



Maxwell Quartet

Sunday, June 6, 7:00pm PDT and Thursday, June 10, 6:00pm PDT

Dear Friends,

Just like that, Music at Kohl's Virtual Season 38 ends with this evening's broadcast by Scotland's charming and talented Maxwell Quartet! We've come to you online all season from France, Germany, Scotland, and all around the U.S., as our renowned chamber ensembles have heroically continued to produce magnificent concert videos from their home towns, and in some cases, their own homes.

We have missed being with you live and in person in the warm and intimate setting of the Kohl Mansion's Great Hall, and we're deeply grateful that you have chosen to join us in the virtual realm to enjoy great performances from the comfort of your own living rooms.

This season offered us opportunities to share these concert broadcasts with audiences far and wide outside the concert hall walls, and we're honored to have welcomed more than 100 new households over these seven months as our Virtual Season has unfolded. Kai and Patricia have much enjoyed visiting with you in the pre-concert talks and interviews with artists that preceded each broadcast. We hope you tuned in and enjoyed getting to know our musicians "up close" as much as we did.

We're preparing with great enthusiasm for our return to the Kohl Mansion next season, as conditions continue to improve and as it is advisable for us to come together with safety precautions in place. Many of you have already told us how you are feeling at this time about coming back to live concerts, and we are listening to all your voices. If you have not yet done so, please complete our brief (approx. 8-minute) reopening survey at [this link](#). It's completely anonymous, so feel free to be candid. And check back to view our season announcement when it is posted this summer at www.musicatkohl.org.

Enjoy this joyful season finale concert!

Zerlina Chen Hayes
President

Patricia Kristof Moy
Executive Director

Music at Kohl Mansion

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Maxwell Quartet

Colin Scobie, George Smith, violins
Elliott Perks, viola
Duncan Strachan, cello

Program

String Quartet No. 13 in G major, Op. 106, B. 192

Antonín Dvořák

Allegro moderato
Adagio ma non troppo
Molto vivace
Finale: Andante sostenuto - Allegro con fuoco

Scottish Folk Songs (Arranged by the Maxwell String Quartet)

Trad/Jean Finlayson: **Fear a Bhata (The Boatman)** -
Trad. Shetland: **Da Full Rigged Ship/Da New Rigged Ship**

Nathaniel Gow: **Coilsfield House** -
Niel Gow: **Drunk at Night, Dry in the Morning**

The Maxwell Quartet is represented in the United States by Lisa Sapinkopf Artists, www.chambermuse.com

Visit the Maxwell Quartet at www.maxwellstringquartet.com

Music at Kohl Mansion is presented in collaboration with
Mercy High School, Burlingame – Natalie Cirigliano Brosnan, Head of School.

Program Notes

Antonín Dvořák, 1841-1904

String Quartet No. 13 in G major, Op. 106, B. 192, 1895

Antonín Dvořák composed reams of outstanding chamber music spanning a diversity of ensembles and instruments such that it seems there is always something more to discover, or certainly, to rediscover. Even “just” the string quartets offer a marvelous expanse and range all on their own. While the beloved “American” quartet is surely the most famous and frequently programmed, there are 14 string quartets to explore with at least the last five widely considered masterworks. The “American” is the 12th in chronological order, composed in 1893 while Dvořák served as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. Two years later, in 1895, he departed from America and returned to his native Bohemia. In November, Dvořák began earnestly working on a new string quartet that initially germinated while he was still in the U.S., but he quickly encountered a writer’s block. Setting it aside and weathering a bit of a lull, Dvořák began again with yet another new quartet, found his stride, and with customary momentum, swiftly completed what became his 13th string quartet. It was published as Op. 106 only *after* he subsequently completed and published the previously waylaid quartet, the last, number 14, with the lower opus number 105.

The String Quartet No. 13 in G Major, Op. 106 is an extraordinary work by any measure and even among the last five “great” quartets, achieves a high-water mark. The quartet is unmistakably Dvořák for its endearing lyricism, exciting rhythmic vitality, and the ingenious, transparent textures that are inseparable from the vibrant color. But furthermore, this singular quartet achieves a refined amalgam of his stylistic traits in terms of his famous evocation of folk music. It is not so overtly Nationalistic as his “Bohemian” (or “Slavonic”) works on one hand, nor his recent “American” works on the other. Rather, it seems these impulses are richly folded into music that speaks primarily in an exquisite rhetoric of the Romantically charged but essentially Classical, European string quartet. Inherently conversational as most great string quartets are, it conjures a dialogue along a lineage with the voices of Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms implied in the original eloquence of Dvořák’s own.

In a fine touch of artistic unity, the distinctive opening motivic flourishes —featuring trills, and falling arabesques—appear at the beginning of the first movement and reappear towards the end of the very last. In a cyclic construction, the finale recalls the first movement’s two main themes and even a hint of the second movement as the overall quartet recalls its origins like a memory. The second, slow movement is astonishing. It might best be described as an double set of variations as it alternates between two themes, one warm, bright, simple and unified like a choir, the other dark and complex with the texture unraveled into separate strands. As the music oscillates between hope and despair, the variations become more grand and emphatic, the emotions more intense and the dramatic catharsis more profound. The third movement is a characteristically vital scherzo that inverts the previous movement’s dark-within-light with an outer, driven, *furioso* dance giving way, twice, to a softer, more relaxed trio within. As if mirroring the first movement’s introduction, the last movement begins with a long sigh before plunging headlong into a scintillating perpetual motion that sustains the high energy of the best classical rondo finales. It traverses a panorama of episodic contrasts that eventually recall the quartet’s beginnings before snapping back into a fully “amped” conclusion. With the last two quartets of

1895, Dvořák concludes his stunning catalog of chamber music and indeed, his “absolute” instrumental music. In his final years, Dvořák turned exclusively to program music, including tone poems and opera.

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Kai Christiansen is a musicologist, writer and lecturer on chamber music
and is the founder of earsense, an online chamber music exploratorium at earsense.org*

Scottish Folksongs (Arranged by the Maxwell String Quartet)

Trad/Jean Finlayson: **Fear a Bhata (The Boatman)** -

Trad. Shetland: **Da Full Rigged Ship/Da New Rigged Ship**

These tunes from Scotland tell seafaring stories. "Fear a Bhata" (The Boatman) dates from the late eighteenth century, and is a Gaelic song composed by Sìne NicFhionnlaigh from the Isle of Lewis, in which she tells of her longing for her fisherman lover to return home. "Da Full Rigged Ship" is a well-known and well-loved jig from the Shetland Isles which is followed by its companion reel, "Da New Rigged Ship", both of which have a distinctly Scottish-Scandinavian sound.

Nathaniel Gow: **Coilsfield House** -

Niel Gow: **Drunk at Night, Dry in the Morning**

The Perthshire based father-son team of Niel (1727-1807) and Nathaniel (1763-1831) Gow were very important figures in the collecting and notating (as well as the composition) of Scottish folk tunes of the time. "Coilsfield House" is a beautiful air composed in a classical style by Nathaniel Gow, and "Drunk at Night, Dry in the Morning" is a rousing tune which perfectly displays Niel Gow's 'rustic classicism'.

Notes provided by the Maxwell Quartet

Meet the Musicians

Maxwell Quartet

Colin Scobie, George Smith, violins

Elliott Perks, viola

Duncan Strachan, cello

Winner of both the First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2017 Trondheim (Norway) International Chamber Music Competition, the Glasgow-based Maxwell Quartet is now firmly regarded as one of the world's most exciting and unique young string quartets for its electrifying performances of standard repertoire, its own unique arrangements of traditional Scottish music, and contemporary works by such composers as Anna Meredith, James MacMillan and many others. The quartet was greatly honored to have been invited jointly by the Metropolitan Museum and members of the Guarneri Quartet to perform at a 50-year anniversary celebration of the Guarneri Quartet's career.

The quartet consists of four great friends who grew up playing classical and folk music together across Scotland. They have performed at the Edinburgh Festival, London's Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and the BBC Chamber Music Proms, and at many chamber music festivals across the UK, including their own Loch Shiel Festival in the Scottish Highlands, as well as Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Asia, with concert engagements at Muziekgebouw Amsterdam.

The quartet's first North American tour in Winter 2019 included a New York début on the prestigious Schneider Concerts series, which is curated by a panel of luminaries from the world of chamber music. The New York Times praised Maxwell's "eloquent performance . . . charisma and sense of adventure," and The New Yorker wrote, "Scotland's Maxwell Quartet has won critical acclaim and audience approval overseas with its effervescent sound and buoyant energy."

Maxwell's début CD, featuring Haydn's Op. 71 Quartets alongside traditional Scottish folk music, was released in early 2019. Gramophone Magazine raved about the quartet's "earthy robustness . . . their precision at speed and unanimity of bowing are a match for all comers . . . a thoroughly delightful performance."

The sequel to the above-mentioned CD, of Haydn's Op. 74 Quartets and more Scottish folk music, was hailed in the March 2021 issue of The Strad: "For all those who enjoyed the Maxwell Quartet's widely acclaimed 2019 début album . . . it's time to celebrate, because the follow-up is just as good . . . On a programming front it's just as magical . . . there's the rustic edge the players bring to no. 1's opening forte chords . . . There's also just the right element of theatre, as heard to fabulous effect over the first movement of no. 3 'The Rider', with its cleverly employed rubato and sharply defined dynamic contrasts. In short, this is a treat."

Passionate about collaborating with other musicians and art forms, the quartet has performed with world-renowned artists including Benjamin Grosvenor and the Danish String Quartet, as well as a global roster of cross-genre artists and institutions, from the Scottish-German soul duo Lunir to theatre groups, ballet dancers and cinematographers.

The Maxwell Quartet has held residencies at Oxford University as well as giving many school workshops and children's concerts. The Quartet has been mentored by the Endellion Quartet and Hatto Beyerle, founding member of the Alban Berg Quartet.