



**EUGENE DRUCKER, VIOLIN**

**PHILIP SETZER, VIOLIN**

**LAWRENCE DUTTON, VIOLA**

**PAUL WATKINS, CELLO**

# EMERSON STRING QUARTET

MAY 15, 2019

**JOSEPH HAYDN**  
(1732-1809)

**Quartet No. 55 in D Major, Op. 71, no. 2**

Adagio - Allegro

Adagio cantabile

Menuet. Allegretto and Trio

Finale. Allegretto

*Eugene Drucker, First Violin*

**DMITRI  
SHOSTAKOVICH**  
(1906-1975)

**Quartet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 68**

Overture: Moderato con moto

Recitative and Romance: Adagio

Valse: Allegro

Theme and Variations: Adagio

*Eugene Drucker, First Violin*

## INTERMISSION

**EUGENE DRUCKER**  
(b. 1952)

**Elegy, from *Series of Twelve***

*Dedicated to the memory of Ann Levy*

**GIUSEPPE VERDI**  
(1813-1901)

**Quartet in E Minor**

Allegro

Andantino

Prestissimo

Scherzo Fuga – Allegro assai mosso

*Philip Setzer, First Violin*



**EUGENE DRUCKER**

*violin*

**PHILIP SETZER**

*violin*

**LAWRENCE DUTTON**

*viola*

**PAUL WATKINS**

*cello*

## EMERSON STRING QUARTET

The Emerson String Quartet has maintained its stature as one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles for more than four decades. 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." The Emerson frequently collaborates with some of today's most esteemed composers to premiere new works, keeping the string quartet art form alive and relevant. They have partnered in performance with stellar soloists including René Fleming, Barbara Hannigan, Evgeny Kissin, Emanuel Ax, and Yefim Bronfman, to name a few.

During the 2018-2019 season the Emerson continues to perform as the Quartet-in-Residence at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. for its 40th season and returns to perform with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The group's North American appearances include a performance at New York's Alice Tully Hall, Library of Congress in Washington D.C., Vancouver, Seattle, Houston, Indianapolis, Detroit, the Yale School of Music, and University of Georgia. The quartet also embarks on two European tours, performing in major venues in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain. During the summer of 2019, the Emerson will perform at the Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Aspen Music Festivals.

Other North American highlights include performances of *Shostakovich and The Black Monk: A Russian Fantasy*, the new theatrical production co-created by the acclaimed theater director James Glossman and the quartet's violinist,

Philip Setzer. The music/theater hybrid, co-commissioned by the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Princeton University, and Tanglewood Music Festival, has been presented at the Ravinia Music Festival, Wolf Trap, and in Seoul, South Korea. In spring 2019, the quartet will reprise this work at Stony Brook University and the Orange County Performing Arts Center. In a bold intersection of chamber music and theater starring David Strathairn/Len Cariou and Jay O. Sanders/Sean Astin with the Emerson String Quartet, the audiences witness the trials of Dmitri Shostakovich's 40-year obsessive quest to create an opera based on Anton Chekhov's mystical tale, *The Black Monk*.

The Emerson's extensive recordings range from Bach to Harbison, including the complete string quartets of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Bartók, Webern, and Shostakovich, as well as multi-CD sets of the major works of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Dvořák. The ensemble has also recorded music by Tchaikovsky, Smetana, Debussy, Ravel, Barber, and Ives. In April 2017, the Emerson released its latest album, *Chaconnes and Fantasias: Music of Britten and Purcell*, the first CD issue on the new label, Decca Gold. The quartet has commissioned and performed new works from composers such as Thomas Adès, Kaija Saariaho, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and Edgar Meyer.

Formed in 1976 and based in New York City, the Emerson was one of the first quartets whose violinists alternated in the first chair position. The quartet, which took 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 chamber musician, joined the original members of the Emerson Quartet. The reconfigured group has been praised by critics and fans alike around the world. In spring 2016, full-time Stony Brook faculty members Philip Setzer and Lawrence Dutton received the honor of Distinguished Professor, and part-time faculty members Eugene Drucker and Paul Watkins were awarded the title of Honorary Distinguished Professor. The Emerson had previously received honorary doctorates from Middlebury College, the College of Wooster, Bard College, and the

University of Hartford. 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.

The Emerson Quartet endorses Thomastik strings.

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

## NOTES

*Program Notes* © Elizabeth Bergman

HAYDN: QUARTET  
NO. 55 IN D  
MAJOR, OP. 71,  
NO. 2

### IN BRIEF

**BORN:** March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

**DIED:** May 31, 1809, Rohrau, Austria

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMANCE:**

Juilliard Quartet, February 7, 1979

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 17 minutes

Joseph Haydn composed a total of 86 string quartets over some 40 years. His works set the standard for the genre. He established the norm for the sequence of movements, including a sonata form opening, minuet-trio movement, and closing variation or rondo. His music mixed the styles of the moment, from folk dances to operatic arias, proving that the quartet could be every bit as “symphonic” in scope as the symphony itself. His trademark humor and wit often shines through in rhythmic shifts or turns and dynamic contrasts. In contrast to the Baroque trio sonata, which most often featured a rather showy, almost soloistic, violin simply accompanied by other instruments, Haydn fashioned a more robust dialogue among instruments. Each instrument was now to have its own role in a larger conversation, and listening to his quartets becomes akin to following different voices in a lively discussion.

In his Quartet Opus 71, no. 2, the discussion seems to be about the interval of an octave. Everyone who writes about this marvelous score points out the novelty of the opening melodic gesture in the first violin: a two-octave drop that is echoed, less ostentatiously, by the other three instruments.

Later in the score the leaps downward are reversed, then filled in, and offered in unison rather than in sequence. Haydn's second movement is among the most affecting and emotional of any he composed, and the third movement, a minuet, includes a puzzling trio that altogether lacks a tune. The chatter from the first violin, which usually carries the melody, is briefly silenced.

The conversation has its disquieting moments, and some of the more disturbingly enigmatic passages in the quartet anticipate the one by Shostakovich that follows on tonight's program.

## IN BRIEF

**BORN:** September 25, 1906, St. Petersburg, Russia

**DIED:** August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMANCE:**  
Borodin Quartet, January 29, 1969

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 34 minutes

SHOSTAKOVICH:  
QUARTET NO. 2  
IN A MAJOR,  
OP. 68

Dmitri Shostakovich, the preeminent Soviet composer, is best known for his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, his Fifth and Seventh Symphonies, and his fifteen string quartets, composed between 1938 and 1974. His life and work are forever linked to the Stalinist regime and the reactionary crackdown on musical activity in 1936 and 1948. In 1936, *Lady Macbeth* was denounced in an infamous article titled “Muddle Instead of Music,” and in 1948, Shostakovich was censured for musical “formalism,” an intentionally vague slander. As a result, he lost his professorships at the Moscow and Leningrad conservatories, but his position of prominence in Soviet musical life was never truly threatened.

The cultural climate in the 1930s and 1940s under Stalin was inhospitable at best, deadly at worst. Soviet censors closely scrutinized music with words, which helps explain why Shostakovich turned in 1938 to writing string quartets. But not everything was political. The simple C major idiom of his First String Quartet, completed in 1939, coincided with the birth of Shostakovich's son Maxim and the second birthday of his daughter Galina, which triggered recollections of his golden childhood. “I tried to convey—in the First Quartet—images of childhood, somewhat naïve, bright, springlike moods,” Shostakovich commented.

Achieving childlike simplicity involved considerable paring down. And even then, a darkness lines the brightness and joy that the composer claimed he wanted to express.

In writing the Second String Quartet, Shostakovich collaborated with the Moscow Conservatory Quartet, otherwise known (from 1931) as the Beethoven Quartet, to be sure he captured the best of each instrument. These musicians taught Shostakovich how to compose for strings, and occasionally their ideas informed his creative choices.

The Second String Quartet was composed in September 1944, toward the conclusion of the Soviet phase of the Second World War, at the Union of Soviet Composers retreat outside of the industrial town of Ivanovo, about four hours by train from Moscow. The largest building, where the composers dined, was a former imperial estate. Service buildings on the grounds served as studios. Shostakovich worked in a renovated chicken hut, the nest boxes having been cleared out to make room for an upright piano and desk. A photograph from Ivanovo from 1944 shows the composer and his daughter Galina playing with piglets. His preferred mode of recreation, however, was volleyball. Shostakovich was in top form when he composed the work—on the rebound from a period of creative malaise caused by the unexpected death of his friend, music critic and scholar Ivan Sollertinsky. The composer marveled at his own progress while also fearing that he might be working too fast, sacrificing quality for quantity. His colleagues were also impressed by his pace, especially since he found so much time to socialize.

There are four movements, all of which incorporate both vocal and dance idioms. An earnest, strident Overture in three-part (sonata) form is followed by a Recitative paired with a Romance. The melodic organization of the Overture is mirror-like, the ending an estranged, estranging reflection of the opening. The music of the Recitative ranges in affect from ruminative to mournful and concludes, or fails to conclude, with a series of anxious seventh chords. The Romance, too, is uncertain. Judging from the surviving sketches of the quartet, Shostakovich spent most of his time on the two-part second movement

and its song-like solo passages. Arts critic Wendy Lesser, who wrote a book about Shostakovich's quartets called *Music for Silenced Voices*, proposes that the fickle expressive affect of the second movement captures something of the personality of the friend that Shostakovich had just lost: Sollertinsky. As he composed the quartet he struggled to come to terms with the loss. As Lesser writes, "a noticeable melody, bearing klezmerish strains of wailing or shrieking in the highest notes, yet with an essentially sardonic sensibility, appears in the first violin and stays there."

The third movement, the Waltz, recalls the ghoulish death dances composed by Gustav Mahler, whom Shostakovich greatly admired, and the final movement, a Theme and Variations, takes on the quality of a manic gallop.

#### IN BRIEF

**BORN:** October 10, 1813, Le Roncole, Italy

**DIED:** January 27, 1901, Milan, Italy

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMANCE:**

Juilliard Quartet, November 7, 1956

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 23 minutes

#### VERDI: QUARTET IN E MINOR

Only one piece of chamber music exists by Giuseppe Verdi, the great and celebrated opera composer: a string quartet that he wrote during breaks in the 1872-73 rehearsals for his grand opera *Aida*. He penned the quartet just to amuse himself, he told his friends in Naples, while waiting for the lead soprano, Teresa Stolz, to recover from illness.

His own attitude towards the piece—that it was something of a doodle to pass the time—has resulted in its undue neglect. The Quartet is an extremely erudite score, quoting discretely from some of his operas while also acknowledging the great string quartets of the past. Felix Mendelssohn's music influences the chromatic harmonies of the first movement, for example, and echoes of Haydn are heard in the second. The third movement seems to recall the ballet that Verdi included in his opera, *Macbeth*, but the finale reaches again into the past, referencing one of Beethoven's late quartets in the frantic, intricate fugal writing. Perhaps the most striking feature of the Quartet is the ease with which it unfolds. Never, with the possible exception of Haydn's Opus 71, no. 2, has such learning been worn so lightly.

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## A TRIBUTE TO ANN LEVY



Ann Levy died on February 27, 2019, just two months before her birthday. She would have been 96 on April 28. A vibrant personality, Ann was passionate about the arts and progressive causes, generously giving time, money, and encouragement to countless organizations. Even more importantly, Ann was one of those very engaging, enchanting souls for the people in her life, from family and friends to colleagues. As much as you appreciated her, you always felt that she truly enjoyed being with you. Over the years, everyone who knew her marveled that Ann Levy could be counted on to add a positive and energetic charge – a sparkle – to any encounter. Those connections will be sorely missed.

As one of the early founders of Friends of Chamber Music, Ann served on the board for more than thirty years beginning in 1959. She was a loyal FCM subscriber and donor until her death. With a generous bequest from Ann, as well as donations from the Levy family, the board of Friends of Chamber Music has established The Ann C. Levy Contemporary Chamber Music Fund. The fund will be used to support the performance of contemporary chamber music, which Ann ardently championed throughout her life. Never complacent, Ann believed in the arc of change, in looking forward, whether in the arts, social issues, or politics.

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We are pleased to welcome Simone Dinnerstein (substituting for Piotr Anderszewski), with a program featuring works by Couperin, Glass, Satie, and Schumann.

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