

Gimme a Beat

Lex Chamber Music Festival plans Sophomore Success

S hannon Cline explains Chamber Music with an analogy *Ace* readers can perhaps appreciate, “if going to an orchestra concert is the musical equivalent of going to an arena show, hearing a chamber group is like hearing a great band at your favorite local club. Anyone who has heard, say, *Scourge of the Sea* or the *Asylum Street Spankers* at the *Dame (RIP)* understands that ineffable connection between performer and audience—and the tremendous rush that connection can deliver. It’s the same experience.”

She admits, “People unfamiliar with the genre always seem to have the sad misapprehension that chamber music is esoteric and inaccessible.”

She’s most excited this year about the addition of composer-in-residence, Daniel Thomas Davis. (See sidebar.)

Asked about the Festival’s contribution to Lexington’s music and performing arts niche, she responds, “it demonstrates that Lexington and the Bluegrass Region is the kind of community that artists can come to and create important,

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vibrant work. When people think of ‘artists’ colonies’ they think of New England or the Southwest, but our musicians have found Lexington, with its history and agrarian beauty, to be deeply inspiring. The classical music community is very close-knit and musicians talk to one another. It won’t be long before word gets around that this is a wonderful place to create art.”

Cline acknowledges, “Chamber music has been somewhat under-the-radar as an art form here, in spite of a very good concert series presented by the Chamber Music Society of Central Kentucky. We are going to great ends to reach out to young musicians, with free master classes, open rehearsals and a casual Sunday concert, because this music was

historically written not for the concert hall but for the home. Sitting down with friends and creating music is an incredibly rewarding activity. Chamber music allows anyone who plays an instrument to continue to enjoy the benefits their entire lives, whether they pursue a professional career or not.”

It’s undeniable Lexington is at a cultural crossroads. Are we a big town, or a small city?

Cline responds, “Nobody seems to be able to quite come to a resolution about this,” but adds, “I think what is important is that someone

visiting from out-of-town picked up immediately on the sense of community closeness in Lexington and was inspired by that to structure his composition on the theme of ‘community.’”

For newcomers to the festival, Cline has a few recommendations, “If you are unfamiliar with chamber music, the free open rehearsal on Thursday is quite an interesting glimpse into how a small group of musicians work. It is completely different from an orchestra, where you have a strong central vision (the conductor) and the role of the musicians is to bring that vision to life. Chamber music is much more democratic—anarchic, almost. Five creative, strong individuals have to find a way to reconcile their individual visions and come to a common consensus. It really comes back yet again to that idea of ‘community’ and how a community *should* work. It’s fascinating.”

She adds, “All of the programs are very nicely balanced. Each night showcases something new and something time-

tested. I am looking forward to hearing John Adams *Road Movies* for violin and piano on Friday. Saturday, of course, is the world premiere of Dan Davis’ *Book of Songs and Visions*. And Sunday is just going to be a lot of fun, with a very diverse array of smaller pieces. Nathan has loosely structured the theme around the Olympics.” ■

Festival Schedule

Wednesday, August 27,

6pm - 7:30pm
Violin master class w/ Nathan Cole
First Presbyterian Church,
171 Market St. / Free

7:30pm - 9pm
Piano master class w/ Alessio Bax
Christ Church Cathedral,
166 Market St. / Free

(Both of these venues are within walking distance of each other)

Thursday, August 28

7pm
Open Rehearsal
Christ Church Cathedral,
166 Market St. / Free

Friday, August 29

8pm
Concert at Fasig-Tipton Pavilion
2400 Newtown Pike

Saturday, August 30

8pm
Concert at Fasig-Tipton Pavilion
2400 Newtown Pike

Sunday, August 31

1:30pm
Concert at Fasig-Tipton Pavilion
2400 Newtown Pike
Friday and Saturday,
\$30 general admission
(\$15 students and seniors)
Sunday, all tickets \$10

Composer-in-Residence, Daniel Thomas Davis

C line says of this year’s festival, “The biggest gamble we’ve taken and the development that I am most excited about is the addition of the composer-in-residence. Daniel Thomas Davis was commissioned by the festival, with the support of Dr. Ron Saykaly and his wife Teresa Garbulinska, to write a piano quintet. He visited Lexington in February, soaked up local color and culture, and created “Book of Songs and Visions”—I can’t wait to hear it on Saturday! Bringing in a composer to work with the musicians and the community puts the festival on national footing. We hope the new work will become an important addition to the chamber music repertoire.”

Originally from the rural American South, composer Daniel Thomas Davis (b. 1981) divides his time between London, England and Ann Arbor, Michigan. Hailed by *USA Today* as “versatile...driven by an endless curiosity and the equally expansive energy to pursue it,” Daniel maintains a busy schedule of commissions and performances that reflects his deep love of a wide range of music, literature, and history.

Daniel’s music has been performed widely throughout North America and Europe and has been praised by *The Baltimore Sun* as “immediate and personal” yet still endowed with “subtle orchestral coloring.” His most recent projects include works for the Lontano ensemble (three separate commissions for the South Bank and Barbican Centers), Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta (Queen Elizabeth Hall), Latvia International Festival, BBC Singers, Boston’s Back Bay Chorale with the Orchestra of Emmanuel Music, and St-Martin-in-the-Fields. Daniel’s commissioned opera *If I Were a Voice* was premiered in 2004 by Peabody Opera and excerpted on National Public Radio.

From 2004-2007 Daniel completed his tenure as a Marshall Fellow of the British Government, one of the few musicians ever awarded this honor. In addition to winning James B. Duke, Sproull, and Krieger Fellowships, Daniel was given the BMI Young Composer Award for 2006 by a panel chaired by Milton Babbitt. Daniel has served as composer-in-residence at the Latvia International Music Festival (alongside Peteris Vasks) and Brightstar Music Festival, and as artistic director/founder of Carolina New Music, a free summer music series now entering its seventh year. In summer 2007, Daniel was an artist-in-residence at Saratoga Springs’ prestigious Yaddo Colony—the youngest composer offered such a position in recent years.

Daniel holds degrees from the Peabody Conservatory of Music, the Royal Academy of Music, and Johns Hopkins University. He has received further training in music theatre and non-Western musics at the National Theatre and School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Daniel’s composition teachers have included Judith Weir, Chris Theofanidis, William Bolcom, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and Jennifer Higdon. As a collaborative pianist for a number of ensembles and soloists, he has performed at venues such as the Kennedy Center and is especially active in the performance of contemporary and early American music, as several recordings testify (Naxos and other labels). As a musicologist and ethnomusicologist, Daniel has authored several articles on American and African popular musics. In 2007-2008, he holds the Regent’s Fellowship in Composition at the University of Michigan, where he also teaches several courses. ■



Composer Daniel T. Davis