

66th Concert Series 2019-20



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is pleased to present

Emerson String Quartet

Eugene Drucker, violin

Philip Setzer, violin

Lawrence Dutton, viola

Paul Watkins, cello

Saturday, October 12, 2019

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

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Who We Are

Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization now celebrating its 66th season of showcasing, right here in Westchester, artists chosen from among the finest in today's diverse world of chamber music. Additionally, our Partners in Education program in the public schools and free student admission to our concerts give young people enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music.

In order to help sustain what one of our artists called this “legendary series,” we need people who can join the volunteers listed above, either as Board members or equally valued off-Board committee members. Specifics we are looking for include, but are not limited to, people with networking, editorial, business development, and/or fund-raising skills. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can explore the range together.

Acknowledgments

Our concerts are made possible, in part, by an ArtsWestchester Program Support grant made with funds received from Westchester County Government. Additional support is received from many friends of Friends of Music, including subscribers and other ticket holders listed in this program.* If you, too, can contribute, please send your gifts to Friends of Music Concerts, Inc., P.O. Box 675, Millwood, NY 10546.

Program

String Quartet No. 21 in D Major, K575

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Allegretto

(1756-1791)

Andante

Menuetto: Allegretto

Allegretto

(Philip Setzer, first violin)

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51

Antonín Dvořák

Allegro ma non troppo

(1841-1904)

Dumka: Andante con moto; Vivace

Romance, Andante con moto

Finale: Allegro assai

(Eugene Drucker, first violin)

Intermission

Quartet No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 92

Dmitri Shostakovich

Allegro non troppo

(1906-1975)

Andante – Andantino – Andante – Andantino - Andante

Moderato – Allegretto - Andante

(Philip Setzer, first violin)

The Emerson String Quartet appears by arrangement with IMG Artists, 7 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019. 212-994-3500

The Emerson String Quartet has recorded on Deutsche Grammophon and on the Decca Gold Label.

Next concert

Saturday, October 26, 2019, 8:00 pm at **Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York**
Zlatomir Fung, cello; Richard Fu, piano

Program: Domenico Gagliardi: Cello Sonata No. 1 in G Major; Nicolay Mayaskovsky: Cello Sonata No. 2, Op. 81; Elliot Carter: Figment No. 1; Gabriel Fauré: Romance for Cello and Piano, Op. 69; premiere of work by Marshall Estrin; Ludwig van Beethoven: Cello Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69.

Program notes

String Quartet No. 21 in D Major, K. 575

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Mozart, unlike earlier composers, was not employed by the church or court but worked as a free artist. Initially, his popularity as composer, performer, and teacher produced sufficient income for him through commissions, but by 1788 those had become greatly reduced, leading to a difficult financial situation. In 1789 his pupil, Prince Lichnowsky (who later was an intimate of Beethoven's), had become almost the only member of the Viennese nobility who continued both to take an active interest in Mozart and to understand his greatness. Lichnowsky took Mozart to Berlin to meet the Prussian king, Frederick William II, a devoted music lover and amateur cellist. The King paid Mozart a moderate fee for a private concert at court, and commissioned six string quartets for himself as well as six piano sonatas for his daughter, Princess Friederike. Although Mozart composed this quartet in June, a sonata for the Princess in July, and two more quartets in early 1790, he could never complete the commission.

In this quartet, Mozart's writing has richness and body; he took great pains to give the royal cellist an active part, with many solos. Because Frederick William was so very talented, Mozart provided elegant melodic material for him throughout. Each movement includes prominent cello solos with the instrument at the top of its range. In order to balance those, Mozart gives similar solos to the other quartet members, varying the line and texture to avoid repetitiveness.

The quartet, a mature masterpiece like his last symphonies, shows a new strength. Its character is optimistic and playful. The first movement is an *Allegretto* whose first theme is animated by appoggiaturas and rapid, rhythmic figures. A second principal theme is so similar to the first that Mozart adds variety to the short development section by introducing a completely new theme. The second movement, a compact *Andante*, is relatively slow; its melody has similarities to the song *Das Veilchen*, Mozart's only setting of a Goethe poem. The third movement *Minuetto* includes strong *sforzati*, loud accents similar to those Beethoven used. In its contrasting central Trio section, the cello has a prominent lyrical melody. In the last movement, *Allegretto*, the cello articulates the main theme, a recurring subject derived from the first movement. Counterpoint soon complements the theme, and the process repeats with different combinations of instruments. In addition, Mozart inverts the theme and establishes a Rondo with variations.

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Dvořák's father was an innkeeper and butcher in the Czech village of Nelahozeves who hoped to pass his trade on to his son, but the young man turned instead toward music, took up the violin and organ, and, at sixteen, left home to study in Prague. Four years later he joined the orchestra of the National Theater as a violist, soon testing his creative powers with extended compositions in the classical forms. By then chamber music had an important place in his life; many of his earliest works were quartets and quintets,

modeled after those of Beethoven and Schubert. He played them with his colleagues and friends while developing his craft.

Dvořák composed this quartet between December 25, 1878, and March 28, 1879. The famed violinist Joseph Joachim gave it a private reading at his home with his quartet in Berlin on July 29th; on December 17th Jean Becker and his Florentine Quartet performed it in public for the first time, in Prague. After it was published in 1879, it acquired such an international circle of admirers that it became one of Dvořák's most frequently performed works. Becker had suggested that the music be categorized as in Dvořák's popular "Slavonic" style, causing a British critic to find its unfamiliar national character, with its incorporation of folk dances, to be "bizarre, fantastic, and semi-barbaric." The critic actually meant that description as a compliment. We hear it now as a work that is delicate and intimate, full of good humor and high spirits.

The opening *Allegro ma non troppo* has a charming melody that later becomes interwoven with the polka-like bouncing theme which makes up the movement's second subject. That dance melody begins the recapitulation, but the calmer first subject brings the movement to a close. The second movement, *Dumka: Andante con moto; Vivace*, takes the form of a folk lament, which then becomes mixed with a thematically-related furiant, a fiery folk dance with the frequently shifting accents often used by Czech composers. A serenely nocturnal and lyrical Romance, *Andante con moto*, follows. The *Finale: Allegro assai*, is a brilliant, witty, reeling dance, a *skáčna*, which the composer sets off with meditative subsidiary ideas.

Quartet No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 92

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Shostakovich's family, originally Polish, settled in Russia two generations before the composer's birth. He received his first piano lessons from his mother, entering the Petrograd Conservatory at the age of thirteen. His graduation piece was his Symphony No. 1, a brilliant work that soon was performed widely. He proved to be music's last great classicist, the composer of fifteen symphonies, two operas, three ballets, fifteen string quartets, and many other works including thirty-six film scores. Curiously enough, early in his career he had not shown much interest in writing string quartets.

Shostakovich came to maturity in an era when the rulers of Russia felt that their Communist society should support new kinds of art. Russian composers, poets, novelists, and painters soon formed a true avant-garde. Because official ideas soon changed, however, Shostakovich's next symphonies and his two operas of the late 1920's and early 1930's were attacked by Communist aesthetic theoreticians as embodying "bourgeois decadence" and ideological "formalism," and were withdrawn from circulation. With his Symphony No. 5 of 1937, which he described as "a composer's reply to just criticism," he re-entered the mainstream of Russian musical life; it was only then that he composed his first string quartet. Although he went on to be acknowledged as one of the world's greatest living composers, he had difficulties of one kind or another with Russian authorities until the time of his Symphony No. 13 (1962), which was

dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Nazi's World War II massacres at Babi-Yar outside Kiev in Ukraine.

Quartet No. 5 has been much lauded. Some feel it is the greatest quartet he had yet written; others go so far as to contend that, because of its consummate symphonic integration, it is a masterpiece he never surpassed and rarely equaled. There is no question that the quartet has a symphonic character, but it also is an intimate work. It was composed in the fall of 1952 and premiered in Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) in September 1953 by the Beethoven Quartet, to which it was dedicated in order to mark that ensemble's thirtieth anniversary.

The work's three movements are played without pause. The first, *Allegro non troppo*, is in a large-scale sonata form, with the first two bars announcing the motif for the entire quartet. The viola dominates the second measure; this theme, a five-note cell of C, D, E-flat, B, and C-sharp, contains the composer's musical "signature" (DSCH, or D, E-flat, C and B; E-flat is Es and B is H in German). The work then evolves from these three intervals, with the first ascending minor second followed by a major second and then a minor third. The second subject, introduced by the second violin, is a simple, lyrical diatonic theme based on the interval of a third. The full exposition is repeated, with Shostakovich using cross-rhythms and cross-tonalities throughout. The development reaches its climax as a new theme is introduced before the recapitulation. The first violin then joins the first movement to the second with a protracted high F.

The intense second movement, *Andante/Andantino*, again a type of sonata form but without development, more fully explores lyrical aspects of the motivic material introduced in the first movement. The principal theme, shared by the first violin and the viola, has a Russian flavor. The second theme is unusually romantic. One of the melodies is a quote from a piano trio composed by Shostakovich's student Galina Ustvolskya with whom, said Rostopovich, Shostakovich had a "tender relationship." The instruments are muted throughout, while the texture alternates between three-part and four-part writing. When Shostakovich does use four instruments here, he even creates the impression of an additional one. Both themes make a return, with the addition of a closing theme. This time a high F sharp in the first violin, doubled by the viola, and a D by the cello, link the second and third movements.

In the finale, a long, thoughtful introduction, *Moderato*, leads to the main body, *Allegretto*, in sonata rondo form in which the viola announces the first subject. The second theme is soft and expressive. The development section brings back themes from the earlier movements. A gentle dance grows in intensity before subsiding as the disparate elements are smoothed together and transformed into a folk-like theme. Before the work ends quietly, earlier themes return; the resolution of the pull between duple and triple time, which had caused tension throughout, is settled and synthesized in the final bars.

About the Artists

For more than 40 years the Emerson String Quartet has maintained its status as one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles. 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 Reneé Fleming, Barbara Hannigan, Evgeny Kissin, Emanuel Ax, and Yefim Bronfman, to name a few.

The Emerson's 2019-20 season, which began with a seven-city tour of Australia, includes a number of high-profile projects. Among the North American highlights is a three-concert stint at Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series featuring Beethoven's "Razumovsky" Quartets and the complete Bartok cycle. The Quartet performs in its 41st series at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and makes appearances at the Park Avenue Armory in New York, Friends of Chamber Music in Vancouver, Wharton Center for the Performing Arts in East Lansing, MI, Wouth Mountain Concerts, Wooster Chamber Music, Chamber Music Cincinnati, and Chamber Music Louisville, in addition to this concert with us. Overseas, the Quartet performs the complete Beethoven Cycle at the Seoul International Music Festival, and embarks on three European tours that include stops in Serbia, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Poland, and Spain.

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 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. In January 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.



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