Tonight’s concert by the Ariel Quartet is dedicated to CCM Professor Emeritus Walter Levin, the founder and first violinist of the legendary LaSalle Quartet. Levin passed away in Chicago on Aug. 4, 2017, at the age of 92. He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Evi, and two sons, David and Tom.

Born in Berlin on December 6, 1924, Levin and his family emigrated to Tel Aviv in 1938. Levin was accepted to Juilliard in 1946, where he studied with Ivan Galamian and Hans Letz. The LaSalle Quartet was formed during this period, taking its name from the nearby LaSalle Street where the Quartet members rehearsed. Upon graduation, the Quartet — then comprised of Levin, Henry Meyer, Peter Kamnitzer and Jack Kirstein — became quartet-in-residence at Colorado College.

In 1953 the LaSalle Quartet came to what was then known as the College of Music in Cincinnati (the College of Music would merge with the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music in 1955 before again merging with UC to become the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in 1962). The Quartet served as CCM’s string quartet-in-residence for over 30 years, while also touring the world.

After making its European debut in 1954, the LaSalle Quartet won international recognition for its masterful interpretations of the major works in the chamber music repertory. The Quartet’s programs offered a remarkable spectrum of music from all periods, including premieres of major works by twentieth-century composers.

The Quartet became particularly well regarded as the leading interpreters of “The Second Viennese School,” performing complete cycles of the quartets of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern throughout the United States and Europe. The LaSalle Quartet’s Deutsche Grammophon recording of these
cycles created a sensation in the music world, winning the Grand Prix du Disque in 1972. *TIME Magazine* called the album “a landmark in recorded music.” In 1978 the LaSalle again won the Grand Prix du Disque, this time for its recording of the Five Late Quartets by Beethoven. The following year, the Quartet won the Edison Prize for the first recording of Alexander Zemlinsky’s Second String Quartet.

During his 33-year tenure at CCM, Levin greatly enhanced CCM’s reputation on the international stage. He also served on the faculty at Basel’s Musik-Akademie der Stadt and the Musikhochschule Lübeck. Levin’s students included conductor James Levine, violinist Christian Tetzlaff, pianist Stefan Litwin, and members of the Alban Berg Quartet, the Arditti Quartet and the Ariel Quartet. CCM presents this concert in loving memory of Walter Levin.

A NOTE FROM THE ARIEL QUARTET

Tonight we celebrate the life of a true giant of music and the String Quartet world, whom we were incredibly lucky to have had as our mentor. Walter was in our lives for the past decade – half of the Quartet’s existence. We traveled the world to work with him in southern France, Berlin, Paris, Basel and Cincinnati. It would take much more than a short program insert to appreciate his immeasurable impact on us. Walter will always remain a central figure in the shaping of our craft. In the context of his astounding tenure as a musician and teacher, we could be seen as a mere afterthought for a man who spent a lifetime nurturing musicians. It is humbling to grasp the scope of his legacy, which extends to a time before our parents were born.

Walter’s more local legacy in Cincinnati continues with the LaSalle Foundation and the Ariel Quartet’s residency at CCM. We will continue, as best we can, to infuse this city and this college with his spirit of musicianship, discipline, generosity and profound love of the arts. We are grateful and honored to have the family — Evi, David and Tom — and their many friends join us for this special evening.