

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MUSIC OF MELODY, MIRTH AND MEMORY
by Michael Johns

USCB Chamber Music welcomes in the new year on Sunday, January 11, 2026, 5:00, with a concert of small forces presenting music of great consequence. Joining Artistic Director, pianist, and enthusiastic host Andrew Armstrong will be globetrotting violinist Stefan Jackiw and cellist Raphael Bell. It will be an intense experience featuring two highly-personal, multi-movement works: Dmitri Shostakovich, Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Opus 67 and Antonin Dvořák, Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor, Opus 90 “(Dumky)” Powerful storytelling shifts between loss and mourning, contemplation and nostalgia, joy and celebration.

Shostakovich's Piano Trio No. 2, conceived during WWII carnage and Soviet repression, was a private statement the composer had to make. Emotional relief, then as now, came from the strength of personal bonds, therefore it was a devastating blow when a treasured colleague died unexpectedly. To the mourning widow Shostakovich wrote “It is impossible to express in words all the grief that engulfed me on hearing the news about Ivan Ivanovich’s death. He was my closest and dearest friend....To live without him will be unbearably difficult.” Shostakovich began converting his devastation to music four days later into what became Piano Trio No 2. The trauma proved a powerful creative stimulus; the work graphically expresses joyful memories set against piercing stabs of loss. Czech composer Antonin Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor, Opus 90 (“Dumky”) is also a deeply personal statement. He composed folk-style melodies and set them as dumka, Slavic folk-music pieces with contrasting sorrowful and lively episodes. Dvořák characterized “Dumky” as “a little piece for violin, cello and piano. It will be both happy and sad. In some places it will be like a melancholic song, elsewhere like a merry dance.” He conveys innumerable shades and gradations between those emotional poles, creating a narrative as nuanced as lived existence. Dvořák's ease of storytelling and warm humanity shine throughout these evocative settings.

Stefan Jackiw is one of America's foremost violinists. Hailed for playing of “uncommon musical substance” that is “striking for its intelligence and sensitivity” (Boston Globe), he has appeared as a soloist with the Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco symphony orchestras, among many others. The 2024-25 season was studded with performances in the United States, Europe, and Asia. He released a CD recording of the complete violin sonatas of Charles Ives, about which Alex Ross in **The New Yorker** wrote, “Jackiw sets a new standard.”

A devoted chamber musician, Jackiw is the Artistic Director of the Hawaii Chamber Music Festival and has performed worldwide in numerous festivals and chamber series,

including the Aspen, Ravinia, Caramoor, Schleswig-Holstein, New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, Celebrity Series of Boston, Washington Performing Arts Society, and USCB Chamber Music. Stefan Jackiw holds a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University and an Artist Diploma from New England Conservatory. He plays a violin made by Domenico Montagnana "ex Rossi" c. 1730.

Raphael Bell, a graduate of the Juilliard School, enjoys a career as a cellist, chamber musician, teacher, and festival director. He is principal cellist of Belgium's Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, guest professor at the Antwerp Conservatory, co-founder and co-director of the Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival, and co-Artistic Director of the La Loingtaine in Montigny-sur-Loing, France. As a chamber musician, Bell has performed at Wigmore Hall, Queen Elisabeth Hall, Salle Gaveau, Berlin Philharmonie, Köln Philharmonie, Luzerner Theater, American Academy in Rome, Tokyo Suntory Hall, and Kyoto Concert Hall and at festivals including Seattle Chamber Music, Ferrara Musica, Wiener Festwochen, Elba Festival, Sonoro Musikland, Ravinia, and Verbier. Raphael has also performed with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, English Baroque Soloists, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and Les Dissonances.

Andrew Armstrong's career continues to grow and sparkle anew. He is such a fixture here that the lowcountry classical-music community now engenders an adopted-son sense of pride, reluctantly loaning him out to the rest of South Carolina, the US, and the world for concertos with orchestra, chamber music with soloists and pre-formed ensembles, recitals in many of the great concert halls, and directorship of multiple chamber music series. In addition to our Sunday performances, while in Beaufort Andy has been an outspoken advocate for the communicative power of music to soothe, educate, and bring us together. This season's outreach presentations have included numerous home concerts, two free public concerts at St. Marks Episcopal Church in Port Royal and the Parish Church at Habersham, a children's live-music-and-conversation performance for 7th and 8th grade students from Beaufort, Holy Trinity Classical Christian, Lady's Island, and Whale Branch Middle Schools, and an upcoming free-for-children Youth Concert on Saturday, February 28, 2026, 3:00 at the CFA. Mark your calendar and text your children! Andy makes the following pledge, "We [the artist-performers] will always strive to outdo ourselves and out-dream our past triumphs together, and I sincerely hope that this year's adventures greet you in just that spirit of celebratory excellence and discovery." If the first concert was any indication, USCB Chamber Music's 46th season is already exceeding that standard.

There are three ways to enjoy each concert: in person at the Arts Center and virtually by Live-Stream and OnDemand. All virtual concerts are professionally produced; great viewing opportunities abound. On the Wednesday before each concert, live and virtual ticket holders receive an email with a link to Sunday's concert. OnDemand is accessible four days after the concert and available to view at your leisure for three weeks.

Each Friday before a Series concert the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) presents Inside the Music, a two-hour, general audience, deep dive into Sunday's repertoire. Dr. Michael Johns provides multiple recorded excerpts and commentary, acclimating listeners to what they will hear on Sunday. Classes are free and open to the public. For concert, artist, event,

OLLI, and ticket information, go to www.uscbchambermusic.com or call 843-208-8246, Monday through Friday. The second concert of USCB Chamber Music's 46th season is Sunday, January 11, 2026 at 5:00 pm at the USCB Center for the Arts, 801 Carteret Street, Beaufort, in the downtown historic district.

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