

## Musician mentors next generation

Sep. 28, 2006. 01:00 AM

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There are times that the word "busy" doesn't even begin to describe a life.

David Finckel has an international career as a cello soloist and as a member of the Emerson Quartet. He and his wife, pianist Wu Han, perform recitals together and run a record label.

They are also the co-artistic directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York City and founded a music festival in California called Music@Menlo four years ago.



Much of their focus is on making classical music accessible to a broader audience. Finckel and Han are grassroots artists who enjoy playing in small-town venues and have made it a point to encourage young artists.

Finckel is now in his early 50s. He and Han have a 12-year-old daughter, Lillian. You would think that he might want to take some time for himself.

But there is no personal time for this dynamo. "More than ever before, I feel I have a mission," Finckel says from his Lincoln Center office. "All these activities, they help crystallize ideas and clarify my intentions."

He describes how his many jobs have helped "increase my awareness of the music world at large." His chamber music playing, as member of the 30-year-old Emerson, improves his solo performances, he says. And vice versa.

Members of the Emerson Quartet — Finckel, violinist Philip Setzer and Eugene Drucker on viola (regular Lawrence Dutton is off, due to an injury) — are joined by Han tonight at the Jane Mallett Theatre to kick off the Music Toronto recital season. It's a pleasant program of a Mozart *Divertimento for String Trio* (K.563) and the *Piano Quartet in G minor*, Op. 25 by Brahms.

Finckel had something like a mid-life crisis five years ago: He was turning 50; his father, composer Edwin Finckel, died; Sept. 11 happened; and mentor violinist Isaac Stern died a few days later.

"Within the space of a couple of years, I lost a lot of people who I could turn to for guidance," says Finckel. "At the same time, I started running festivals and had young musicians starting to ask questions. That was the crisis. I realized that I was now the front line and being asked all those tough questions."

He noticed that "you can either cut and run or do it." Given Finckel's background, it's not surprising that he chose to continue working with young musicians around North America.

Finckel's father founded a summer music camp in Vermont in the early 1960s. Called Point

CounterPoint, it still exists at Lake Dunmore, says the cellist. "I organized a reunion for its 40th anniversary in 2003. Wu Han and I spent three days in residence there."

He was 10 when the camp started. "In my early teens, I was already a young administrator." He was also having his musical horizons stretched.

Mstislav Rostropovich was his main teacher. "He was the single greatest commissioner of new music of all time."

Finckel regularly premieres new compositions, such as on his recent disc with the Taipei Symphony Orchestra, which pairs the well-worn Dvorak *Cello Concerto* with a new piece, *Ritual Incantations* by Augusta Read Thomas.

The Emerson Quartet has a steady recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. But Finckel's own albums have been produced by ArtistLed.com, the company he runs with Han.

The label is almost 10 years old, and has released 10 albums. Back in 1997, it was unusual for a major artist to make his own CDs. But as major labels reduced their classical catalogues, others quickly joined in. Now even major symphony orchestras issue their own discs. "It's the way to go," says Finckel.

Although his own recordings with Han tend toward 19th-century chestnuts, he says he has nearly enough new music to record a full disc. "The commission for duo performers are starting to take off," he says. "I now have the privileged task of being able to chose the composers."

That's one privilege Finckel is actually taking advantage of.