

Hopkins Center for the Arts

at Dartmouth

presents

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

Tuesday, October 8, 8 pm

Rollins Chapel • Dartmouth College • 2024

Funded in part by the Aires Family Fund for the Performing Arts and the Marion and Frederick B. Whittemore 1953 Distinguished Artists Series.

Program

Approximate duration: 75 minutes

There will be no intermission, but there will be a 5 minute pause after the first two pieces.

Two pieces for string octet, Op. 11 (1924–5)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

Prelude

Scherzo

Sextet for two violins, two violas and two cellos (1920/4)

Erwin Schulhoff (1894–1942)

Allegro risoluto

Tranquillo: Andante

Burlesca: Allegro molto con spirito

Molto adagio

Octet in E-flat major, Op. 20 (1825)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Allegro moderato ma con fuoco

Andante

Scherzo. Allegro leggierissimo

Presto

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.

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

Program Notes

Dmitri Shostakovich

Two pieces for string octet, Op. 11 (1924–5)

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, September 12/25, 1906; died in Moscow, August 9, 1975

At the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917, St. Petersburg was a city in decline. By the end of the Revolution and the ensuing civil war, 10 million had died in the country. Millions more were to die from

famine. Against this bleak background, the teenaged Shostakovich, already diagnosed with tuberculosis, created a big splash with his graduation symphony. The brilliant First Symphony catapulted him to international fame and retains its freshness to this day.

At this time, Shostakovich also began what he first envisaged as a Prelude and Fugue for string octet. The Prelude was completed by December 1924. Six months

later the Fugue had turned into a Scherzo and he now viewed these two movements as part of a projected five-movement suite, which he never completed. The Two Pieces, Op. 11, are at once experimental and precociously crafted, as though the young Shostakovich had set himself the challenge of reconciling opposites—of writing a scherzo within an elegy in the first movement and an elegy within a scherzo in the second. The Prelude is written in memory of a young friend, the poet Volodya Kurchavov, whose death occurred while Shostakovich was composing. Its elegiac opening chords, together with the interval of a dying fifth and its downward spiraling main theme, are the building blocks of both movements and give the two pieces some unity. Both movements include tautly written contrapuntal passages. In the rather more edgy Scherzo—“the very best thing I have written,” Shostakovich said at the time—they build to searing intensity.

Erwin Schulhoff

Sextet for two violins, two violas and two cellos (1920/4)

Born in Prague, Bohemia, June 8, 1894; died Würzburg, Germany, August 18, 1942

During his life, Czech composer Erwin Schulhoff was a victim of the troubled times in which he lived. After death, he then became a victim of history. In the West, the embattled Czech-Jewish composer's neglect after the second world war largely resulted from a decision he took to follow communist ideology. (He even set the Communist manifesto as a cantata). In the East, Schulhoff was also viewed suspiciously. This time, however, it was as a Western composer with modernist leanings. It was only towards the end of the last century that concerts began to include the music of a composer caught in the middle, one of the most gifted of a lost generation of composers to die in wartime imprisonment (like Schulhoff) or in the concentration camps.

In the 1920s, when he composed the String Sextet, Schulhoff was becoming known as a prominent pianist and composer, appearing regularly at international

contemporary music festivals. His interests tended towards modernism, often combining Schoenberg's free atonality with the strong dance rhythms of folk music. As a pianist, he championed the quarter-tone music of his fellow-countryman Alois Hába. He soaked up the neo-classicism of Stravinsky. He followed developments in Paris and was an enthusiast of the music of Milhaud and other members of *Les Six*. He also played in nightclubs and drew inspiration from the then new and exciting phenomenon of jazz and ragtime, integrating them into his music as successfully as any composer of the time. Like his almost exact Czech contemporary Bohuslav Martinů, Schulhoff was something of an outsider.

Dedicated to French composer Francis Poulenc, the Sextet for two violins, two violas and two cellos is one of Schulhoff's most successful compositions. He began it early in 1920 but delayed further work until four years later. The piece is tightly scored, with a recurring motif of three notes that generates much of the musical material. The motif is heard at the very beginning, and it continues to underline the intensely driven opening theme and melancholy, darkly colored second, often as chords held low in the cello. The use of the octatonic scale (comprising alternating whole tones and semitones) gives a pungent chromaticism to the movement and to the hushed, often mysterious, always sustained lyrical lines of the slow movement. *The Burlesca* is a brief whirlwind of a movement, rhythmically complex, with a distinctive neo-classical feel. Its exuberance immediately turns to introspective meditation as the finale opens. Built upon material already introduced, the movement is somber and troubled, concluding with a fade to black.

Felix Mendelssohn

Octet in E-flat major, Op. 20 (1825)

Born in Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809; died in Leipzig, November 4, 1847

With this Octet, the 16-year-old Mendelssohn earned a place in the line of great composers in the Western classical tradition. He had started daily composition at the age of 11. By 16, he could look back on a catalog

Program Notes *continued*

of four operas, three piano quartets, a virtuoso sextet and, most significantly, a dozen string symphonies. These were the apprentice works that allowed the precocious young man to appear to burst forth as a fully mature and, indeed original, composer at the age of 16. Everything came together to favor early development. His family was wealthy and highly cultivated, with weekly Sunday musicales in the family's magnificent Leipzigerstrasse estate in Berlin. Later, the philosopher Friedrich Hegel, a family friend, taught Mendelssohn at the University of Berlin. Even as an adolescent, Mendelssohn was a gifted all-rounder. He painted, he fenced, he wrote verse as well as a copious number of letters. As a musician, he was an accomplished pianist and played both violin and viola tolerably well.

In the Octet, Mendelssohn reveals a palette of eight essentially equal instruments and paints in myriad instrumental colors, ranging from the hushed monochrome unison at the end of the Scherzo to the burst of multi-colored hues in the eight-part fugal exuberance that follows. Mendelssohn also pinpoints the sort of chamber-scale orchestral sound he wants: "This Octet must be played by all instruments in symphonic orchestral style," he writes in the preface to the score. "*Pianos* and *fortes* must be strictly

observed and more sharply emphasized than is usual in pieces of this character." Throughout, the young Mendelssohn eagerly explores a sparkling variety of textures, often in strikingly original ways. The first two movements alternate between polished ensemble playing and, as in the soaring opening, the style of a violin concerto. The scherzo, a meeting point for both absolute and program music, has always been the favorite movement of the Octet, inspired by the *Walpurgis* night dream section of Goethe's *Faust*, with its vivid insect and small animal imagery. The mood of the Octet's finale is hard to put into words. The opening, which is played low down on scrubbing cellos, seems humorous, and the countermelody which soon evolves is less than reverentially lifted from the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's *Messiah* at the words: "And He shall reign for ever and ever." In fact, the entire movement seems to evolve as a light-hearted treatment of the academic form of the fugue. It is youthful in its exuberance, tongue-in-cheek at times, effortlessly modulating from one key to another, joyous and assured. It represents a perfect rapport between form and content, the likes of which Mendelssohn was to achieve only infrequently again.

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About the Artists

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 he 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 Järnåker 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 as 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, *Anthemes 2* for the composer's 85th birthday celebrations. She also worked closely with Oliver Knussen, giving many performances in Sweden, Japan, Finland and Hungary of the Knussen Violin Concerto, 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. She plays with the Colin Currie Group in Europe and Japan. 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. Whilst 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 founder 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 the 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, Martinu 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 a wide variety of playing away from both these ensembles, a highlight including touring the world with Peter Gabriel.

Robert Smissen (viola) won a scholarship to Chethams 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, and as a member of the ASMF chamber ensemble and the Pro Arte Piano Quartet he has performed, broadcast and recorded all over the world. Outside of music, being a father of five keeps him more than busy, but his other interests include walking his six dogs, gardening, DIY, early renaissance art, philosophy, cooking and cricket.

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 founder 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. Career highlights

include the complete piano trios of Beethoven, Schubert and Dvorak 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 afterwards with the City of London Sinfonia, where he is now Principal Cello.

Arts in the Curriculum & Community

During their time at Dartmouth, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields will visit a class in the Music Department and participate in a pre-show conversation.

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