please join us for this first all-day Film Fest. Check the website for a schedule of film start times.

The Library has hours on Saturdays from 9:45am-12:30pm.
Since its formation in 1987, the Wister Quartet has earned high praise from critics and audiences alike for its superb musicianship and memorable performances, including those with guest artists Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Alicia de Larrocha, Christoph Eschenbach, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Yo-Yo Ma. Formerly in residence at Haverford College, the Quartet performs widely in the tri-state area, including concerts at Swarthmore and Gettysburg Colleges, and Arcadia and Shippensburg University. The Quartet is featured regularly in performances at the Lenape Chamber Players Summer Festivals as well as the Chamber Series of the Philadelphia Orchestra and at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, the Glencairn Museum, and the Laurel Hill Concerts by Candlelight. The Wister Quartet is the core constituent ensemble of 1807 & Friends chamber ensemble.

Since 1993, the Wister Quartet has been presented in the Classical Concert Series of the German Society of Pennsylvania featuring some of the greatest string quartet repertoire ever written. The Quartet has recorded with DTR Recording Company, earning a Grammy nomination and critical praise for their "big vibrant sound, dramatic contrasts and brilliant effects."

Nancy Bean has been a member of The Philadelphia Orchestra since 1983 and is currently its Assistant Concertmaster. She is Artistic Director of 1807 & Friends chamber ensemble and violinist with the Barnard Trio, the Florian Trio, Duo Paganini, Duo Parisienne, Duo Malibran and the Amerita Chamber Ensemble.

Davyd Booth has been a violinist and keyboard player in The Philadelphia Orchestra since 1973 and was named its harpsichordist in 1999. He was a member of the Philarote Quartet for 14 years and is Co-Director and harpsichordist for the Amerita Chamber Ensemble. He is a member of 1807 & Friends, the Barnard Trio and Duo Malibran.

Pamela Fay is a substitute member of The Philadelphia Orchestra. She has been a member of the Vancouver and Toronto Symphonies and was Assistant Principal Viola of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa. She is the violist of 1807 & Friends chamber ensemble.

Lloyd Smith has been a member of The Philadelphia Orchestra since 1967 and was its Assistant Principal cellist since 1988. In 2002 he was its Acting Associate Principal cellist and retired in 2003 to devote himself to chamber music and composing. He is cellist with 1807 & Friends, the Barnard Trio, the Florian Trio and the Amerita Chamber Ensemble.

The audience is invited to a reception in the Ratskeller following the concert.

Nancy Bean, violin
Davyd Booth, violin
Pamela Fay, viola
Lloyd Smith, cello

PROGRAM

JOAQUIN TURINA La Oración del Torero

W. A. MOZART Divertimento in D Major, K. 136
Allegro
Andante
Presto

INTERMISSION

FRANZ SCHUBERT String Quartet in D Minor, D. 810
(“Death and the Maiden”)
Allegro
Andante con moto
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Presto
Program Notes
by Lloyd Smith

Joaquin Turina (1882-1949)
La Oración del Torero

Perhaps more than any of his Spanish contemporaries, Joaquin Turina tried to write music of conventional European character. The mediocre success of his piano quintet, Op. 1, in Paris led Isaac Albéniz to suggest that he find his inspiration in Spanish folk music.

Turina was born in Seville; his father was a painter of Italian descent. As a boy, music quickly became central to his life, and his success in his hometown encouraged him to strike out for larger pastures. He arrived in Madrid at the age of twenty with grand ambitions — and some idea of how to achieve them. Madrid, and most particularly the Teatro Real, was difficult for a young composer to break into, but Turina sought out important musicians (among them Manuel de Falla), who vouched for his compositions.

His contact with Falla turned into a life-long friendship, and while their music is often referred to as related, there are really only limited similarities. Falla’s sense of tragedy is not to be found in the simple, kind Turina, whose strongest musical inspiration ultimately came from his own roots, the graceful music of Seville. By the time he wrote La Oración del Torero in 1925, he was well-established and highly regarded in Madrid and in the musical world.

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Divertimento in D Major, K. 136

A divertimento is another term used for serenade, dinner music, or even background music. In the case of Mozart, or indeed of most composers of the Baroque and Classical periods, it was a daily duty to provide music for all of the above situations — dinner, court dances, evening entertainment — the list is nearly endless. It stands as a monument, not only to Mozart, but to scores of other composers, to their speed, inventiveness, and perhaps above all, their adaptable practicality. If nothing else, the ability to churn out one masterpiece after another is amazingly impressive.

The Divertimento in D dates from Mozart’s Salzburg years, and is known to have been heard in both chamber orchestra and string quartet versions. It is music of great charm and tremendous energy, the outer movements displaying the essential elements of the high Classical style. Mozart at every turn delights us with catchy, memorable melodies and unexpected turns of harmony, all bound together with an infectious liveliness.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
String Quartet in D Minor, D. 810 (“Death and the Maiden”)

Regarded by many as the greatest of Schubert’s quartets, “Death and the Maiden” was inspired by a poem of Matthias Claudius (1740-1815):

“Pass me by! Oh, pass me by!
Go away, wild skeleton.
I am still young — go, dear Death,
and do not touch me.”

“Give me your hand, you lovely and tender creature;
I am your friend and do not come to punish.
Be comforted! I am not wild.
You will sleep gently in my arms.”

“The poet’s sense of kinship of life and death,” wrote John Reed, “of the ambivalence of joy and sorrow, made a strong appeal to the composer’s imagination.” The emotional center of this quartet is the Andante movement, variations on a harmonic sequence taken from Schubert’s setting of this poem.

The first movement starts as a headlong, intense flight, and we see the maiden’s fear fully expressed as well as Death’s friendly entreaties in the contrasting second theme. The Andante movement begins by singing Death’s song, and its six variations are serenely melodic for the most part. One very harsh, rhythmic variation with scarcely any melody at all interrupts the serenity, and towards the end we hear a truly “over the top” shout of frenzy with all instruments interrupting each other, striving to be heard — then settling down to a discouraged sigh.

The third movement is a hefty, defiant Scherzo with an exquisitely sweet Trio section. The finale Presto movement has been called a “Tarantella of Death” in its frighteningly fast pace with sudden, grotesque contrasts in dynamic — similar to another of his songs about death, “Der Erlkönig”. One might speculate that Schubert, when he wrote the quartet in 1824 (his health already in jeopardy from syphilis), did not actually believe Death to have the gentleness which he claimed to have in the song!

The famed Schuppanzigh Quartet rejected this quartet for performance; it was, sadly, not published or performed until four years after Schubert’s death.