

It isn't often that we can or will be able to say that The Plaza Arts Center is hosting an artist who is the best in the world at what he or she does (especially having been open only 7 months), but this Saturday night, we are fortunate to claim that right when world famous Béla Fleck and The Sparrow Quartet step onto our stage, thanks to OPAS.

Béla has won eight Grammy Awards and is known throughout the world as the premiere banjo player who has "single handedly" taken the instrument from its bluegrass and Appalachian folk music roots on an evolution through bluegrass, classical, and jazz. His musical genius has propelled him to continually push the edge of the musical envelope. Known in the past for his association with his jazz group "The Flecktones" and his ground-breaking group "The New Grass Revival", you are in for a treat to see Béla perform with "Abigail Washburn + The Sparrow Quartet."

Abigail, Abby to her friends, has a voice that can charm birds from a tree and she and Béla (who are dating) formed The Sparrow Quartet along with cellist, Ben Sollee, and violinist, Casey Driessen. After spending time in China to learn about Chinese folk music, Abby and Béla composed the songs on their newly released CD and have been touring around the world this year, including a performance at the Beijing Olympics. The Sparrow Quartet is not a classical string quartet, but a group that is "Beyond Bluegrass & Virtuosos of American Acoustic Music."

Join us before dinner at 5:00 PM when Béla, Abby, Ben and Casey will host an "Open Forum" for students and the local community to answer questions about music, the banjo, China, or anything else you are interested in asking them.

Kazanetti returns on Friday, October 24, when they will be performing for the Putnam County school students with their Halloween-inspired "Peter and the Werewolf". They will have a brown bag concert out by the fountain in front of The Plaza at noon on Friday (grab your lunch and come join us) and on Saturday, October 25, they will team up with David Odom and Jeremy Samolesky to add clarinet and piano to their repertoire. Prior to the show will be the Musical Petting Zoo, which gives children, in particular, a chance to touch and 'pet' the different instruments with hopes that it will spark an interest in a child that could lead to unlocking their creative potential. Once again, Kazanetti brings tremendous talent and credentials to The Plaza Arts Center stage.

David Odom is Assistant Professor of Clarinet at Auburn University, teaching applied clarinet, music appreciation and woodwind skills. He has an extensive orchestral background having performed across the U.S. and in Japan and he is currently Principal Clarinet of both the Atlanta Opera Orchestra and the Columbus (GA) Symphony.

Jeremy Samolesky, is currently serving his first year as Assistant Professor of Piano at Auburn's Music Department. With a passion for both solo and collaborative piano performances, Jeremy has appeared in concert as a soloist and chamber pianist throughout Canada, the U.S., Italy, Austria, and recently at Singapore's prestigious Esplanade Theatre. These performances helped earn him a full recital at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., which was broadcast nationally on National Public Radio's "Performance Today."

Samolesky achieved a considerable feat in May of 2007 by graduating with two doctorate degrees from the Eastman School of Music, which Eastman has permitted just once before in the school's history. He is an avid promoter of new music and most of his programs contain at least one work by a current living composer, in hopes of encouraging the public's interest and admiration for great new musical works.

'Twas the Right Before Christmas Festival of the Arts is right around the corner and tickets are already on sale for the Reynolds Chorus, the Washington, DC Ballet and the Macon Symphony. We are also looking for individuals or businesses to sponsor and decorate Christmas trees as part of our first-ever holiday season at The Plaza. Please call or email for more details (706-923-1655, tpacdirector@bellsouth.net).

See you at The Plaza!