David Diamond

String Quartets 3 & 8
Concerto for String Quartet
Potomac String Quartet
Washington, DC

Volume One
Presidential Medal of the Arts presented at the White House in 1995. His eleven symphonies were premiered by the following conductors: Mitropoulos, Koussevitzky, Munch, Bernstein, Ormandy, Masur and Schwarz, the last-named now in the process of recording the entire cycle with the Seattle Symphony.

The following interview was conducted by Alex Jeschke, a long-time friend, with the 86-year-old composer at his home in Rochester, New York, on Sunday, June 24, 2001.

**Alex Jeschke:** The Concerto for String Quartet was written in 1936. Did you compose it when you started studying with Nadia Boulanger?

**David Diamond:** No, I actually began composing it before I began to study with her. It was the result of my meeting with the composer Albert Roussel for the first time. I was introduced to him you to meet Albert Roussel because he has already asked me about you” (Koussevitzky had told him about me), so he took me to this beautiful apartment that he had with his wife, so that’s how I met him.

**Aj:** What made you decide to write a ‘Concerto’?

**DD:** I had always admired the performers of a string quartet because they had to be perfect musicians, technically and interpretively. They were, for me, the peak, even more so than a conductor. Also, at that time in Paris, I was listening to a cycle of the Beethoven quartets which the Lener, a Hungarian quartet [Jenö Lener and Lawrence Steinhardt, violins; Ralph Hersh, viola; and Gabor Retjö, cello], was playing. So, with Boulanger's analysis and with these remarkable performances, I really got to know them very well.
DD: It's a sad story in many ways. The young woman I was living with, a fabulous painter by the name of Allela Cornell, became depressed while I was conducting performances of my music for Margaret Webster's production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. When I got home one night, I saw them bringing a stretcher down from the loft that we shared at 544 Hudson Street in Manhattan, and, of course, the moment I got near the ambulance, they said they were taking her to St. Vincent's. So I immediately ran over to the hospital which was diagonally across 7th Avenue, and when I got there, she was in the Diagnostic Room. She had a friend who was a photographer and who had hydrochloric acid in the woodshed for developing her film, and Allela in her depression had gone out there and drunk almost half a bottle of the acid, and for one whole year she was a dying wraith; she weighed twenty-four pounds on the last day of her life. And yet she was dancing in the 5th Avenue in the winter. I recall seeing her and saying, “She'll never make it.”

Aj: Do you believe that what is happening to a composer greatly affects the notes he puts on paper, because this is certainly one of your most personal works?

DD: I can't see how it would not be so. If we don't react to other human beings, we're not very human. I would say I am basically a garrulous person; I love conversation, and I know a good deal about the arts and politics; I'm a well-rounded person; my family was such, to be sure, that they made me so.

Aj: When did Leonard Bernstein first hear this work?

DD: Lenny came to the first reading in the loft I had with Allela. I invited a few close friends, and Lenny said that I could use four string players from the New York City Center where he was then the conductor. I remember Werner Leywen was the first violinist, and he was the concertmaster of that orchestra that Lenny conducted for two years. It was more than a reading; it was much more than a reading.
The Potomac String Quartet

The Potomac String Quartet has served as the resident string quartet at the chamber music concerts at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. In October 2000, the quartet embarked on a project of recording all eleven string quartets written between 1936 and 1968 by the eminent American composer David Diamond.
musician. Solo engagements have included performances at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, the National Gallery of Art, the Corcoran Gallery and Lisner Auditorium. She has performed chamber music on the Embassy Series, with National Musical Arts and the 20th Century Consort. She frequently performs as an orchestral musician with the National Symphony Orchestra and the Eclipse Chamber Orchestra and served as concertmaster for the Washington Chamber Symphony for ten seasons. Ms. McLain is a member of the Theater Chamber Players, Leon Fleisher Director.

Violinist JENNY OAKS BAKER received her Master's degree from the Juilliard School in New York City. She also earned a Bachelor's degree in violin performance from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Ms. Oaks Baker has given recitals in Israel, Europe, and Asia and has soloed with orchestras throughout the United States, including the Utah Symphony and the Concerto Soloists Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. She has also been a guest soloist with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in their national television and radio broadcast. Recently, she made her Carnegie Hall debut as a featured soloist in the Easter Festival Concert. This past August, Ms. Oaks Baker soloed with the Jerusalem Symphony in a production of Lex de Azevedo's Gloria. Ms. Oaks Baker has been prize winner in several national and international competitions. Additionally, she is the recipient of two Pearl Awards from the Faith Centered Music Association for her solo debut album On Wings of Song. Her subsequent albums, Songs My Mother Taught Me and Where Loves Is, also feature hymns and sacred classical works. Ms. Oaks Baker's teachers have included Victor Danchenko, Jaime Laredo and Robert Mann. She is a member of the National Symphony Orchestra.
include Pierre Fournier and Karl Fruh. Voted 'Best New Chamber Music Series' of 1994 by the Washington Post, Steven Honigberg has been The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's chamber music series director since its inception. Mr. Honigberg has an extensive CD recording list, which includes his latest recording of Ernst Toch's cello compositions. Mr. Honigberg also has recorded Ludwig van Beethoven's complete works for cello & piano; an album of twentieth-century American cello works; the chamber music of Erich Wolfgang Korngold; and recordings of music performed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum — three volumes of Darkness & Light. His recent performances include concerts at the 1998 Ravinia Festival and Weill Hall in New York, and a performance of Dmitri Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1 in August 2001 with the Sun Valley Festival Orchestra, where he has performed as principal cellist since 1990. Mr. Honigberg performs on the 'Stuart' Stradivarius cello made in 1732.

For other CD Titles from Steve Honigberg and the musicians of The Potomac String Quartet please visit www.webcom.com/steveh