

SERAFIN SUMMER MUSIC 2025

CZECH THIS!

Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 7pm

Lewes Public Library

111 Adams Avenue

Lewes, DE 19958

Hal Grossman and Kate Ransom, violin
Adelya Shagidullina, viola; Charae Krueger cello

PROGRAM

Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola

Bohuslav Martinů
(1890-1959)

Poco allegro
Poco andante
Allegro

Ms. Ransom, Ms. Shagidullina

String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96 (*American*)

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Allegro ma non troppo
Lento
Molto vivace
Finale: Vivace ma non troppo

Mr. Grossman, Ms. Ransom, Ms. Shagidullina, Ms. Krueger

(This program is played without intermission and runs approximately 60 minutes)

**Special thanks to Lewes Public Library and Coastal Concerts for their sponsorship of
Serafin Summer Music 2025 and this performance.**

PROGRAM NOTES

by Michael Redmond

Bohuslav Martinů: Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola

Although his music is little known by American audiences, Bohuslav Martinů ranks high among Europe's modernist composers. He suffered a fall while visiting the United States in 1947; while he recovered, he turned his attention to small-scale works. He had been inspired by a performance of Mozart duos by his friends Joseph and Lilian Fuchs, the famed brother-sister duo. He wrote and dedicated Three Madrigals for them. The work represents a major statement concerning the unexpectedly wide capabilities of this modest ensemble.

Martinů had fallen in love with English madrigals in the 1920s. Three Madrigals features the sprung rhythms and free mix of polyphony and chordal writing that are characteristic of the madrigal tradition. Of particular note are Martinů's brilliant usage of double stopping on both instruments at once (thus creating full four-part harmony).

Antonín Dvořák: String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, Op. 96, *American*

One of the most popular string quartets in the repertory, Dvořák's *American* quartet has a place on this program through a quirk – its nickname. Composed in 1893 in Spillville, Iowa, where the composer was a guest with an immigrant Czech community, the quartet is vintage Dvořák, with nothing especially American about it, although some commentators claim to hear echoes of the Negro spirituals and Native American drumming that fascinated the composer during his teaching residency in the United States.

The F Major quartet was composed in two weeks, immediately after the Symphony No. 9, which Dvořák titled *From the New World*. He did not title the quartet, however. "When I wrote this quartet ... I wanted to write something for once that was very melodious and straightforward, and dear Papa Haydn kept appearing before my eyes, and that is why it all turned out so simply. And it's good that it did," he wrote.

While Dvořák denied he had intentionally incorporated any American elements into this quartet, there's one conspicuous exception -- the song of the scarlet tanager (or the red-eyed vireo), a bird he had heard while hiking. The birdsong can be heard early in the quartet's scherzo, given to the first violin, high in the treble range.

"A characteristic, unifying element throughout the quartet is the use of the pentatonic scale. This scale gives the whole quartet its open, simple character, a character that is frequently identified with American folk music. However, the pentatonic scale is common in many ethnic musics worldwide, and Dvořák had composed pentatonic music, being familiar with such Slavonic folk music examples, before coming to America, writes John H. Baron (*Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music*, 1998).