

23/24



Alexander String Quartet with Robert Greenberg

Music as a Mirror of Our World

Chamber Music at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

December 3, 2023

February 25, 2024

May 5, 2024

All performances take place at 2 p.m.

Jackson Hall, UC Davis

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Alexander String Quartet with Robert Greenberg

Music as a Mirror of Our World: Chamber Music at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Zakarias Grafilo & Yuna Lee, violins

David Samuel, viola

Sandy Wilson, cello

PROGRAM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2023 — FRANCE

P. 5

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10 (1893)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Animé et très décidé
Assez vif and bien rythmé
Andantino, doucement espressif
Très modéré — Très animé

—INTERMISSION—

String Quartet in F Major (1902-3)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Allegro moderato — Très doux
Assez vif — Très rythmé
Très lent
Agité

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2024 — SCANDINAVIA

P. 6

String Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 13, FS 4 (1889)

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Allegro energico
Andante amoroso
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Finale: Allegro (inquieto)

—INTERMISSION—

String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 56 “Voces Intimae” (1908-9)

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Andante; Allegro molto moderato
Vivace
Adagio di molto
Allegretto (ma pesante)
Allegro

String Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 7 (1905)

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

Nicht zu rasch; Kräftig (nicht zu rasch); Mässig, langsame Viertel; Mässig, heiter

—INTERMISSION—

Langsamer Satz (1905)

Anton Webern (1883-1945)

Five Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5 (1909)

Heftig bewegt

Sehr langsam

Sehr bewegt

Sehr langsam

In zarter Bewegung

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PROGRAM NOTES

FRANCE
SUNDAY DECEMBER 3, 2023

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10 (1893)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, Saint Germain-en-Laye

Died March 25, 1918, Paris

Early in 1893, Debussy met the famed Belgian violinist Eugene Ysaÿe. Debussy was at this time almost unknown (*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* was still a year in the future), but he and Ysaÿe instantly became friends—though Ysaÿe was only four years older than Debussy, he treated the diminutive Frenchman like “his little brother.” That summer, Debussy composed a string quartet for Ysaÿe’s quartet, which gave the first performance in Paris on December 29, 1893. Debussy was already notorious with his teachers for his refusal to follow musical custom, and so it comes as a surprise to find him choosing to write in this most demanding of classical forms. Early audiences were baffled. Reviewers used words like “fantastic” and “oriental” and Debussy’s friend Ernest Chausson confessed mystification. Debussy must have felt the sting of these reactions, for he promised Chausson: “Well, I’ll write another for you...and I’ll try to bring more dignity to the form.”

But Debussy did not write another string quartet, and his Quartet in G Minor has become one of the cornerstones of the quartet literature. The entire quartet grows directly out of its first theme, presented at the very opening, and this sharply rhythmic figure reappears in various shapes in all four movements, taking on a different character, a different color, and a different harmony on each reappearance. What struck early audiences as “fantastic” now seems an utterly original conception of what a string quartet might be. Here is a combination of energy, drama, thematic imagination and attention to color never heard before in a string quartet. Debussy may have felt pushed to apologize for a lack of “dignity” in this music, but we value it today just for that failure.

Those who think of Debussy as the composer of misty impressionism are in for a shock with his quartet, for it has the most slashing, powerful opening Debussy ever wrote: his marking for the beginning is “Animated and very resolute.” This first theme, with its characteristic triplet spring, is the backbone of the entire quartet: the singing second theme grows directly out of this opening (though the third introduces new material). The development is marked by powerful accents, long crescendos and shimmering colors as this movement drives to an unrelenting close in G minor.

The Scherzo may well be the quartet’s most impressive movement. Against powerful pizzicato chords, Debussy sets the viola’s bowed theme, a transformation of the quartet’s

opening figure; soon this is leaping between all four voices. The recapitulation of this movement, in 15/8 and played entirely pizzicato, bristles with rhythmic energy, and the music then fades away to a beautifully understated close. Debussy marks the third movement “Gently expressive,” and this quiet music is so effective that it is sometimes used as an encore piece. It is in ABA form: the opening section is muted, while the more animated middle is played without mutes—the quartet’s opening theme reappears subtly in this middle section. Debussy marks the ending, again played with mutes, “As quiet as possible.”

The finale begins slowly but gradually accelerates to the main tempo, “Very lively and with passion.” As this music proceeds, the quartet’s opening theme begins to appear in a variety of forms: first in a misty, distant statement marked “soft and expressive,” then gradually louder and louder until it returns in all its fiery energy, stamped out in double-stops by the entire quartet. A propulsive coda drives to the close, where the first violin flashes upward across three octaves to strike the powerful G major chord that concludes this most undignified—and most wonderful—piece of music.

String Quartet in F Major (1902-3)

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, Basses-Pyrenees

Died December 28, 1937, Paris

Ravel wrote his only string quartet in 1902-3, while still a student at the Paris Conservatory, and the first performance was given by the Heymann Quartet in Paris on March 5, 1904, two days before the composer’s twenty-ninth birthday. Ravel’s quartet is in many ways similar to the Debussy quartet, written in 1893—there are parallels between the structure, rhythmic shape and mood of the two works—but Ravel dedicated his quartet “To my dear teacher Gabriel Fauré,” who was directing Ravel’s work at the Conservatory.

One of the most distinctive features of Ravel’s quartet is its cyclic deployment of themes: the first movement’s two main themes return in various forms in the other three movements, giving the quartet a tight sense of unity. Some have charged that such repetition precludes sufficient thematic variety, but Ravel subtly modifies the color, harmony and mood of each reappearance of these themes so that from this unity comes enormous variety.

The first movement is marked *Allegro moderato*, but Ravel specifies that it should also be *Très doux* (“Very gentle”). The calm first subject is heard immediately in the first violin over a rising accompaniment in the other voices, and this leads—after some spirited extension—to the haunting second theme, announced by the first violin and viola, two octaves apart. The relatively brief development rises to a huge climax—Ravel marks it *fortississimo*—before the movement subsides to close with its opening theme, now gracefully elongated, fading gently into silence.

**String Quartet No. 1 in G Minor,
Op. 13, FS 4 (1889)**

CARL NIELSEN

Born June 9, 1865, Norre-Lyndelse

Died October 2, 1931, Copenhagen

Some composers (Mozart and Mendelssohn come to mind) appear almost to have been born knowing how to write music. Other composers (Beethoven and Elgar) struggled for years to master their craft and achieve success. Carl Nielsen belonged to the latter group. Born into a family who lived in near poverty in rural Denmark (his father was a house painter), the boy helped support his family by herding geese during school vacations. Nielsen was drawn to music from an early age: his family became aware of his talent when they watched him beat out rhythms on logs using sticks. He learned to play the violin and piano as a small boy, and by 15 he played the cornet in a military band. But he wanted to write his own music, and he was able to attend the Copenhagen Conservatory only because of the support of friends in his hometown. He graduated in 1886 and then struggled to make his way as a composer. Financial security came in 1889 when, at age 24, he joined the Royal Danish Opera Orchestra as a violinist. That job paid the bills, but it was killing work, and he would remain in the orchestra for sixteen years until, at age 40, he had become successful enough as a composer that he could support himself and his family through his own music.

Nielsen sketched several string quartets while still a teenager, but he did not compose his official first string quartet—the first one he allowed to be published—until he was 22. Nielsen composed his String Quartet No. 1 in G Minor between December 1887 and February 1888. We may think of Nielsen as a twentieth-century composer, but when he wrote this string quartet, Brahms, Bruckner and Tchaikovsky were still active and Liszt had been dead for only a year. So, it is not surprising that the idiom of this music is still fairly conservative, and this quartet is noteworthy not for any striking innovations but for its high energy level and for Nielsen's accomplished writing for strings.

The quartet is in the expected four movements, and they are all in traditional forms: a sonata-form opening movement, a ternary-form slow movement, a scherzo and trio, and a vigorous finale that recalls themes heard in earlier movements. Nielsen's marking for the first movement, *Allegro energico*, is exactly right, because this is indeed a high-energy movement. From its insistent and driving opening, this music is built on busy textures, athletic themes and rapid interchanges between the instruments. The first violin states the first theme immediately, and the cello quickly announces the second. These are treated to a full-throated development and a soaring recapitulation, so that after all this

The second movement, *Assez vif—Très rythmé*, is a scherzo in ternary form. The opening is a tour de force of purely pizzicato writing that makes the quartet sound like a massive guitar. Some of this movement's rhythmic complexity comes from Ravel's use of multiple meters. The tempo indication is 6/8 (3/4), and while the first violin is accented in 3/4 throughout, the other voices are frequently accented in 6/8, with the resulting cross-rhythms giving the music a pleasing vitality. The slow center section is a subtle transformation of the first movement's second theme. At the conclusion of this section comes one of the quartet's most brilliant passages, the bridge back to the opening material. Here the pizzicato resumes quietly, gathers speed and force, and races upward to launch the return of the movement's opening theme. This is wonderful writing for quartet, and the scherzo drives straight to its explosive pizzicato cadence.

The third movement—*Très lent*—is in free form, and perhaps the best way to understand this movement is to approach it as a rhapsody based loosely on themes from the first movement. Beneath these themes Ravel sets a rhythmic cell of three notes that repeats constantly, but it remains an accompaniment figure rather than becoming an active thematic participant. The movement's impression of freedom results in no small part from its frequent changes of both key and meter.

After the serene close of the third movement, the fourth—*Agité*—leaps almost abrasively to life. Agitated it certainly is, an effect that comes from its steadily driving double-stroked passages, and this mood continues across the span of the movement. The basic metric unit here is the rapid 5/8 heard at the beginning, though Ravel changes meter frequently, with excursions into 3/4 and 5/4. Once again, material from the first movement returns, and after several lyric interludes the finale takes on once again the aggressive mood of its opening and powers its way to the close.

Ravel's quartet generated a mixed reaction at its premiere in 1904. One of those most critical was the dedicatee, Gabriel Fauré, who was especially bothered by the unorthodox finale, which he thought "stunted, badly balanced, in fact a failure." But when Ravel, troubled by such criticism, turned to Debussy for his estimation, the latter offered the best possible response: "In the name of the gods of Music and for my sake personally, do not touch a note of what you have written."

— Program notes © 2023 Eric Bromberger

energy the very ending brings a surprise: its energy exhausted, the movement concludes on a *pianissimo* chord.

While Nielsen marks the second movement *Andante amoroso*, this music does not seem in any way a love song. First violin sings the broad-spanned opening melody (the meter here is 9/8), and all seems set for a lyric slow movement, but now Nielsen springs a surprise in this “slow” movement. Suddenly the music accelerates into a violent section marked *agitato*, and only gradually does it make its way back to the calm opening material, now marked *molto tranquillo*.

After the quiet conclusion of the slow movement, the Scherzo, set in 6/8 rather than the expected 3/4, erupts with energy. At the trio section Nielsen moves into G major, and the first violin sings a bucolic tune whose many open E-string notes give this music the flavor of country fiddling. But this does not last for long: back comes the vigorous scherzo, and a powerful coda drives the movement to its emphatic final chord.

The finale brings further surprises. Nielsen stresses that he wants the performance to be *inquieta*, and suddenly we find ourselves back in the G-minor intensity of the first movement. As the finale nears its conclusion, Nielsen creates a section he titles *Resumé*, and here he recalls themes from the first and third movements and weaves them into the busy textures of this music. It makes for a grand conclusion to a very impressive piece of music by a very young composer.

String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 56 “Voces Intimae” (1908-9)

JEAN SIBELIUS

Born December 8, 1865, Tavastehus, Finland

Died September 20, 1957, Järvenpää, Finland

We automatically think of Sibelius as the composer of orchestral music, and his reputation continues to rest squarely on his symphonies, tone poems and his Violin Concerto. Yet it is surprising that Sibelius was not drawn more to chamber music. He was an accomplished violinist, and as a very young man he wrote a number of chamber works, including (when he was about twenty) three string quartets. But there is only one significant piece of chamber music from his artistic maturity, the String Quartet in D Minor, composed in 1908–9 between the Third and Fourth Symphonies. The quartet shows some unusual features. It is in five movements rather than the expected four, and there are thematic links between the movements. The quartet also has the nickname “Voces Intimae” (Intimate Voices), which originated with the composer himself. That nickname has, however, been a source of uncertainty, for there seems to be no explicit program behind this music. A quartet with a similar nickname, Janacek’s Second Quartet (subtitled “Intimate Pages”), is fired in every measure by that aging composer’s love for a young woman, but there is no such message in this music, which remains abstract

throughout. At one point in a copy of the score to the third movement, Sibelius penciled “Voces intimae” over three hushed chords, and this remains our only clue to the meaning of the enigmatic nickname.

Listeners who know Sibelius’ symphonies will recognize many of their trademarks here: murmuring pedals, long crescendos, rhetorical outbursts and sustained passages of unison writing. But there are many more passages of true chamber music: music of inward character, created by a partnership of equals and of a truly intimate sonority. The quartet is built on an arch structure worthy of mature Bartók: two big outer movements (sonata form and rondo) form the anchors, while the even-numbered movements are both powerful scherzos. These surround a lengthy *Adagio di molto* that is, musically and emotionally, the capstone of the arch.

The slow introduction to the first movement, for first violin and cello alone, provides a basic theme-shape, and at the *Allegro molto moderato* the entire quartet takes up this idea, yet at a speed only slightly faster than the introduction. This animated sonata-form movement leads without pause into the second movement, marked *Vivace*, which is derived from the first movement’s themes. This pulsing, driving scherzo—a superb movement—divides into smaller sections in different keys; so closely related is this movement to the first that Sibelius referred to it as movement “one-and-a-half.” The central *Adagio di molto* has a yearning, striving quality that grows directly out of its constantly driving upward; along the way the listener will make out the three separate chords—first in E minor and then in C-sharp minor—over which Sibelius inscribed the enigmatic “Voces Intimae.” The fourth movement, a firm-ribbed and declarative *Allegretto*, is followed by the rondo-finale, which has some of the character of a perpetual-motion movement and finally drives to a near-symphonic close.

Sibelius himself was quite pleased with this quartet. In a diary entry in July 1909, six months after its completion, he wrote: “Believe me, with the quartet I have left the training ship and gained my master’s certificate. Now I shall set course for the open sea. You’ve achieved something!”

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AUSTRIA SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024

String Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 7 (1905)

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Born September 13, 1874, Vienna

Died July 13, 1951, Los Angeles

Schoenberg began his String Quartet No. 1 during the summer of 1904, just as he turned 30, and completed it a year later, in September 1905. This was a time of incredible activity and growth for the young composer: he was teaching in Vienna, putting on concerts of new music, and maturing rapidly as a composer. His *Verklaerte Nacht* had been premiered in 1903, and he had recently completed sketches for the massive *Gurrelieder*. Around him, the world of music was in similar ferment: as Schoenberg composed his String Quartet No. 1, Mahler completed his Seventh Symphony, Debussy wrote *La Mer*, and Strauss finished *Salome*.

If Schoenberg was reaching out in new directions and beginning to rethink the limits of tonality in these years, his String Quartet No. 1 remains firmly conscious of its past even as it pushes toward new territory. It is tonal music (it has key signatures throughout), and it is in classical forms: its four component sections correspond to the four movements of the classical string quartet. Yet both harmony and form are under considerable tension in this music. Schoenberg declares that the quartet is in D minor, but admits that it passes through “vagrant harmonies” before it moves to a peaceful conclusion in D major. Even more striking is the form. This quartet is in one large movement that spans 45 minutes, and within that vast span Schoenberg offers sections that seem to mirror classical structure: sonata form, scherzo, slow movement in ternary form, and a concluding rondo. But to describe the quartet that way risks oversimplifying it, and some have instead described it as one large sonata-form movement into which Schoenberg inserts component interludes. Schoenberg said that his model here was the first movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica*, but audiences should not search for thematic resemblances between the two works (this quartet does not sound like the *Eroica*). Instead, Schoenberg meant that he was striving for the same vast and dramatic movement built on the same kind of motivic development that Beethoven had employed in the symphony.

A brief overview: the opening movement (marked “Not too fast”) opens immediately with the quartet’s seminal theme, sounded here by the first violin. This theme will supply much of the material—thematic, harmonic, textural—of the entire quartet, and one immediately senses the intensity and busy-ness of this music. But it is not idle busy-ness, and virtually every sound in this quartet has a thematic function. A long transition leads to the second subject, again announced by the first violin and

here marked *ausdruckvoll*: “expressive.” The development is active and extended, as is the recapitulation. The music proceeds directly into the second section, marked simply *Kräftig*: “powerful.” Once again, the relation to classical form is clear: this is a scherzo-and-trio, with a buoyant scherzo and a muted, nocturnal trio section, but the return is not literal, and Schoenberg continues to develop material heard in the opening section.

The quartet evolves somewhat at the third section, which is a ternary-form slow movement. Here Schoenberg introduces new material, as the first violin begins all by itself, and the viola has the lovely second subject over pulsing cello accompaniment; these two themes are combined in the closing part of this section. The concluding section is in rondo form, and once again the first violin leads the way. The rondo theme is a transformation of the violin theme from the slow movement, and some have noted that while we can identify the influence of Brahms, Wagner, and Beethoven on early Schoenberg, we should also note the influence here of Franz Liszt, who built large structures on a similar transformation of thematic material. The closing minutes of this vast quartet come as a complete surprise: after all the tensions, after all the concentrated thematic development, after all the formal complexity, Schoenberg’s *String Quartet No. 1* ends in luminous calm. The music moves into D major and concludes with a romantic postlude that sounds all the more peaceful after what has gone before.

The premiere of this quartet was given in Vienna on February 5, 1907, by the Rosé Quartet, and that performance touched off a near-riot—the audience banged chairs and hissed as the quartet played. Mahler, a supporter of Schoenberg, leaped up and confronted one of the noisemakers, crying out: “Let me just see what sort of fellow it is who hisses.” The two nearly came to blows, and the demonstrator was escorted out of the hall. On the front steps of the auditorium, he turned and shouted: “Calm down, I hiss at Mahler concerts *too!*”

Mahler confessed that he could not always respond to Schoenberg’s music, but the day after that premiere he wrote to Richard Strauss in Berlin, saying that the quartet had made “a significant and indeed impressive impact on me.” He enclosed a copy of the score and recommended that Strauss sponsor a performance in Berlin.

Langsamer Satz (1905)

ANTON WEBERN

Born December 3, 1883, Vienna

Died September 15, 1945, Mittersil

Webern entered the University of Vienna to study musicology in the fall of 1902, when he was 19, and two years later he began composition lessons with Schoenberg; these private studies would continue until 1908. Early in his work with Schoenberg—in 1905—Webern wrote a movement for string quartet as a

composition exercise, and this is called today simply *Langsamer Satz*: “slow movement.”

Listeners who usually flee at the thought of Webern may be surprised by this music. Composed before Webern had abandoned tonality, the *Langsamer Satz* makes clear just how deeply rooted he was in the music of late nineteenth-century Vienna. In fact, hearing this music without knowing its composer, one might well guess either Brahms or Mahler. The influence of Brahms (dead only eight years when the *Langsamer Satz* was written) can be felt in the lush sound and the romantic theme-shapes; the influence of Mahler (then director of the Vienna Opera and composing his *Seventh Symphony*) appears in the scrupulous attention to sound and the intensity of the development. The harmonic language is quite traditional (this music begins in C minor and progresses to the relative major, E-flat), as is the form. This eleven-minute movement is based on two themes; both of these develop, and the music moves to a climax, resolving quietly on fragments of the opening idea.

Particularly striking is the expressiveness of this music. We have so much come to think of Webern as the supremely intelligent and detached manipulator of tone rows and complex canons that it may surprise some to hear the romantic arc of these themes and to sense the intensity of feeling in the music. The score is littered with such performance markings as “very warm,” “with deep feeling,” “expressive,” and “very calm.”

Webern probably never heard this music. He wrote it as an exercise, and doubtless he and Schoenberg went over it in some detail, revising and refining. But the *Langsamer Satz* remained unpublished, and the manuscript was eventually discovered in the Webern archives that musicologist Hans Moldenhauer established at the University of Washington. The first known performance took place in Seattle on May 27, 1962, over half a century after the music was written and seventeen years after the composer’s death.

Five Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5 (1909)

ANTON WEBERN

Webern wrote these five brief movements in 1909, when he was 25 and working as an operetta conductor in Austria. He had just completed four years of study with Schoenberg, and his music was moving toward a free tonality. The *Five Movements for Strings* are miniatures. In the score, Webern suggests that they should last a total of about eight minutes, but most performances run closer to ten or twelve. In the same year that Webern wrote these tiny pieces for string quartet, Mahler was writing his eighty-minute Ninth Symphony, Ravel his opulent *Daphnis and Chloe*, and Stravinsky *The Firebird*, employing what that composer himself called a “wastefully large” orchestra. Webern’s

Five Movements can be understood as a movement away from those extremes of length and orchestration and toward a fierce concentration of materials. This is not to say that Webern is unconcerned with color. Far from it. These brief pieces use almost every known string technique: pizzicato, harmonics, *col legno* (bowing with the wood of the bow), and *ponticello* (bowing on top of the bridge).

Listeners usually dismayed at the prospect of hearing Webern will find these pieces quite approachable. They are now over a century old, and many film scores today—which give audiences no trouble—are written in a much more difficult idiom. Those new to the Five Movements can approach them by listening for the variety of sound Webern produces or his treatment of thematic motifs, tiny thematic cells that appear in many guises. These motifs recur throughout the Five Movements and are modified slightly as they proceed, though the pieces are so short that they lack real development sections. Anyone who thinks Webern a detached and emotionless composer should see his careful instructions to the performers: “With tenderest expression,” “Utmost delicacy,” “Transitory,” “Dying away.”

1. *Heftig bewegt* (Moving vehemently). The first of the pieces begins fiercely, with snapping pizzicatos and dry *col legno* cracks. Soon the cello plays the brief thematic cell that will recur throughout the Five Movements in various forms. This movement goes through great dynamic extremes, ending with a barely audible pizzicato stroke.

2. *Sehr langsam* (Very slow). Muted throughout, this movement is only fourteen measures long. The viola immediately sounds the theme, which undergoes very slow transformations before the music dies away on a second violin phrase marked “Hardly audible.”

3. *Sehr bewegt* (Moving rapidly). This movement might be considered the scherzo of the Five Movements. Over a rapid cello pizzicato, the upper strings flit and sing, with the first violin breaking into waltz-like fragments before the sudden rush to the close. The entire movement lasts forty seconds.

4. *Sehr langsam* (Very slow). Thirteen measures long, this slow movement opens with violin tremolos, very softly extends the theme, and ends with a tiny brush of violin sound.

5. *In zarter Bewegung* (With delicate movement). The longest of the five movements, this opens quietly with the thematic cell in the cello, moves very quietly to a sudden, modest climax, then dies away on a sustained chord. The variety of sound in this final movement is particularly impressive.

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Alexander String Quartet

Zakarias Grafilo, violin • Yuna Lee, violin • David Samuel, viola • Sandy Wilson, cello



The Alexander String Quartet stands among the world's premier ensembles, having performed in the major music capitals of five continents. The quartet is a vital artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving since 1989 as Ensemble in Residence of San Francisco Performances. Widely admired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart, and Shostakovich, the quartet's recordings have won international critical acclaim. Founded in New York City in 1981, the ensemble quickly captured attention, initially winning the Concert Artists Guild Competition in 1982, and then becoming the first American quartet to win the London (now Wigmore) International String Quartet Competition in 1985. The members of the Alexander String Quartet are recipients of honorary degrees from Allegheny College and St. Lawrence University, and Presidential medals from Baruch College (CUNY).

Since its inception, the Alexander String Quartet has maintained an unyielding and passionate commitment to education. For decades, the ensemble has trained generations of gifted performers, emerging string quartets, and talented young musicians destined to pass on their knowledge and love of music as teachers in schools across the globe. The 2023-24 season marks the beginning of a new initiative that brings together the quartet's expertise in education and devotion to its community. Partnering with schools, arts organizations, and community institutions in the Bay Area and beyond, the Alexander String Quartet will be hosting a series of innovative workshops, performances and collaborations that are designed to support and bolster chamber music awareness and education for individuals from all walks of life.

The Alexander String Quartet has performed at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum, Jordan Hall, the Library of Congress, and appeared as guests at universities including Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Lewis & Clark, UCLA, and many more. Numerous overseas tours include the U.K., the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina, Panamá, and the Philippines. Their visit to Poland's Beethoven Easter Festival is beautifully captured in the 2017 award-winning documentary, *Con Moto: The Alexander String Quartet*.

Joyce Yang, Marc-André Hamelin, Richard Stoltzman, Joyce DiDonato, Midori, Lynn Harrell, Branford Marsalis, David Sánchez, Jake Heggie, Augusta Read Thomas, Tarik O'Regan, Wayne Peterson, and Samuel Carl Adams are only a few of the many distinguished instrumentalists, singers, and composers with whom the Alexander String Quartet has collaborated in performance and recording projects crossing genres from classical to jazz, rock, and folk in its more than four decades of music making. Their most recent collaborative project, "British Invasion," brings the Quartet together with guitarist William Kanengiser to explore the music of Sting, Led Zeppelin, John Dowland, and the Beatles by way of contemporary composers Ian Krouse, Dušan Bogdanović, and Leo Brouwer. The quartet continues to enjoy a long-standing collaboration with the richly entertaining composer-lecturer, Robert Greenberg, with whom it presents series of concerts every season with San Francisco Performances and at the Mondavi Center at the University of California in Davis. These concerts, which have also reached audiences at the Library of Congress in Washington, Merkin Concert Hall in New York, and many other venues, provide a deep dive into the history and essence of the works being presented in addition to a full performance of each piece.

Recording for the Foghorn Classics label, the Alexander String Quartet's extensive recording catalogue includes complete string quartet cycles by Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms, Kodály, and Shostakovich. Their most recent release is the third installment of a Mozart chamber music project, "Apotheosis Volume 3," featuring the string quintets of Mozart with violist Paul Yarbrough. Apotheosis Volumes 1 & 2, released in 2018 and 2019, featured the late string quartets and piano quartets (with Joyce Yang) of Mozart. Both recordings received critical acclaim ("These are by far, hands down and feet up, the most amazing performances of Mozart's two piano quartets that have ever graced these ears." —*Fanfare*). Other major recordings include the 2020 release of the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets (with Eli Eban) and the 2019 release, "Locale," featuring Dvořák's "American" quartet and piano quintet (with Joyce Yang). Their recording catalogue also includes the Mahler Song Cycles in transcriptions for mezzo-soprano (with Kindra Scharich) and string quartet by the Quartet's first violinist, Zakarias Grafilo.

The Alexander String Quartet performs on Michael Fischer and unlabeled circa 1800 Italian violins, a Hiroshi Iizuka viola, and a Francis M. Kuttner cello. They have also had the distinct honor on numerous occasions to record and perform on a matched set of instruments known as the Ellen M. Egger Quartet, made in San Francisco by the late Francis M. Kuttner.



Robert Greenberg

Robert Greenberg was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1954, and has lived in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1978. Greenberg received a BA in music, magna cum laude, from Princeton University in 1976. His principal teachers at Princeton were Edward Cone, Daniel Werts, and Carlton Gamer in composition, Claudio Spies and Paul Lansky in

analysis, and Jerry Kuderna in piano. In 1984, Greenberg received a Ph.D. in music composition, With Distinction, from the University of California, Berkeley, where his principal teachers were Andrew Imbrie and Olly Wilson in composition and Richard Felciano in analysis.

Greenberg has composed over fifty works for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Recent performances of his works have taken place in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, England, Ireland, Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands, where his *Child's Play* for String Quartet was performed at the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam.

Greenberg has received numerous honors, including being designated an official "Steinway Artist," three Nicola de Lorenzo Composition Prizes, and three Meet-The-Composer Grants. Notable commissions have been received from the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Alexander String Quartet, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, San Francisco Performances, and the XTET ensemble. Greenberg is a board member and an artistic director of COMPOSERS, INC., a composers' collective/production organization based in San Francisco. His music has been published by Fallen Leaf Press and CPP/Belwin, and recorded on the Innova label.

Greenberg has performed, taught, and lectured extensively across North America and Europe. He is currently music historian-in-residence with San Francisco Performances, where he has lectured and performed since 1994. He has served on the faculties of the University of California at Berkeley, California State University East Bay, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he chaired the Department of Music History and Literature from 1989-2001 and served as the Director of the Adult Extension Division from 1991-1996. Greenberg has lectured for some of the most prestigious musical and arts organizations in the United States, including the San Francisco Symphony (where for ten years he was host and lecturer for the Symphony's nationally acclaimed "Discovery Series"), the Chautauqua Institute (where he was the Everett Scholar-in-Residence during the 2006 season), the Ravinia Festival, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Van Cliburn Foundation, the Nasher Sculpture Center, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra,

Villa Montalvo, Music@Menlo, and the University of British Columbia (where he was the Dal Grauer Lecturer in September of 2006). In addition, Greenberg is a sought after lecturer for businesses and business schools. For many years a member of the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania/Wharton School's Advanced Management Program, he has spoken for such diverse organizations as S.C. Johnson, Canadian Pacific, Deutsches Bank, the University of California/Haas School of Business Executive Seminar, the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, Harvard Business School Publishing, Kaiser-Permanente, the Strategos Institute, Quintiles Transnational, the Young Presidents' Organization, the World Presidents' Organization, and the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco. Greenberg has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal*, *INC. Magazine*, the *Times* of London, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, the *University of California Alumni Magazine*, *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, and *Diablo Magazine*. For fifteen years Greenberg was the resident composer and music historian to National Public Radio's "Weekend All Things Considered" and "Weekend Edition, Sunday" with Liane Hansen.

In February 2003, *The Bangor Daily News* (Maine) referred to Greenberg as the "Elvis of music history and appreciation," an appraisal that has given more pleasure than any other.

In May 1993, Greenberg recorded a forty-eight-lecture course entitled "How to Listen to and Understand Great Music" for the Teaching Company/Great Courses Program of Chantilly, Virginia. (This course was named in the January 1996 edition of *Inc. Magazine* as one of "The Nine Leadership Classics You've Never Read.") The Great Courses is the preeminent producer of college level courses-on-media in the United States. Twenty-five further courses, including "Concert Masterworks," "Bach and the High Baroque," "The Symphonies of Beethoven," "How to Listen to and Understand Opera," "Great Masters," "The Operas of Mozart," "The Life and Operas of Verdi," "The Symphony," "The Chamber Music of Mozart," "The Piano Sonatas of Beethoven," "The Concerto," "The Fundamentals of Music," "The String Quartets of Beethoven," "The Music of Richard Wagner," and "The Thirty Greatest Orchestral Works" have been recorded since, totaling over 550 lectures. The courses are available on both CD and DVD formats and in book form.

Dr. Greenberg's book, *How to Listen to Great Music*, was published by Plume, a division of Penguin Books, in April, 2011.

Greenberg lives with his children Lillian and Daniel, wife Nanci, and a very cool Maine coon (cat) named Teddy, in the hills of Oakland, California.

Robert Greenberg is an official Steinway Artist.

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