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REVIEW

## Review: Dover Quartet plays passionately, skillfully, intelligently









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By Keith Powers  
Contributing writer

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Continuing its tradition of presenting outstanding young chamber groups, Concerts on the Point hosted the Dover String Quartet Sunday afternoon at Westport Point United Methodist Church.

Four graduates of Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, they later pursued graduate studies together at Rice University in Houston. The quartet has won several competitions, and last year began a three-year residency at Northwestern's Bienen School of Music.

Dover — Joel Link and Bryan Lee, violins; Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt, viola; Camden Shaw, cello — played with assurance and balance, offering a terrifically varied program of Mozart, Dutilleux and Shostakovich. Solid intonation, a depth of understanding of each score, and confident playing were the norm.

They opened, as many of the best concerts do, with Mozart, the "Hunt" quartet. Its first movement, with its genial outdoorsy theme, and the florid second movement Menuetto always have appeal. In this performance, the third movement, the stately but not overwrought Adagio, stood out.

With its repeated-but-not-exactly phrases sounding like echoes, Dover accomplished a kind of archetypal quartet sound: making the foursome sound like one unit, but allowing the individual voices to articulate their parts with clarity.

Cellist Shaw introduced Dutilleux's "Ainsi la nuit," noting correctly that it was the first French work to enter the regular quartet repertory in a century or so. It has, but that doesn't make it any easier for audiences.

Not to imply it isn't a thing of beauty, which it is. "Ainsi la nuit," composed in the 1970s by Dutilleux (1916-2013), bases its sound world on a single, six-tone chord. But unlike most works, the chord is not presented, then developed. It's hinted at, fleshed out, briefly articulated, and then gradually abandoned. It's kind of a crescendo of understanding, with the center of the work being the place where it's most fully comprehended.

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In the composer's conception, the work represents an evening (thus the title), beginning at dusk and gradually filling with intensity as the night sky deepens. (The composer also had Van Gogh's "Starry Night" in mind while composing.) Sounds are created in multiple ways: pizzicato, spiccato (bouncing the bow on the strings), ponticello (bowing on the bridge). Overlapping chords produce an echo effect.

It's a full-bodied, atmospheric sound, and Dover clearly has played the work frequently. A determined sense of phrasing dominated, along with elevated interaction among the players.

Challenges of a much different kind were in store after intermission. Shostakovich's second quartet, a mature work written after World War II, opened up a torrent of quartet writing by the composer (who would write 15 before he was done).

It's a strident work, loud and engaging, fiercely intense. Violinist Link rigorously bowed the opening melody, which trades off to viola and then back, before the extensive first movement explores it in great detail. The group's playing was fiery and alert.

The slow movement begins with another long line in the first violin, this time played over drone accompaniment by the three other players. A barely recognizable waltz idea dominates the third movement, and the finale, a theme-and-variations introduced gorgeously in the viola, takes listeners on a rigorous exploration of the idea before an anguished, strident ending.

Dover ran through the difficulties with an persistent sense of understanding. The group's playing throughout the afternoon was well balanced, highly collegial. When a quartet projects a genuine feeling that they enjoy the music and have a firm grasp of its challenges and rewards, audiences benefit.

The next program for Concerts on the Point will be violinist Emil Altschuler and pianist Thomas Pandolfi performing music of Beethoven, Schubert, Massenet and others. For tickets and information visit [www.concertsatthepoint.org](http://www.concertsatthepoint.org) or call 508-636-0698.

*Keith Powers is an art and music writer who lives in Rockport.*

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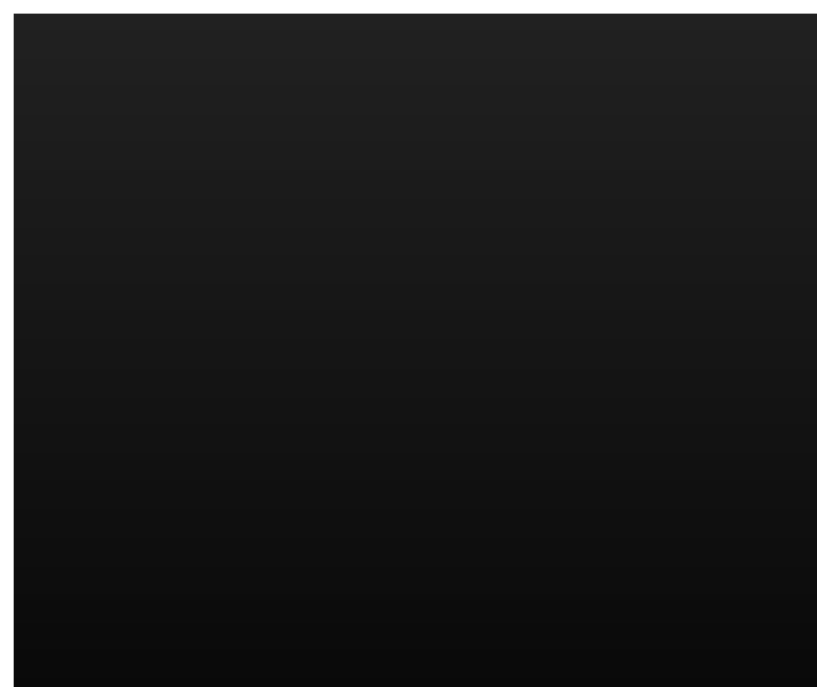
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	<b>The Work of JP Powel, Yellow Boat Studio</b>					11:00 am
Gallery X						
	<b>Adult Coloring</b>					2:00 pm
Francis J. Lawler Library						
	<b>Open art reception for Portuguese artist, Pedro Albuquerque</b>					2:00 pm
New Bedford Whaling Museum						
<b>In Defense of Food</b>						6:00 pm
New Bedford Whaling Museum						
	<b>New England Revolution Come to New Bedford for 2016 Kick-Off Presented by</b>					6:00 pm
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