

Taconic Music: A new beginning for Manchester

By Jim Lowe

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Some 20 years ago, cellist Michael Rudiakov, longtime artistic director of the Manchester Music Festival, established the tradition of an annual Thanksgiving concert in Manchester. After his passing in 2000, that tradition was carried on by his son Ariel and daughter-in-law Joana Genova. This year, the Thanksgiving concert will be the debut of the Rudiakovs' new community music organization, Taconic Music.

"It's a new beginning and a new start for myself and my wife," Ariel Rudiakov explained in a recent phone interview. "Taconic Music carries forward many of the traditions and respecting the legacy of Michael and Judy Rudiakov, and (Manchester Music Festival founders) Carol Glenn and Eugene List, and keeping those things while firmly rooting itself in classical music."

Taconic Music will present "Rudiakovs and Friends: A Concert of Thanksgiving" at 4 p.m. Saturday at the Manchester Community Library. Violist Ariel Rudiakov and violinist Joana Genova-Rudiakov will be joined by their friends, violinist Deborah Buck and cellist Sophie Shao, in Antonin Dvorak's "American String Quartet," No. 12 in F Major, Op. 96. Clarinetist Todd Palmer will then join them in Carl Maria von Weber's Clarinet Quintet, Op. 34.

After 16 years as artistic director of the Manchester Music Festival, its third artistic administration following his father and Glenn and List, he was informed in September that the festival wasn't renewing his and his wife's contract for the coming season. The Rudiakovs and their two children had long made Manchester their home.

"After processing this, we sat down and spoke to each other in earnest about what it was we wanted to do," Rudiakov said. "And we spoke to many other people along the way. Really, what we are doing is responding now to a very broad groundswell of support for us to stay."

The result of that decision is the multi-faceted Taconic Music.

"We're also opening up the world a bit to other styles — so that everybody can periodically feel comfortable in their own skin," Rudiakov said. "This summer we have a four-week festival with a group of nine college-age students, with faculty chamber music concerts that will center on classical music only."

"Other times of the year we're going to present jazz and a variety of different styles of music, depending on funding," he said.

Taconic is presenting its public face first with this Thanksgiving concert and a New Year's Eve celebration.

"For Thanksgiving, two classical chestnuts will kind of roll out of our existence officially," Rudiakov said. "It'll be a short concert, about an hour, with a reception to follow."

New Year's Eve, at the Inn at Manchester, will feature cocktails and a concert, dinner with dancing to follow.

"We're also very focused on the educational component, of the needs of the area," Rudiakov said. "The area is accustomed to a regular presence in their schools and private lessons, and we are carrying forth with those things, including a program with the Community Library called 'Music in Action.'"

Taconic has already played for

Manchester's Maple Street School, and Monument School in Bennington, as well as presenting a children's concert at the Community Library.

Begun just a month ago, the essential framework of building a new nonprofit organization is firmly in place.

"We have our own board of directors, a website and a bank account," Rudiakov said. "We have a little money in the bank account and fortunately more is coming."

All of the summer concerts will take place at the Riley Center for the Arts at Manchester's Burr and Burton Academy. And a Steinway piano has been donated.

"So we find we're in a really good place," Rudiakov said. "We have wonderful colleagues and wonderful support from many in the community. We are marching forth, after some soul searching, after 30 years of music and music education, my father's work, my mother's work, and, of course, what got started by Carol and Eugene. We found that this is really a calling of us."

"And once that call is made, you can't hang up the phone."

TACONIC MUSIC

Taconic Music debuts with "Rudiakovs and Friends: A Concert of Thanksgiving" at 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 26, at the Manchester Community Library, 138 Cemetery Ave. in Manchester Center, featuring Antonin Dvorak's "American" String Quartet and Carl Maria von Weber's Clarinet Quintet. Admission is by donation (\$15 suggested) at the door; for more information, go online to www.taconicmusic.org.