

Group Description

The newly formed Kalnas Ensemble is a string quartet focusing on Lithuanian musical roots, exploring compositions of Stanley Chopaitis with improvisatory overtones, as well as performing standard quartet repertoire. The ensemble is a diverse group of multi-talented individuals with a commitment to engaging audiences with a dynamic approach to live performance. In addition, their wide spectrum of knowledge and interests allows them to offer workshops and other interactive presentations that enhance the meaning and experience of the music they perform.

Concert Blurb

A performance by the Kalnas Ensemble is more than just a concert of passionately played music. It is an exploration of the roots of that music, bringing together aspects of folklore, psychology, history, and the physics of sound. For this program, the Kalnas Ensemble will initiate the audience into the unique ethos of Lithuanian traditional music through discussions and demonstrations of its stories, melodies, and rhythms as envisioned in Dr. Stanley Chopaitis' original works.

Chopaitis dives deeply into his own Lithuanian heritage, and into the heart of the songs, stories, and dances which form the basis and inspiration for the music he creates. From the ancient Sutartines, which come out of northeastern Lithuania, to more recent folk song from around the country, this music paints a picture of ancient and medieval Lithuanian life in its focus on nature and the cycles of life. The string quartet's voices represent a search for the timeless Lithuanian soul and an attempt to bring that soul to modern ears.

This performance by the Kalnas Ensemble is designed to offer an appreciation of the deep roots of Lithuanian culture and its impact on the culture of America, and of all humanity in the 21st century.

Member Biographies

Dr. Stanley Chopaitis - *Founder, Composer, and Violinist*

Dr. Chopaitis holds a Doctor of Musical Arts Degree and a Master of Music, as well as a Performer's Certificate from the Eastman School of Music. He is a versatile performing and recording artist who is at home in a classical string quartet, a jazz band, and anything in

between. His career spans fifty years in which time he has performed Nationally and Internationally, composed and premiered his own works, and recorded seven CDs mostly of original music. Dr. Chepaitis has been at the forefront of the Alternative Styles Movement having had a leading role in the ASTA Alternative Styles Conferences in '03,'05, '06, '07, and '08.

Swana Chepaitis - *Violinist*

Swana Chepaitis received a diploma in Violin Performance and Pedagogy from the Hochschule fur Kunste in Bremen Germany. She studied with Maria Grevesmuhl and Baroque violin specialist Christoph Heidemann. She has been a member of L'arco (a professional Baroque orchestra based in Hanover, Germany), the Litton String Quartet. Mrs. Chepaitis currently performs with the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra, does freelance performance as a baroque violinist in the Pittsburgh area, and maintains a studio of 20+ violin students in Indiana, PA.

Simon Maurer - *Violist*

Simon Maurer grew up in Switzerland in a family of six children, all of whom became professional musicians. He studied violin at the Conservatory in Biel and continued his studies in the U.S. with Geoffrey Michaels at Swarthmore College and Joyce Robbins at Stoneybrook. He has performed as a soloist in France, Switzerland, and with the Shenyang Symphony Orchestra in China. Solo performances in the US include concerts with the Schuylkill Symphony Orchestra, Bloomsburg Chamber Orchestra, Loudon Symphony in Maryland, Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra, Valley Vivaldi, and the Southwest Symphony in Hobbs New Mexico. He is a founding member and the artistic director of the Gabriel Chamber Ensemble now celebrating its 32nd season. Committed to performance and education, the group takes pride in bringing classical music to underserved areas. Mr. Maurer teaches violin, viola, and cello at the Bear Crossing Music Studio in New Ringgold.

Nancy Baun - *Cellist*

Cellist Nancy Baun has performed over 1,000 events throughout the United States, including three appearances at Carnegie's Weil Hall, as well as in Switzerland, France, Italy, Iceland, and Canada. She appears on nine piano trio recordings, including a series on the Naxos International label "Home for the Holidays", a favorite of Public Radio audiences. Her favorite highlights also include judging the semifinals of the renowned Koussevitzky Competition in New York City and performing in a World Music Institute event at Merkin Concert Hall. She has been an elementary music teacher for over 10 years in urban Buffalo, where she designed curriculum for her passion, "collaborative connections with music". She has received a national Young Audiences grant for her education workshops integrating music with drawing.

Comments / Testimonials

from participants in the Symposium on Marija Gimbutas, presented by

The International Society for Women and Myth

" I had the privilege of knowing Marija Gimbutas. I know how much her Lithuanian Heritage meant to her. She would have been delighted to hear the old Sutartines that she studied woven into these excellent new jazz compositions! Very innovative and creative."

"I didn't know much about Lithuanian music, and I don't know what I was expecting, but this music was beautiful. I am so glad it was included in this historic international program."

" Thank you so much for including the jazz quartet in your event. The quartet's music was a wonderful mini- concert, and the music was very well explained in the accompanying video."

and from audience at the Kalnas appearance in Chicago 9/22

" I was impressed by how the ensemble was creating new music using the traditions of the Lithuanian people. I think it is important that any culture looks back.... but also brings that history forward. The Kalnas ensemble did a great job of looking forward by looking back."

Michael Polich, cultural anthropologist

"Your compositions and the musical performance of the ensemble were really lovely. Also, your discussion, which helped illuminate the connection between the music and Lithuanian culture, was captivating."

James Garren, attorney/workshop participant