

ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN
IN THE FIELDS
CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

TOMO KELLER, violin
CLIO GOULD, violin
JENNIFER GODSON, violin
MARTIN BURGESS, violin
ROBERT SMISSEN, viola
FIONA BONDS, viola
ALICE NEARY, cello
WILL SCHOFIELD, cello

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH
(1906-1975)

Two Pieces for String Octet, Op. 11
Prelude
Scherzo

ERWIN SCHULHOFF
(1894-1942)

String Sextet
Allegro risoluto
Tranquillo: Andante
Burlesca: Allegro molto con spirito
Molto adagio

FELIX MENDELSSOHN
(1809-1847)

String Octet in E-Flat Major, Op. 20
Allegro moderato con fuoco
Andante
Scherzo. Allegro leggierissimo
Presto

INTERMISSION

The Academy's work in the US is supported by Maria Cardamone and Paul Matthews together with the American Friends of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.



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**TOMO
KELLER,** *violin*

**CLIO
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BONDS,** *viola*

ALICE NEARY, *cello*

**WILL
SCHOFIELD,** *cello*

The Academy Chamber Ensemble was formed in 1967, drawing its membership from the world-renowned chamber orchestra, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, which was itself founded by Sir Neville Marriner in 1958 and is currently led by Music Director Joshua Bell. The Chamber Ensemble was created to perform larger-scale chamber music repertoire with players who customarily worked together, instead of the usual string quartet with additional guests. Drawn from the principal players of the orchestra and directed by Academy Director/Leader Tomo Keller, the Chamber Ensemble performs in multiple configurations, from wind trios to string octets. Its touring commitments are extensive and include regular tours of Europe and North America. Recording contracts with Philips Classics, Hyperion, and Chandos have led to the release of over 30 CDs.

The Academy Chamber Ensemble's October 2024 tour of the United States is supported by Maria Cardamone and Paul Matthews, together with the American Friends of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. The American Friends was founded in 1998 to support the work of the Academy around the world, particularly in the United States. Find out more at www.asmf.org

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists, www.davidroweartists.com. Recordings are available on Chandos, Philips, and Hyperion.

You can also find the Academy on:
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Tomo Keller (violin) was born in Stuttgart in 1974 to German-Japanese parents, both of whom were professional pianists. He started playing the violin at the age of six and at ten years old gave his first performances as a soloist with an orchestra. Tomo studied at Vienna's University for Music and Performing Arts and New York's Juilliard School. Numerous prizes and awards followed, and he has since performed at major concert halls all around the world, including as a soloist with the Beethovenhalle Orchestra Bonn, St Petersburg Camerata, London Symphony Orchestra, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Tomo Keller is a much sought-after orchestral leader, having led the Essen Philharmonic Orchestra (1999–2007), the London Symphony Orchestra (Assistant Leader 2009–2015), the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra (2014–present), and more than 20 orchestras as guest leader. Tomo was appointed Leader of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in December 2015. Tomo plays a violin by Andrea Guarneri, Cremona 1667, made available to him by the Swedish Järnäker Foundation.

Clio Gould (violin) enjoys variety in her career as a violinist and performs as soloist, chamber musician, director, and concertmaster internationally and at home in the UK. She has held major and longstanding positions as Concertmaster of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Violin of the London Sinfonietta, and Artistic Director of Scottish Ensemble, directing from the violin. Clio has appeared as concerto soloist with most of the UK's major orchestras covering a wide-ranging repertoire. Known as one of Britain's foremost interpreters of contemporary violin music, she has been given the opportunity to work with many of today's leading composers. Highlights include performances at the Royal Festival Hall of Pierre Boulez's epic work for solo violin and live electronics, *Anthèmes 2*. She also worked closely with Oliver Knussen, giving many performances of the Knussen Violin Concerto in Sweden, Japan, Finland, and Hungary, conducted by the composer. She gave the UK premiere of this work at the Aldeburgh Festival with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Clio regularly contributes to film and TV soundtracks at Abbey Road Studios and Air Lyndhurst Studios, where she frequently leads studio orchestras. Clio teaches at the Royal Academy of Music and directs the Sainsbury Royal Academy Soloists. She has been awarded Honorary Membership of the Academy.

Jennifer Godson (violin) was awarded the Dove Scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music, an honor which had also been given many years previously to her aunt, Daphne Godson. While at the Academy she joined the Fairfield String Quartet, with whom she recorded and toured extensively throughout Britain and abroad. She joined the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in 1985 and the orchestra gradually became the main focus of her musical life. She began playing in the Academy Chamber Ensemble in 2006. An interest in period performance led to her becoming a founding member of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's *Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique* and also appearing as guest leader with the *Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment*, with whom she played regularly for many years.

Martin Burgess (violin) began playing with the Academy in 1992, taking up the position of Principal Second Violin in 1998. Having studied with Emanuel Hurwitz and the Amadeus Quartet, he brought with him a love of chamber music. He leads the Grammy-nominated Emperor Quartet, winners of the prestigious Evian International String Quartet Competition. The Quartet has released critically acclaimed CDs of music by Britten, Walton, Martinů, and James MacMillan. They have also performed on several film soundtracks, notably *There Will Be Blood* and *Norwegian Wood* (both written by Jonny Greenwood from Radiohead). Martin enjoys playing a wide variety of music away from both these ensembles, a highlight including touring the world with Peter Gabriel.

Robert Smissen (viola) won a scholarship to Chetham's School of Music and went on to study at the Guildhall School of Music, from which he graduated with distinction. After playing with the European Community Youth Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, he took the position of Principal Viola with the Northern Sinfonia before joining the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, with whom he has been Principal Viola for over 25 years. He often performs as a soloist with the orchestra. As a member of the ASMF Chamber Ensemble and the Pro Arte Piano Quartet, he has performed, broadcast, and recorded all over the world.

Fiona Bonds (viola) is Associate Principal Viola of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and enjoys a busy and diverse career outside the orchestra. She has recently been appointed Principal Viola of the City of London Sinfonia and is a founding member of the Grammy-nominated Emperor String Quartet, who have recently released a critically acclaimed disc of Benjamin Britten's quartets.

Alice Neary (cello) enjoys a varied performing career as a chamber musician and principal cellist of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Alice was a member of the Gould Piano Trio from 2001 to 2018, and career highlights include performing the complete piano trios of Beethoven, Schubert, and Dvořák at the Wigmore Hall, the commissioning of new works from Sir James MacMillan and Mark Simpson, regular tours, and over 25 CD releases. Alice studied with Ralph Kirshbaum at the Royal Northern College of Music and, as a Fulbright scholar, with Timothy Eddy at Stonybrook, USA. As winner of the 1998 Pierre Fournier Award, Alice made her début at the Wigmore Hall in 1999.

Will Schofield (cello) was born in London to Australian and Italian parents. He studied at Edinburgh University and with Radu Aldulescu at the Menuhin Academy in Gstaad, Switzerland. Cellist with the Grammy-nominated Emperor String Quartet since the group was formed in 1992, he started playing with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in 1993 and shortly afterward with the City of London Sinfonia, where he is now Principal Cello.

UPCOMING CONCERTS

DOVER QUARTET

SUN, NOV 17, 2024 | 4:00 PM

GATES CONCERT HALL

Named one of the greatest string quartets of the last 100 years by *BBC Music Magazine*, the Quartet's honors include the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award, and Lincoln Center's Hunt Family Award. The program includes a new work by Jerod Impichchaachaaha'Tate, *Woodland Songs*, commissioned by Friends of Chamber Music.



Photo: Roy Cox

AWADAGIN PRATT, PIANO

WED, DEC 4, 2024 | 7:30 PM

GATES CONCERT HALL

Since launching onto the international stage after winning the prestigious Naumburg International Piano Competition in 1992 and receiving a 1994 Avery Fisher Career Grant, Awadagin Pratt is hailed as "one of the great and distinctive American pianists and conductors of our time" (WGBH). His wide-ranging program includes Fred Hersch's *Nocturne for Left Hand Alone* and Peteris Vasks's *Castillo Interior*, as well as works from Couperin, Rachmaninoff, and Chopin.



Tickets are \$50 each; \$15 for patrons under 30; and \$5 for students (with ID)

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NOTES

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH: TWO PIECES FOR STRING OCTET, OP. 11

IN BRIEF

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

DIED: August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia

DEDICATION: In memory of Volodya Kurchavov

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: November 5, 2013, Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble

DURATION: 12 minutes

This rarely performed pair of pieces were published in 1927 on the heels of Shostakovich's First Symphony, Op. 10. Both are student works that predate their publication date by several years. Still enrolled at Petrograd Conservatory, Shostakovich worked on both the symphony and these two pieces Prelude and Scherzo, in 1924 and 1925. He was not yet 20. The symphony, which has been widely recorded and has entered the standard repertory, is generally considered to be Shostakovich's coming-of-age as a composer. He fulfilled the promise of that work, producing 14 more symphonies between 1927 and 1971, an output that earned him a reputation as the most important symphonist of the twentieth century.

Part of what makes the lesser-known Prelude and Scherzo so fascinating is that they are exactly contemporary with the First Symphony. And Shostakovich went on to make a rich contribution in the field of chamber music as well. Musicians often prefer his chamber compositions, finding them a more soulful window into the composer's heart than the orchestral works. The unusual scoring for string octet suggests that Shostakovich was experimenting with a larger string ensemble, trying out textures and ideas he would later employ in works for chamber orchestra.

The Prelude, marked *Adagio*, is melancholy and steeped in gloom. One wonders what sorrows and hardships 18-year-old Shostakovich must have already encountered to have written such dark and expressive music. A skittery second section provides contrast but does not obliterate the music's dark cast. Shostakovich sketched a

fugue to go with this Prelude and Scherzo, which he never completed. Sections of the Prelude show his keen interest in imitative counterpoint. There is a nervous, rhapsodic quality to the music, with passionate recitatives for the first violin.

Urgency and fierce dissonance open the Scherzo, interrupted by a brief accompanied recitative for cello. Shostakovich resumes his frenetic pace, eliciting a full texture from the string ensemble that stretches the resources of the octet to resemble those of a string orchestra. He punctuates the movement's relentless momentum with wild, expressionist gestures. The composer's early biographer, Ivan Martynov, dismissed the Prelude and Scherzo as "a memento of adolescent enthusiasms, which the composer has since learnt to control." In fact, the control is quite stunning from a young and relatively inexperienced composer.

IN BRIEF

BORN: June 8, 1894, Prague, Czechia

DIED: August 18, 1942, Wülzburg, Germany

FIRST PERFORMANCE: July 19, 1924, Donaueschingen, Germany; Zika Quartet with Paul and Rudolf Hindemith

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 21 minutes

ERWIN SCHULHOFF: STRING SEXTET

Czech-born Erwin Schulhoff was a protégé of Antonín Dvořák and a student of Max Reger and Claude Debussy. Although his name and music are far less familiar than those of the other composers on this evening's program, Schulhoff's music was widely performed throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. In recent years, music by composers who perished in the Holocaust has garnered considerable attention. Schulhoff is arguably the most important of these composers.

When World War I erupted in 1914, Schulhoff was conscripted into the Austrian army and served for four

years. The experience disillusioned him, shifting his political sympathies to socialism (he later joined the Communist Party). Whereas his early compositions adopted a post-Romantic idiom, he now embraced atonality, an Expressionist aesthetic, and the Second Viennese School. Such was his focus when he began work on the String Sextet in 1920.

Two months after the Armistice that ended the war, Schulhoff had moved to Dresden to live with his sister. Over the next four years in Germany, he encountered Dadaism and jazz, both of which would influence his later music. After completing the Sextet's first movement, the *Allegro risoluto*, in April 1920, he set it aside in favor of other projects.

Returning to Prague in 1923, Schulhoff became fascinated by Leoš Janáček's music and philosophy. His study of Janáček awakened an interest in Slavonic folk song and, eventually, neoclassicism. When he returned to the Sextet, his entire approach to composition had changed. One would expect a jarring stylistic shift between the opening *Allegro risoluto* and the balance of the work. However, Schulhoff is skillful in maintaining continuity.

The Sextet explodes in expressionist fury at the outset. Structurally, the *Allegro risoluto* is in ternary (or A-B-A) form, with an uneasy central interlude that barely relieves the tension. Jagged edges and violent gestures in the opening and closing sections make the biggest impression. At the close, subtle dissonance disturbs the clarity of open fifths.

By starting the second movement on the same pitches on which the *Allegro risoluto* ends, Schulhoff gives the listener a sense of natural outgrowth. *Tranquillo* is a spooky mood piece that shows how well he knew how to exploit the special effects possible on string instruments. His return to tonality is evident; repeating accompaniment patterns, pedal points, and sighing figures contribute to the hypnotic effect.

Burlesca, which functions as a scherzo, shows the most overt Slavic elements in the Sextet. The irregular meter (5/8) and occasionally percussive string techniques are reminiscent of Bartók, while the sardonic character calls Prokofiev to mind. Pedal points on C link it to the two preceding movements.

An elegiac cello line introduces the mournful *Molto adagio*, growing from a three-note motive from the first movement; the solo cello recurs periodically throughout the finale. An oscillating pedal point on the low C-to-G open fifth helps thread Schulhoff's Sextet together with admirable cohesion.

When the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939, Schulhoff had no way to support himself. His Jewish heritage and Communist affiliation were more than enough to mandate his arrest in 1941. He died the following year in the German concentration camp at Wülzburg, Bavaria, probably of tuberculosis. The finale to his Sextet seems to be a premonition of his fate.

IN BRIEF

BORN: February 3, 1809, Hamburg, Germany

DIED: November 4, 1847, Leipzig, Germany

FIRST PERFORMANCE: January 30, 1836, Leipzig, Germany

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: November 5, 2013, Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble

DURATION: 32 minutes

FELIX MENDELSSOHN:
STRING OCTET IN
E-FLAT MAJOR,
OP. 20

Once or twice in an artistic career, a masterpiece of such overpowering splendor, skill and charm bursts forth that we must beg the dictionary for words to praise it. Mendelssohn hit this jackpot several times while he was still a teenager. The Octet for Strings is the crown jewel of those magically productive years. Here is a work that one takes to heart on first hearing, delighting in its soaring melodies, its emotional immediacy, its humor, its quasi-orchestral sound flirting with the most delicate of chamber music textures. At the same time, this is a composition

that one looks forward to hearing again and again, because its fruits yield themselves more generously on repeated hearings. Of course, for most of us, that means settling into the comfortable chair in the living room and listening to a favorite recording—live performances of the Octet are comparatively rare. The economics and logistics of assembling eight excellent and compatible string players for rehearsals and performances are formidable. Thus, we are privileged to have this evening's performance.

Felix Mendelssohn was just 16 when he wrote this work. Such mastery from one so young is exhilarating. He completed the Octet on October 15, 1825, in Berlin, on the heels of a trip to Paris with his father. (It is only fair to note that scholars now know that Mendelssohn revised and tightened the work substantially between its initial completion and eventual publication in 1833.) He wrote it for, and dedicated it to, Eduard Rietz (1802-1832), a violinist and conductor with whom Mendelssohn had both studied and played quartets since 1820. Rietz was later the concertmaster for Mendelssohn's historic revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in 1825, and his superior musicianship and string technique are thought to be reflected in the brilliant first violin part of the Octet.

The only significant precedent for eight string instruments as a chamber ensemble is Louis Spohr's Double Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, Opus 65, which dates from 1823. (Spohr's three subsequent double quartets all postdate Mendelssohn's Octet.) Spohr's concept of the eight strings was antiphonal, that is, two string quartets side by side, conversing with each other as units of four. Mendelssohn's approach to the texture is more symphonic. Spohr himself described his younger colleague's Octet as "an entirely different art form, in which the two quartets do not vie and alternate with one another in the manner of a double choir, but all eight instruments work together."

From the exuberant opening measures, one might say that the eight players soar together, for the first theme

takes flight with energy and upward impetus. A series of arpeggios moves the music forward with urgency and commitment, propelled by humming tremolando and syncopations in the inner voices. The second theme, as closely knit and narrow in its range as the first was far-flung, displays Mendelssohn's superb attention to contrapuntal detail. Its deceptive simplicity lends itself to subtle variation at each restatement, and the availability of eight voices enables Mendelssohn to take maximum advantage of the imitative possibilities. The movement is cast in one of the sonata forms so characteristic of his early chamber music, particularly in its truncated recapitulation and extended coda (sonata forms, in various guises, prevail in all four of the Octet's movements). The first movement's length—about 14 minutes—supports its sense of symphonic expanse.

The slow movement is Mozartean in its harmonic nuance. Here Mendelssohn displays an emotional depth that did not frequently recur in his mature instrumental slow movements. This sonata structure is unusual in that the main theme does not recur in the recapitulation. Mendelssohn delays its restatement until the coda. What follows is possibly the greatest scherzo in all chamber music, and certainly Mendelssohn's finest essay in a genre at which he excelled. *Allegro leggierrissimo* is the tempo indication: fast and as lightly as possible. This music is a model of gossamer delicacy. It's a wonder that eight instruments sounding together can sound so slight and ethereal.

By contrast, the galumphing cello line that starts the finale is intentionally gauche. As John Horton has observed:

Not even the best cellists can make this sound dignified, and unless one subscribes to the view that Mendelssohn has for once miscalculated an instrumental effect the only conclusion must be that the whole of this passage is humorous in intention. A possibility is that [his] thoughts were still running on ... Shakespeare's fantasy of the overlapping supernatural and mortal worlds. If the scherzo mirrors the court of Oberon and Titania, why should

not the following movement be in some sense an expression of the other side of the comedy?

Indeed, Mendelssohn not only demonstrates the same type of bumpkin humor as his donkey brays in the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but also introduces a brisk fugal line that allows him to exercise his contrapuntal wizardry again. In complexity and ambition, this finale approaches that of Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony. The difference is that Mendelssohn incorporates subtle references to the earlier movements, binding the Octet together as a cyclic composition. The entire work is a delight, filled with spontaneity and substance, entertaining and satisfying the listener on every joyous step of the journey.

Program notes by Laurie Shulman ©2024

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We are thrilled to announce the launch of the Friends of Chamber Music Commissioning Initiative, a focused expansion of our long-standing commitment to supporting the creation of new works for chamber ensembles.

In the 2024-25 season, three concerts will spotlight works commissioned by Friends of Chamber Music in collaboration with prestigious arts organizations nationwide, including the 92nd Street Y, Detroit Chamber Music, the Tanglewood Learning Institute, and Washington Performing Arts, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts. New commissions are:

African Queens, with acclaimed American soprano Karen Slack, presenting works by seven emerging composers from underrepresented communities.

Jerod Impichchaaha' Tate, celebrated composer and citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, whose new string quartet will be performed by the renowned Dover String Quartet on November 17.

Stephen Banks, an award-winning classical saxophonist, who has composed a piece for string quartet and saxophone to be performed with the Miró Quartet on May 14.

As we plan for future seasons, we are seeking additional founding donors and supporters to help grow the Commissioning Initiative fund. Your support will allow us to:

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Thu, Feb 6, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Benjamin Beilman, violin
Steven Osborne, piano
Thu, Mar 6, 2025 | 7:30 pm

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Basil Vendryes, viola
Wed, Apr 9, 2025 | 7:30 pm

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Steven Banks, saxophone
Wed, May 14, 2025 | 7:30 pm

SUNDAY SERIES

Dover Quartet
Sun, Nov 17, 2024 | 4:00 pm

Tony Siqi Yun, piano
Sun, Jan 5, 2025 | 4:00 pm

COMMUNITY EVENTS

FREE FAMILY EVENT
Sat, Nov 9, 2024 | 11:30 am
Color, Shape, Sound with the
Playground Ensemble
Stanley Marketplace
2501 N. Dallas, St., Aurora

MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES
Sun, Dec 8, 2024 | 12:00 & 1:00 pm
(identical concerts)
Gwenyth Aggeler, classical guitar
Clyfford Still Museum
1250 Bannock Street, Denver

SPECIAL THANKS

**SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
FACILITIES DISTRICT (TIER III)**
for supporting FCM's 2024-25 season

**COLORADO PUBLIC RADIO
(KVOD 88.1 FM)**
for broadcasting FCM concerts on its
"Colorado Spotlight" programs

BONFILS-STANTON FOUNDATION
for sponsorship of FCM's audience
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