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Rachmaninov, *Piano Concerto No. 2*
Dvorák, *Symphony No. 9, "From the New World"*

Featuring piano soloist Bai Yang and conducted by Eduardo Leandro

Saturday, November 5

Vivian Fung, *Prayer*

Sibelius, *Violin Concerto*

Rachmaninov, *Symphonic Dances*

Featuring violin soloist So Jeong Kim and conducted by Jens Georg Bachmann

Saturday, December 10

A student-led concert without a conductor in the tradition of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Saturday, February 18

Dai Wei, *The Dancing Moonlight*

Shostakovich, *Cello Concerto No. 1*

Prokofiev, *Selections From Romeo and Juliet*

Featuring cello soloist

Zhihao Wu and conducted by Michelle Merrill

Saturday, March 25

James Lee III, *Niji Memories for Flute and Orchestra*

Mahler, *Symphony No. 4*

Featuring flute soloist Julietta Curenton and soprano soloist Alina Tamborini; conducted by André Raphael



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Revisiting 5+1 at the Zuccaire Gallery
Photo by Dario Lasagni

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WALKER

String Quartet No. 1 Lyric

I. Allegro

II. Molto adagio

III. Allegro con fuoco

Phillip Setzer, First Violin

SCHUBERT

String Quartet No. 13 in a minor,

Op. 29, No. 1, D. 804 Rosamunde

I. Allegro ma non troppo

II. Andante

III. Menuetto. Allegretto

IV. Allegro moderato

Phillip Setzer, First Violin

-INTERMISSION-

WEBERN

Sechs Bagatellen [Six Bagatelles] for

String Quartet, Op. 9

I. Mässig

II. Leicht bewegt

III. Ziemlich fließend

IV. Seher langsam

V. Äusserst langsam

Eugene Drucker, First Violin

SHOSTAKOVICH

String Quartet No. 12 in D-flat major, Op. 133

I. Moderato - Allegretto - Moderato

- Allegretto - Moderato

II. Allegretto - Adagio - Moderato

- Adagio - Moderato - Allegretto

Eugene Drucker, First Violin

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ABOUT

The **Emerson String Quartet** has maintained its status as one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles for more than four decades. "With musicians like this," wrote a reviewer for *The Times* (London), "there must be some hope for humanity." The Quartet has made more than 30 acclaimed recordings, and has been honored with nine GRAMMYs® (including two for Best Classical Album), three Gramophone Awards, the Avery Fisher Prize, and Musical America's "Ensemble of the Year" award. The Quartet collaborates with some of today's most esteemed composers to premiere new works, keeping the string quartet form alive and relevant. The group has partnered in performance with such stellar soloists as Renée Fleming, Barbara Hannigan, Evgeny Kissin, Emanuel Ax, and Yefim Bronfman, to name a few.

In the 2021-2022 season, the Quartet gave the New York premiere of André Previn's *Penelope* at Carnegie Hall, alongside soprano Renée Fleming, actress Uma Thurman, and pianist Simone Dinnerstein, before reprising the program in a concert at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In addition to touring major American venues,

the Quartet returned to Chamber Music Society of Louisville, where they completed a Beethoven cycle they had begun in spring 2020. Finally, the Quartet embarks on a six-city tour of Europe, with stops in Athens, Madrid, Pisa, Florence, Milan, and London's Southbank Centre where they presented the Emerson in a complete Shostakovich cycle, one of the staples in their repertoire.

The Quartet's extensive discography includes the complete string quartets of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Bartok, Webern, and Shostakovich, as well as multi-CD sets of the major works of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Dvorak. In 2018, Deutsche Grammophon issued a box of the Emerson Complete Recordings on the label. In October 2020, the group released a recording of Schumann's three string quartets for the Pentatone label. In the preceding year, the Quartet joined forces with GRAMMY®-winning pianist Evgeny Kissin to release a collaborative album for Deutsche Grammophon, recorded live at a sold-out Carnegie Hall concert in 2018.

Formed in 1976 and based in New York City, the Emerson String Quartet was one of the first quartets to have its violinists alternate in the first chair position. The Quartet, which takes its name from the American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, balances busy performing careers with a commitment to teaching, and serves as Quartet-in-Residence at Stony Brook University. In 2013, cellist Paul Watkins—a distinguished soloist, award-winning conductor, and devoted

EMERSON STRING QUARTET

chamber musician—joined the original members of the Quartet to form today's group.

In the spring of 2016, the State University of New York awarded full-time Stony Brook faculty members Philip Setzer and Lawrence Dutton the status of Distinguished Professor, and conferred the title of Honorary Distinguished Professor on part-time faculty members Eugene Drucker and Paul Watkins. The Quartet's members also hold honorary doctorates from Middlebury College, the College of Wooster, Bard College, and the University of Hartford. In January of 2015, the Quartet received the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award, Chamber Music America's highest honor, in recognition of its significant and lasting contribution to the chamber music field.

PROGRAM NOTES

Walker, *Lyric* for String Quartet

George Walker (1922–2018) is one of America's most distinguished Black composers. Educated at Oberlin and Curtis conservatories, the Eastman School of Music, and Fontainebleau, Walker studied composition with such notables as Gian-Carlo Menotti and Nadia Boulanger, and piano with Rudolph Serkin and Robert Casadesu. Having taught in several major schools of music, Walker held chairs in composition at Rutgers University, the University of Delaware, and the Peabody Institute. He has also won two Rockefeller fellowships and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1982,

Walker was made a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1996, Walker was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his symphonic work, *Lilacs*, based on poetry by Walt Whitman. He was the first African American to be honored with that award.

In Walker's adaptation for string orchestra, *Lyric* became the most often performed work by an American composer. About the music, Walker wrote:

It was composed in 1946 and was originally the second movement of my first string quartet. After a brief introduction, the principal theme that permeates the entire work is introduced by the first violins. A static interlude is followed by successive imitations of the theme that leads to an intense climax. The final section of the work presents a somewhat more animated statement of the same thematic material. The coda recalls the quiet interlude that appeared earlier. *Lyric* is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother.

Program annotator William D. West has noted certain parallels between George Walker's *Lyric for Strings* and Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. Each was originally the slow movement of its composer's first string quartet, and both are elegiac pieces expressing an underlying sorrow. West writes:

The poignancy inherent in Walker's thematic material, and the way he builds it to a searing

EMERSON STRING QUARTET

climax half way through, may also suggest a profound grief, and in this case, of course, we know the connection with the passing of his grandmother. Appropriately, since this is a very personal memorial, the music in the string orchestra version remains intimate throughout, the equivalent of a personal letter which takes us briefly and succinctly into the private and confidential world of the sender.

Schubert, Quartet in A Minor, D. 804 (Op. 29, no. 1)

After Schubert had put aside his "Unfinished" Symphony in 1822, he did not give up the idea being a symphonist. On the contrary, he had grand plans for what would become the "Great" C Major Symphony, but he felt that he needed more seasoning in the instrumental domain. As a result, he turned his attention to chamber music, writing three string quartets and the Octet. After completing the Quartet in A Minor and the Quartet in D Minor ("Death and the Maiden") in March 1824, he wrote to his friend, Leopold Kupelweiser, "I have written two quartets . . . and an octet, and I intend to write another quartet. In this manner, I want to pave the way to a grand symphony." Although Schubert completed all three quartets, the A Minor was the only one in the trilogy to be published during his lifetime.

The first movement of the A Minor Quartet begins like one of Schubert's songs: with a brief introduction (in fact, a little uneasy, like "Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel"). This leads to an

exquisite lyrical melody. Following a vigorous transition, the second theme is similarly song-like. The development reveals some wonderfully colorful key explorations before settling down to a recapitulation that turns unexpectedly to the major mode for the second theme.

For the *Andante's* main theme, Schubert borrows his own *Entr'Acte* music from *Rosamunde*. This he treats in a series of variations that cover a subtle variety of moods.

Alfred Einstein called the *Menuetto* movement "the germ or kernel of the A Minor Quartet," also pointing out that it is a *Ländler* and not a minuet. In addition, it opens with a direct quotation from Schubert's 1819 setting of Schiller's ode, "The Gods of Greece." If this quartet "is 'about' disenchantment and the loss of innocence," as biographer John Reed asserts, then this movement, with its wistful pre-Brahms melancholy, epitomizes the work.

The rondo finale, set in A major, dispels some of that melancholy with its rustic flavor. But Einstein describes it as appearing "in the same Hungarian disguise which Schubert was to use again in *Die Winterreise* in an exactly similar sense: outwardly exuberant and *chevaleresque*, but . . . without any real consolation...." Nevertheless, the impetuousness and rhythmic verve of the finale does much to redirect the quartet's previous moodiness onto a more positive course."

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Webern, Six Bagatelles, Op. 9

When we hear the name Anton Webern (1883-1945), we might think “12-tone” or “atonal,” because so much of his mature music falls into those “scary” categories. In fact, his music more than that of his teacher, Arnold Schoenberg, became the model for European and American serial composers of the 1950s and 1960s. If you are a little put off by the atonal music of Webern or Schoenberg, you are not alone. In 1920, as sophisticated a musical mind as Béla Bartók’s concluded:

In considering atonal music, it is very confusing that in deciding what is satisfactory and what are the harmonic results of the counterpoint, one possesses no definite points to hold on to, no “rules.” In this respect both the composers and their audiences have to rely only on their instinct.

Webern’s music is not really difficult or “scary,” but it does require a little closer concentration than most music. That is because it is so much distilled. Musical ideas are all short, and Webern rarely reiterates them. In short, every note counts. To put it another way, Webern has trimmed off the husk of outer musical syntax and left us with just the seed – the essential ideas.

The *Bagatelles* for string quartet, composed 1911-1913, are very short sketches that exemplify this tendency. If we can only re-adjust our ears and our sense of time to this terseness, Webern’s music holds a wealth of new,

refreshing musical experiences. Erwin Stein explains that in the *Bagatelles*, “almost every note is given to a different instrument, and each one is a different tone color. . . . They are melodies in one breath. . . . The composer says only the barest essentials and his expression determine the form of a piece.” However, Webern’s dedication (to colleague Alban Berg) probably expresses his approach the best: “*Non multa sed multum* [not big but full]. How happy I would be if this phrase could apply here.”

Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 12 in D-flat major, Op. 133

Certain people have been bold enough to suggest a parallel between the late string quartets of Shostakovich and those of Beethoven, although they do not together make such a clearly defined group as do Beethoven’s. However, his last four quartets do in many ways stand apart from the rest, and although the foundations of their emotional and spiritual world had to a certain extent been laid from No.7 onwards, it is No.12 (1968) which emphatically marks the point of departure. (Paul Griffiths)

By 1968, conditions in Russia had improved for Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). Stalin had died in 1953, but even during the Stalinist years, the composer had found a place on the “favored” list in Soviet Russia, including an appointment to the Supreme Soviet (legislative body) and increased privileges, such as foreign travel. Both inside and outside his homeland

EMERSON STRING QUARTET

Shostakovich was considered the greatest living Russian composer.

Trends in the West did not escape his notice. Following WW II, more and more composers in the Free World were exploring the 12-tone method of composition, and many were using some form of it in their own works. In the music of Shostakovich, the listener could usually perceive various shades of dissonance, but always there had been the “anchor” of tonality. He would always be composing in or around some recognizable key. Most serial music (as 12-tone music was termed) studiously avoided tonality (the presence of major/minor keys and familiar scales). Instead, it employing a composer-invented series (called a “row”) of the 12 different pitches found in every octave. These were to be sounded in strict order in the melodies and harmonies of the composer’s musical opus. The row could also be used in inversion, retrograde, or retrograde inversion, and any of the four forms could be transposed to start on a pitch different from the original presentation.

In his 12th String Quartet, Shostakovich experimented (in his own personal way) with 12-tone composition. We hear his 12-tone row clearly in the opening cello solo. After that, the row weaves in and out of the music, often imperceptibly. Yet, this approach to composition makes the Shostakovich 12th String Quartet unique among his 15 masterful quartets.

The choice of D-flat Major as the designated key of the 12th quartet is puzzling, since it could be awkward for string players, whose instruments are tuned to “natural” pitches. Shostakovich’s purpose is veiled, but intentional — perhaps to involve the players in the *contention* he wished to

express. Yet the forms employed in the quartet’s two substantial movements are familiar (but unorthodox) classical ones, beginning with the first movement cast roughly in sonata form (generally, and in a moderate tempo). Also unorthodox is the composer’s shift to a new 12-tone row in the course of the movement: Never hesitant, Shostakovich asserts his own “brand” of 12-tone music.

The second (and last) movement continues to compress several sonata-movement tempos into a single musical statement:

Allegretto — Adagio — Moderato —
Adagio — Moderato — Allegretto

This contributes great possibilities for *contrast*, which could be the underlying guiding principal in this “finale.” Yet Shostakovich balances that with profound principles of *unity*. Both *Adagio* sections contain a sort of *descant* in common, with which they bridge the intervening *Moderato*. And then, the composer gives us a reprise of music from the *first* movement: again, *unity*. The former struggle with *atonality* then becomes firmly resolved in the triumph of *tonality* in D-flat Major! The quartet may now reach its climactic final moments bathed in a Beethoven-style victory!

Program notes by Dr. Michael Fink

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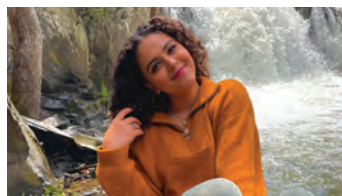
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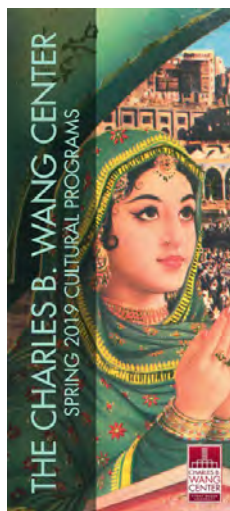
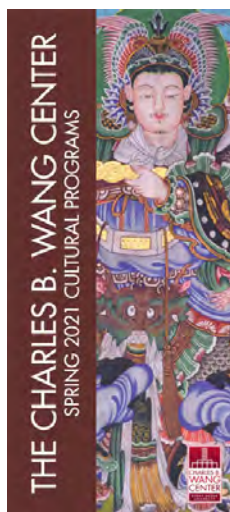
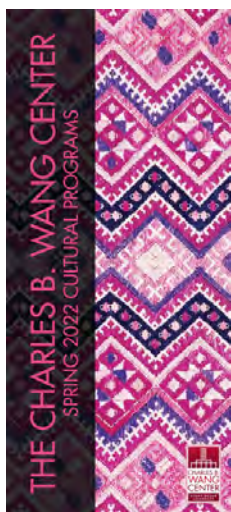


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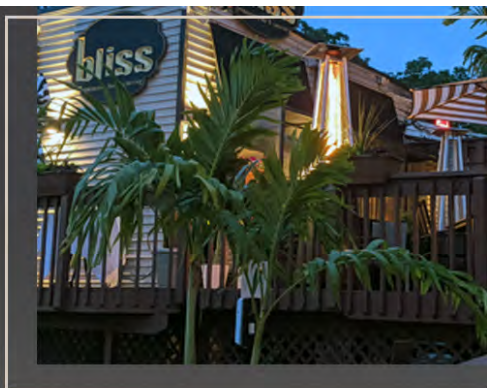
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EMERSON STRING QUARTET #2
Mon. Feb. 13 @ 7pm

STONY BROOK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Sat. Feb. 18 @ 8pm

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
SONGS WE LOVE
Sat. Feb. 25 @ 8pm

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Sat. March 4 @ 7pm

STORM LARGE
Sat. March 18 @ 8pm

STONY BROOK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Sat. March 25 @ 8pm

PROKOFIEV'S PETER & THE WOLF - FOR KIDS
Sun. March 26 @ 3pm

STARRY NIGHTS - SPRING
Wed. March 29 @ 7pm

MIKE E. WINFIELD - COMEDY
Thurs. March 30 @ 8pm

42ND STREET in HD - FROM THE LONDON STAGE
Fri. March 31 @ 8pm

EMERSON STRING QUARTET #3
Tue. April 11 @ 7pm

DIABOLO - ARCHITECTURE IN MOTION
Sat. April 15 @ 8pm

SHELÉA
Sat. April 22 @ 8pm

STONY BROOK OPERA - LA TRAGÉDIE DE CARMEN
Sat. April 29 @ 8pm and
Sun. April 30 @ 3pm

DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM
Sun. May 7 @ 7pm

ON THE SCREEN IN HD - LIVE PERFORMANCES STREAMING FROM THE MET OPERA
Schedule at
stallercenter.com/HD



tickets

boxoffice@stallercenter.com

Programs, artists & dates are subject to change

(631) 632-2787 | stallercenter.com



STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY
STALLER
CENTER FOR THE ARTS