

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 2013

Music@Menlo focuses on 'heavenly' Bach

By **Elijah Ho**
Special to The S.F. Examiner

The secret to success, as with many things associated with the Silicon Valley, is in the programming.

Music@Menlo, the annual three-week gathering of world-class and budding musicians performing chamber music in lavish and intimate Menlo Park and Atherton halls, is now amid its 11th successful season, thanks to rigorous attention to programming by co-founders (and husband and wife) David Finckel and Wu Han.

Finckel, a nine-time Grammy Award winner who in May retired from his post as cellist with Emerson Quartet after 34 years, and Han, a pianist, work differently than most classical music presenters. They select the repertoire before engaging the performers.

This year, the theme is Johann Sebastian Bach, a composer Han calls "heavenly, so logical and organized, scientific and profound."

Upcoming in Music@Menlo's final week is a chamber performance of Bach's formidable, and final, work, "The Art of the Fugue" on Wednesday and Thursday, performed by the Orion String Quartet, with Tara Helen O'Connor on flute, Alan Kay on clarinet, James Austin Smith on

oboe, Marc Goldberg on bassoon and Nicole Cash on French horn.

Already among this year's notable performances was the local debut of the Danish Quartet, young musicians who made waves at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center auditions, which Finckel and Han also direct.

With their decades-worth of knowledge and experience with international audiences, the couple has attracted world-class artists to Music@Menlo through the years, including mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke and pianist Gilles Vonsattel.

The couple has no plans to stop.

"Now that David is retired from the Emerson Quartet, he can finally look at all these things he started in Korea, in Kentucky, etc.," Han says. "He's definitely not going to be sitting at home playing cards!"

For Finckel, a key to programming is having a strong focus.

He says "The programming needs to make sense, so that any listener can come away with the feeling of empowerment — not only in terms of musical enjoyment — but in feeling secure in a certain niche of the great art form."

IF YOU GO

The Art of the Fugue

Presented by Music@Menlo

Where: Stent Family Hall,
Menlo School, 50 Valparaiso Ave.,
Atherton

When: 8 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday

Tickets: \$35 to \$77

Contact: (650) 330-2030,
www.musicatmenlo.org

Note: Music@Menlo programs
continue through Saturday.