

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC  
THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

*present the*

EMERSON STRING QUARTET

EUGENE DRUCKER, VIOLIN  
(1st in Aitken & Schubert)

PHILIP SETZER, VIOLIN  
(1st in Beethoven & Barber)

LAWRENCE DUTTON, VIOLA

DAVID FINCKEL, CELLO

MONDAY

APRIL 28, 2003 8:00 P.M.

STUDE CONCERT HALL  
ALICE PRATT BROWN HALL  
RICE UNIVERSITY

THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED IN PART BY THE CITY OF HOUSTON  
AND THE TEXAS COMMISSION ON THE ARTS  
THROUGH THE CULTURAL ARTS COUNCIL OF HOUSTON/HARRIS COUNTY.

# EMERSON STRING QUARTET

— PROGRAM —

LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

*Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1 (1798)*

Allegro con brio

Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Allegro

HUGH AITKEN (b.1924)

*Laura Goes to India (1998)*

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)

*Adagio for String Quartet, Op. 11 (1936)*

— INTERMISSION —

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

*Quartet in D Minor, D. 810,  
"Death and the Maiden" (1824)*

Allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Presto

*The Emerson String Quartet appears*

*by arrangement with IMG Artists*

*and records exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon.*

[www.emersonquartet.com](http://www.emersonquartet.com)



LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

*Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1 (1798)*

Beethoven wrote the Opus 18 *Quartets* during his first years in Vienna. He had arrived from Germany in 1792 by permission of the Elector of Bonn, shortly before his twenty-second birthday, in high spirits and carrying with him introductions to some of the most prominent members of music-loving Viennese nobility, who welcomed him into their substantial musical lives. At the end of his first four years in Vienna he had established himself as a pianist of major importance and a composer of the utmost promise; he had published, among other things, a set of three *Piano Trios*, Op. 1, three *Trios for Strings*, Op. 9, as well as the three Op. 10 *Piano Sonatas* – small sets by the standard of the day, but already imprinted with his formidable inventive and dramatic genius, and well received by his publishers and the public. In the meantime, his teacher, Franz Josef Haydn, finding himself newly inspired by Mozart's last quartets, had returned from England to take up residence in Vienna, setting himself to write his final quartets in the course of the last decade of the eighteenth century (Opp. 71 & 74, 76 and 77). The importance of making one's mark in this medium was not lost on Beethoven. His sketch-books show that from 1794 until 1799, the year in which most of the writing was done, he was working with great care on this first set of quartets. During this time he was a regular at the Friday gatherings held at Prince Lichnowsky's home where the Schuppanzigh Quartet played Mozart, Haydn and others now perhaps unjustly neglected (Beethoven claimed to be particularly fond of Cherubini!). It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Beethoven's association with this famed quartet, which ultimately gave him valuable advice about the presentation of these quartets, premiered the first performances, and remained faithful, if occasionally exasperated, presenters of his music for the duration of his life. These Opus 18 *Quartets* are dedicated to another of his important patrons, Prince Lobkowitz.

The Op. 18, No. 1 in F Major, was in fact the second to be written (the first being No. 3). It is a technically challenging work. Beethoven sent it to his close friend, theology student and violinist Karl Amenda, warning him a year later not to show it to anyone because he had greatly changed it, "having just learned to write quartets properly, as you will see when I send it to you." It is from a written account by this friend of a conversation he had had with Beethoven that we know Beethoven had in mind the tomb scene from *Romeo and Juliette* when he wrote the heart-wrenching second movement (the *Adagio* marked initially "Les derniers soupirs" in a preliminary sketch).

The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, begins with a terse unison motto. The one-bar germ cell on which it is based (Beethoven having learned much from Haydn) is repeated 104 times during the course of the movement! A more lyrical two-note, syncopated theme is followed by a third motif which combines the main components of the two previous themes. The exposition closes with the unison scales of the earlier bridge passage. Beethoven deals



dramatically with these thematic ideas in the terse development section before melting with masterful economy back into the recapitulation. The second movement alluded to above, marked *Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato*, is one of Beethoven's great early tragic statements. It begins with a long, melodious outpouring in 9/8 meter played by the violin to an accompaniment of pulsating lower strings. The interruption of the lilting rhythm in a few climactic places gives the effect of a skipped heartbeat, while a slashing *forte* periodically intrudes on the lamentations, with which the movement ultimately winds down. The *Scherzo: Allegro molto* which follows, is rollicking throughout. Although technically possessed of a trio section, one can see that already Beethoven has abandoned the traditional minuet-trio of Mozart and Haydn: no hint of a courtly dance here! The final *Allegro* is a scintillating work in sonata-rondo form, based on a plummeting scale-like motif bounced from instrument to instrument in a witty game of musical volleyball. Beethoven took full advantage of the good nature and superb technique of the Schuppanzigh Quartet, for here the lower strings are expected to be fully as versatile as the violins. A feast of thematic material moves along rapidly and the movement ends in a coda-like distillation of the early descending motif played by the middle voices while the cello holds the harmonic line below, as the first violin expands on an exuberant, rising two-note phrase also extracted from the opening theme.

*Program notes* © by Nora Avins Klein, including observations of Harris Goldsmith, with his gracious permission, September, 1996.

HUGH AITKEN (b.1924)

### *Laura Goes to India (1998)*

As the deadline approached for me to submit program notes for this piece, I had to face the fact that I would really prefer not to write any at all.

If the heard piece doesn't tell the listeners all that they need to know, it seemed to me, this must be the fault of the music. And have we not all labored through dense paragraphs which might be appropriate in a text on musical analysis but from which the gentle music-lover should be spared? Or pointless descriptions like, "The clarinets return with the earlier-heard trumpet theme, this time discreetly accompanied by intricate rhythmic figures on the bongos and tuba." (Although, it should be acknowledged, such prose can serve a legitimate purpose; one often sees bored audience members reading these notes to pass the time as an utterly unengaging piece is being played). I will only add that I wanted to write a piece that would be challenging for this superb group of players and that would be attractive enough to keep the audience from reading these notes during the performance.

There are some background facts concerning the piece that may interest you. I had taught a course in the music of India for some years, falling in



love with that wonderful tradition, or group of traditions. My wife and I traveled there twice, including several days at the week-long festival of Thyagaraja's music in the south of the country. I became fascinated by some of the rhythms and rhythmic patterns improvised by players of the mrdangam, a barrel-shaped drum that rests on its side in front of the player. A friend, David Nelson, had studied this drum in India and did his Ph.D. dissertation on its music (*Mrdangam Mind*, Wesleyan, 1990). The patterns in one of the solos he transcribed and analyzed so obsessed me that I have used them in five pieces, most recently in this quartet. And, those of you who can recall the popular tunes of the fifties will know my wife's name after you have heard the piece.

Hugh Aitken, born in New York City, celebrates his 79th birthday this year. In 1943, after having studied chemistry for two years at New York University, he volunteered for the Army Air Corps, serving as a navigator on B-17s flying out of Italy. After the war he entered The Juilliard School, studying composition with Bernard Wagenaar, Vincent Persichetti and Robert Ward. He retired two years ago from the faculty at William Paterson University in New Jersey. Before that he had taught for twenty years at Juilliard. Aitken has composed over eighty works. They include two operas, a large-scale oratorio, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, three violin concertos, ten solo cantatas, and choral and chamber music. His most recent premieres were his *Symphony*, written for Gerard Schwarz and The Seattle Symphony, and a *Duo* for Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax. Eleven works are available on CDs from Artek, New World and CRI. Greenwood Press has published his book, *The Piece as a Whole*, which examines the interpenetration of the theoretical and the expressive aspects of music.

*Program notes by Hugh Aitken.*

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)

### *Adagio for String Quartet, Op. 11 (1936)*

Samuel Barber's *String Quartet*, Opus 11, was composed in 1936. Its second movement is the famous *Adagio for Strings*, which is more familiar as a separate piece for string orchestra than as part of the quartet. The first movement is in B minor, but the second is in the much darker key of B-flat minor. It is a beautiful reminiscence of sixteenth-century polyphony; every instrument gets a chance to sing the brooding, melismatic subject. But this is not a pedantic imitation of an older style. It is intensely personal, and as the music progresses, the harmonic coloring becomes increasingly romantic. The pathos builds to a tragic climax, after which the theme is stated once more, resignedly, before it subsides to a final *pianissimo*, the dynamic that prevailed at the beginning of the movement. Thus the *Adagio* is in arch form, which, in fact is paralleled by the cyclical structure of the entire quartet.

*Program notes by Eugene Drucker.*

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

*Quartet in D Minor, D. 810,  
"Death and the Maiden" (1824)*

Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" opens with a terse descending triplet figure, hammered into the listener's consciousness by two *fortissimo* statements followed by a shuddering, groping *pianissimo* in the first violin. The triplet figure is so prevalent throughout the first movement, so obsessively reiterated with such stark contrasts of dynamics and mood that it takes on the weight and portent of a fate motive. Schubert the long-lined melodist, evident in the lyrical second theme, is subordinated here to a Beethovenian determination to extract every ounce of expressive potential from the ubiquitous triplet motive.

The second movement is a set of variations on a somber chorale, taken from a song written several years earlier about a chilling confrontation between a young girl and an allegorical death figure. The G Minor chorale and all the variations but one end in G Major, signifying the rest, the relief from life's woes and travails that Death offers the Maiden. The quiet but powerful pull toward G Major, the seductive, paradoxical allure of Death as antidote to turbulence and terror is expanded, amplified at the end of the movement; here, even the opening measures of the chorale, not just the cadence, are heard in the major mode.

The angular, tightly coiled *Scherzo* catapults us back to D Minor and the world of conflict; the tense atmosphere is only momentarily relieved by a sweet, tranquil trio section in D Major, whose long melodic lines have a lilt-ing, waltz-like underpinning.

The finale is a *tarantella*, a dance of death in which the first movement's triplet motive reappears first as part of the second theme, then throughout a transitional passage and finally as the essential theme played by the first violin over the *tarantella* as accompanist. The headlong rush of this movement towards the final *prestissimo* builds an electrifying conclusion to the whole work, whose visceral impact is heightened by motivic coherence and compelling structural unity.

*Program notes by Eugene Drucker/Emerson String Quartet.*

## EMERSON STRING QUARTET

Acclaimed for its insightful performances, brilliant artistry and technical mastery, the Emerson String Quartet is one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles and has amassed an impressive list of achievements: a brilliant series of recordings exclusively documented by Universal Classics/Deutsche Grammophon since 1987, six Grammy awards including two unprecedented honors for "Best Classical Album," and performances of the complete cycles of the Bartók, Beethoven and Shostakovich string quartets in the major con-



cert halls of the world. Today, the ensemble is lauded globally as a string quartet that approaches both classical and contemporary repertoire with equal mastery and enthusiasm.

The 2002-2003 season illustrates the Quartet's penchant for innovative programming and commitment to teaching with the performance of a pair of concerts at Carnegie Hall exploring relationships between instrumental music and narrative entitled *Text/Subtext*, joined by baritone Thomas Hampson and soprano Barbara Bonney. Repertoire for these concerts features a world premiere by Andre Prévin. The Quartet will also give the premiere of a Joan Tower commission as part of the Bard College Virtuosi International String Quartet Festival in the spring of 2003. The Quartet's busy touring schedule across much of North America includes Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Pittsburgh. In Europe, the group performs in such major cities as Vienna, Paris, Amsterdam, Seville and London. For the twenty-fourth consecutive season, the Emerson performs at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The Quartet's relationship with Universal Classics/Deutsche Grammophon continues with a release this fall of *The Emerson Encores* – a compilation of the Quartet's favorite encore works.

In the fall of 2002 the Emerson joined Stony Brook University as Quartet-in-Residence, coaching chamber music, giving master classes and providing instrumental instruction. They also perform several concerts during the year at Stony Brook's Staller Center for the Arts. During the 2001-2002 season the Emerson String Quartet celebrated its 25th anniversary, and the occasion was marked by many extraordinary projects. *The Noise of Time*, a theatrical presentation directed by Simon McBurney featuring the Quartet and Complicité, explored the haunted life of Dmitri Shostakovich and his fifteenth string quartet. Blending film, choreography, taped readings and live music, the multimedia work captured the essence of this composer and his music. Performances of this work took place in major cities of North America and Europe. The Quartet gave the U.S. premiere performances of Wolfgang Rihm's *Dithyrambe for Quartet and Orchestra* with Christoph von Dohnányi and the Cleveland Orchestra in Severance Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall and New York's Carnegie Hall. The Quartet also compiled a commemorative book entitled *Converging Lines*, published in celebration of the anniversary season. Written in the members' own words, the book contains never-before-published text, graphics, and photos from the Quartet's private archives.

In the spring of 2004 the Quartet will continue its unique collaboration with Brian Greene, author of *The Elegant Universe*. Dr. Greene and the ensemble demonstrate the principles of String Theory through lecture, video presentation and performances of important musical works that illustrate or coincide with major developments in the history of physics.

Dedicated to the performance of the classical repertoire, the Emerson String Quartet also has a strong commitment to the commissioning and performance of twentieth-century music. Important commissions and premieres



include compositions by Ellen Taaffe Zwillich (1998), Edgar Meyer (1995), Ned Rorem (1995), Paul Epstein (1994), Wolfgang Rihm (1993) and many others.

Formed in the bicentennial year of the United States, the Emerson String Quartet took its name from the great American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. Violinists Eugene Drucker and Philip Setzer alternate in the first chair position. In 1995 each member of the quartet was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by Middlebury College in Vermont. They have also received a Smithsonian Award from the Smithsonian Institution. The Quartet is based in New York City.

Violinist **EUGENE DRUCKER**, a founding member of the Emerson String Quartet, is also an active soloist. He has appeared with the major orchestras of North America and Europe. A graduate of Columbia University and the Juilliard School, where he studied with Oscar Shumsky, Mr. Drucker was concertmaster of the Juilliard Orchestra, with which he appeared as soloist several times. He made his New York debut as a Concert Artists Guild winner in the fall of 1976, after having won prizes at the Montreal Competition and the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels. Mr. Drucker has recorded the complete unaccompanied works of Bach, recently reissued by Parnassus Records, and the complete sonatas and duos of Bartók for Biddulph Recordings.

Mr. Drucker's violin is an Antonius Stradivarius (Cremona, 1686).

Violinist **PHILIP SETZER** began studying violin at the age of five with his parents, both violinists in the Cleveland Orchestra. At the Juilliard School he studied with Oscar Shumsky. In 1967, Mr. Setzer won second prize at the Meriwether Post Competition in Washington, DC, and in 1976 received a Bronze Medal at the Queen Elisabeth International Competition in Brussels. He has appeared with many orchestras in North America and Europe. Additionally, Mr. Setzer has participated in the Marlboro Music Festival and has been a regular faculty member of the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Workshops at Carnegie Hall and the Jerusalem Music Center. He also teaches as Visiting Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at SUNY Stony Brook and has given master classes at schools around the world. In April of 1989, Mr. Setzer premiered Paul Epstein's *Matinee Concerto*. This piece was dedicated to and written for Mr. Setzer.

Mr. Setzer's violin is a Samuel Zygmuntowicz (Brooklyn, 1999).

**LAWRENCE DUTTON** has collaborated with many of the world's great performing artists, including Isaac Stern, Mstislav Rostropovich, Oscar Shumsky, Menahem Pressler, Lynn Harrell, Joseph Kalichstein and Misha Dichter among others. He has also performed as guest artist with numerous chamber music ensembles such as the Juilliard and Guarneri Quartets, the Beaux Arts Trio and the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. Mr. Dutton has appeared as soloist with many American and European orchestras including those of Germany, Belgium, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. He has also appeared as guest artist at the music festivals of Aspen, Santa Fe, Ravinia and Chamber Music Northwest,



and has collaborated with the late Isaac Stern in the International Chamber Music Encounters both at Carnegie Hall and in Jerusalem.

Mr. Dutton's viola is a P.G. Mantegazza (Milan, 1796).

Cellist DAVID FINCKEL's recent solo engagements have taken him to countries around the world and in the United States to distinguished series in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other major cities. Last summer he performed complete Beethoven sonata cycles with pianist Wu Han at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and Chamber Music Northwest. In May 2000 Finckel and Wu Han made their third recital appearance at London's Wigmore Hall. This season, Finckel records John Harbison's *Cello Concerto* and performs new works composed for him by Bruce Adolphe and Augusta Read Thomas. Finckel is a cofounder of ArtistLed, the first musician-directed and Internet-based classical recording company. Mr. Finckel is a regular member of the faculty of the Isaac Stern Chamber Music workshops at Carnegie Hall and the Jerusalem Music Center. This summer he will give masterclasses at the Aspen Music School.

Mr. Finckel's cello is a Samuel Zygmuntowicz (Brooklyn, 1993).

[www.emersonquartet.com](http://www.emersonquartet.com)

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