NISO Welcomes the Euclid Quartet

By Amber Vis

Every year, Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra hosts one Guest Concert and invites one fantastic outside guest or ensemble in its musical season. This year, we are honored to invite the Euclid Quartet to Dordt College for a performance that you won’t want to miss.

The Euclid Quartet has been together for 15 years. The members are a multinational mix representing four different continents of the world, including violinist Jameson Cooper from the United Kingdom, violinist Jacob Murphy from the United States, violist Luis Enrique Vargas from Venezuela, and cellist Si-Yan Darren Li from China.

Murphy is a founding member of the quartet. He started playing violin at the age of six and currently teaches violin and chamber music at Indiana University South Bend. Li started playing the cello when he was only five years old and made his professional debut at the age of nine. He is a member of the cello faculty at Indiana University in South Bend.

Cooper started playing the violin when he was six years old and is a former faculty member of the Lyceum Music School of Oldham, England and Morningside College. Vargas joined the Euclid Quartet in 2001, and he currently teaches viola and chamber music at Indiana University South Bend.

The quartet is one of the most well-regarded chamber ensembles of its generation; its performances are known for personality, passion, and energy. The group has performed in many renowned places such as Carnegie Hall and the Library of Congress.

The Euclid Quartet has performed and entertained a broad variety of age groups, including educational activities for every age. They have performed for thousands of children and young adults.

Their repertoire for 2013-14 includes music by composers George Gershwin, Franz Joseph Haydn, Carl Nielsen, Felix Mendelssohn, Charles Ives, and Hugo Kauder.

The Euclid Quartet will perform on March 1 at 7:30 p.m. in the B.J. Haan Auditorium at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.
Euclid Quartet Pay Tribute to American Music
By Karen De Mol

Early on in our history, America looked to Europe for music. Settlers and colonists took with them the songs and instruments from their native European homes. Early American music was really European music transplanted. For the first century after 1776, American musicians went to Europe for training; performers were not considered to have “come of age” until they made a successful concert tour of Europe.

In the late 1800’s, the Bohemian composer Antonín Dvořák, resident on these shores to help found what is now the Juilliard School of Music, urged Americans to look for inspiration and materials right at home. He especially noted the uniqueness and richness of black and Native American music.

In the century after Dvořák’s visit, American music developed into many unique and diverse styles. Classical music is infused with American folk tunes, as in the music of Aaron Copland (think of his cowboy tunes in Rodeo). Blues and jazz, born in America, have worldwide influence. Popular American music is known around the globe, and all styles reflect the energy and inventiveness of this land.

On March 1, the Euclid Quartet will celebrate America’s contributions in three pieces that highlight different strains of American music. Their program begins with music by the pre-eminent jazz musician, Wynton Marsalis. Selections from Marsalis’ At the Octoroon Balls pay tribute to music of the south that gave birth to jazz, such as the Creole music and ragtime featured in lively movements titled “Creole Contradanzas,” “Mating Calls and Delta Rhythms,” and “Rampart St. Row House Rag.” The program moves next to New England, home of Charles Ives, who wove New England hymn tunes and local color into his music. Hymn tunes appearing in his String Quartet No. 1 include Nettleton (often sung to the text, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”), Beulah Land, Shining Shore, and Missionary Hymn. Audience members should see how many of these tunes they can recognize!

The final piece is composed by the very person who originally called us to look at home for our inspiration—Dvořák. His String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, Op. 96, called the “American” quartet, was written in 1893 right here in Iowa during his summer vacation in Spillville, where he also completed his Symphony No. 9, subtitled “From the New World.” A main “American” characteristic of the music is that the melodies use the pentatonic scale, a five-note scale common in folk and Native American music. The music, like much of Dvořák’s music, is richly melodious and warm-hearted.

Here, in the nutshell of the Euclid Quartet concert, will be the main flavors of American music: jazz, folk melody, and innovation. What a treat!

Visual Arts Auction
By Norma Snyder-Jones

A few years ago Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra (NISO) held a fundraising art auction in conjunction with the String Fever event. Area artists created beautiful works with violins as the “canvas.” The auction was so lovely and successful that the event is going to be held again at the April 15th concert. Area artists have contributed their talent to creating works of art using string instruments and furniture as the “canvas.”

Rein Vanderhill, professor of art at Northwestern College in Orange City, and Jo Alberda of Sioux Center are two of the gifted artists who have created works for NISO. The viola, painted by Vanderhill, was on display at the Winter Pops Concert and is a great example of the beauty and creativeness that will be available for the auction. More works will be on display at the Euclid Quartet concert on March 1. Eight to ten works will be available for purchase.

Since this is one of two major fundraisers for the season, the NISO board encourages you to give some thought to purchasing a work, while at the same time supporting the orchestra. The artists will be our guests at the Spring Concert, and bidders will have the unique opportunity to visit with them and hear about the inspiration for their work. Be sure to come early that evening to view the art, visit with the artists, and put in your bids.

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