

Gramophone

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Californian festival chips in with new label

Music@Menlo, the new chamber music festival inaugurated by cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han in the heart of Silicon Valley, will open its second season (29 July - 15 August) with a new record label named Music@Menlo LIVE. Twenty-seven initial releases offer performances from last year's inaugural festival showcasing either artists or repertory. Stent Family Hall at Menlo

Finckel and Wu, whose own label ArtistLed became a prototype for mom-and-pop classical music recording projects, had experimented with a festival format earlier as the artistic directors of the La Jolla Chamber Music Festival. Enlisting their regular ArtistLed producer Da-Hong Seetoo, a Grammy-winning engineer currently behind the Emerson Quartet's recordings for Deutsche Grammophon, the concerts from La Jolla were recorded and broadcast on NPR's Performance Today, with a tiny sampling included on a limited release CD for the festival.

"The idea for Music@Menlo LIVE has been brewing since those days in La Jolla," says Finckel. The broadcasts received widespread acclaim, and musicians who played there have often asked us whether the recordings could be released for sale."

Music@Menlo, which features a similar broadcasting affiliation with Minnesota Public Radio, recordings will now be available both at the festival and on the festival's website. Although musicians aren't brought to Menlo specifically to make recordings – and are under no obligation to do so, Finckel maintains – the project will help fill a growing gap in the classical music recording industry.

'When we were young musicians we were inspired by great recordings,' he adds. 'Far too many great musicians today who deserve to record have no outlet, and if Music@Menlo can do this for them and for the public who wants to hear them, then why shouldn't we?'

Ken Smith, Gramophone Online US East Coast correspondent

