

#8 Saturday, August 4 At 6:30 P.M.

The Amernet String Quartet: Misha Vitenson, Violin; Michael Klotz, Viola; Marcia Littlely, Violin; Jason Calloway, Cello; Assisting Artist Yizhak Schotten, Viola

THE ARTISTS

THE AMERNET STRING QUARTET

Lauded for their “intelligence” and “immensely satisfying” playing by the New York Times, the Amernet String Quartet has garnered worldwide praise and recognition as one of today’s exceptional string quartets. Ensemble-in- Residence at Florida International University since 2004, the group was formed in 1991, while its founding members were students at the Juilliard School. The Amernet rose to international attention after their first season, winning the gold medal at the Tokyo International Music Competition in 1992. In 1995, the group was the first prize winner of the prestigious Banff International String Quartet Competition. Their busy performance schedule has taken the group across North America, Mexico, Europe, and the Middle East, and they have collaborated with many of today’s most prominent artists. Prior to their current position at Florida International University, the Amernet held posts as Corbett String Quartet-in- Residence at Northern Kentucky University and at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Additionally, during 2004-2005 the ensemble served as the Ernst Stiefel Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for the Arts. The Amernet has always been committed to the music of our time and has commissioned works from many of today’s leading composers, working closely with Anthony Brandt, John Corigliano, Stephen Dankner, David Epstein, Toshi Ichianagi, Harold Meltzer, Gerhard Samuel, Morton Subotnick, Dmitri Tymoczko, among others. In addition, the Amernet is keen on exploring collaborative projects, and has recently appeared with jazz pianist Steve Allee; onstage with Josée Garant Dance; and with the Kruger Brothers. The Amernet also is an active advocate for neglected works of the past and aims to enliven the concert experience through its innovative programming. Please visit www.amernetquartet.com for more information.

YIZHAK SCHOTTEN, VIOLA

Israeli-born violist Yizhak Schotten was discovered and brought to the United States by the renowned violist William Primrose, with whom he studied at Indiana University and the University of Southern California. Other studies were with Lillian Fuchs at the Manhattan School of Music. A feature article about Yizhak Schotten in STRAD Magazine called him “one of America’s finest viola players... a leading light of the U.S. viola establishment.” His solo appearances with orchestras in this country and abroad have included performances with conductors Seiji Ozawa, Thomas Schippers, Sergiu Commissiona, Joseph Swensen, Arthur Fiedler and others. He has concertized in Israel, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Holland, Austria, Mexico, England, Canada and throughout the United States. His solo recitals have included Town Hall, Carnegie Hall, and Merkin Hall in New York, Boston’s Jordan Hall, the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., the Dame Myra Hess Series in Chicago, and the Cleveland Museum of Art, among others.

Yizhak Schotten joined the University of Michigan School of Music faculty in 1985 after having taught at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music and the University of Washington in Seattle. He was also on the American Federation of Musicians’ Congress of Strings faculty. As a teacher of prize winning students, he is very active giving master classes to young violists throughout the United States and abroad. He has given recitals and master classes in England at the Tertis International Competition

at the Isle of Man, the Menuhin School in Surrey, and the Guildhall School of Music and Royal College of Music in London. He has also given master classes in Israel at the Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem Academies of Music, at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in Australia, and in Taiwan for the Hsing Tien Kong Culture & Education Development Foundation.

PROGRAM

ALL DVORAK

STRING QUARTET IN E FLAT MAJOR, OPUS 51 (1878-1879)

- Allegro ma non troppo
- Dumka: Andante con moto; Vivace
- Romanze: Andante con moto
- Finale: Allegro assai

STRING QUARTET IN A FLAT MAJOR, OPUS 105 (1895)

- Adagio ma non troppo; Allegro appassionato
- Molto vivace
- Lento e molto cantabile
- Allegro, non tanto

VIOLA QUINTET IN E FLAT MAJOR, OPUS 97 (1893)

- Allegro non tanto
- Allegro vivo
- Larghetto
- Finale: Allegro guisto

HISTORIC ENCORE: Shostakovich: String Quartet #5 in B flat major, opus 92 played by the St. Petersburg String Quartet (partial)

PROGRAM NOTES

All Dvorak Program (1841-1904)

Dvorak must be placed among the most richly gifted and versatile composers of the 19th Century. Truly, like Haydn, Mozart, and Schubert, he was of the race of those divinely blest and naively inspired leaders whose thoughts and emotions manifest themselves spontaneously in musical forms, and whose musical imagination gives itself out in an inexhaustible wealth of pure, fresh and fascinating ideas, in melody, harmony, and rhythm.

.... Otakar Sourek, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians

STRING QUARTET IN E FLAT MAJOR, OPUS 51

Brahms had brought Dvorák together with his publisher Simrock. He had had successful tours of Germany and England. In short, Dvorák was becoming well known and was flourishing. Jean Becker of the famed Florentine Quartet asked for a work for the Quartet in the Slavic style. This was the genesis of the E Flat Quartet, a work filled with the spirit of Czech folk dance. This work also scored a big hit with Brahms and Josef Hellmesberger of the Hellmesberger Quartet, who then also became performers of Dvorák's quartets.

The first movement *Allegro ma non troppo* (but not too much) opens in a relaxed, carefree manner. The movement also abounds in snatches of rhythm evoking the polka. The second movement is entitled “*Dumka*”; a word of Ukrainian origin suggesting a piece in an elegiac mood, or a melancholy reminiscence, introduced into European Art music by Dvořák. The *Dumka* usually contains a livelier center section; in this case a fast Czech dance called the *furiant*. The third movement *Romanza* contains a lullaby-like melody, which undergoes various transformations, elaboration and embellishments. The *Finale*, *Allegro assai*, is one of those pieces whose opening theme you’ll find yourself humming as you leave the concert. It, too, is based on a folk dance, this time the *skocna*, a fast Bohemian reel dance

The E Flat Major Quartet was first performed at Music Mountain on August 2, 1950, by the Berkshire Sting Quartet.

STRING QUARTET IN A FLAT MAJOR, OPUS 105

“Son of the butcher or Tony the Butcher” is how we would know him (or much more likely never know him) if Antonin Dvořák’s father had prevailed in determining his son’s future. Antonin Dvořák was in line to become a butcher, like his father. However, also like his father who played the zither, son-Antonin played the fiddle with his father’s band at weddings and various social events of the day in rural Bohemia, a part of middle Europe we think of as Czechoslovakia. At those gatherings, the young Antonin acquired a strong interest in music, especially the folk music of his people.

Antonin Dvořák went on to study music at the Organ School in Prague, to be influenced by not only the greats of the past, Beethoven and Schubert, but also to be intrigued with the music of Smetana, 20 years his senior. Smetana was adding Bohemian/Czech folk music into his own compositions. Unable to resist, Dvořák followed suit. The most obvious musical manifestation of this is his incorporation of the *Dumka*, a Ukrainian folk song that usually begins quite melancholy, then, almost without warning, breaks out into a mad dance.

During his lifetime, Dvořák composed thirty pieces of chamber music, including one unpublished manuscript. In time, according to Cobbett’s *Cyclopedia Survey of Chamber Music*, “Antonin Dvořák, together with Bedřich Smetana, was one of the joint creators of the modern, and consciously national, school of Czech music, also one of the most gifted and individual composers of the nineteenth century.” Another influence on his music and his life was the time he spent in America, 1892-1895, as director of the National Conservatory in New York City and the time he spent in Spillville, Iowa (population 300). Dvořák was invited to Spillville by one of his students, Josef Kovarik. There he found a farming community popular with Bohemian families and of course, he felt very much at home.

Although the distinct American influence and Slavonic flavor can be heard in his earlier quartets, this, the A Flat Major, Op. 105, his final quartet, reflects neither. Instead, we hear a confident accomplished composer demonstrating his years of experience and expertise. The first movement opens moodily with the cello leading, but quickly brightens and continues through the end of the movement. The second movement is a scherzo, similar to a *Furiant* – a Bohemian folk dance with great energy and verve. The third, *Lento* movement is reminiscent of the first. The final movement begins somewhat uncertainly, but closes with gusto and joy.

VIOLA QUINTET IN E FLAT MAJOR, OPUS 97

The E Flat Major Viola Quintet, Opus 97, is a legacy of Dvořák’s stay in Spillville, Iowa during the

summer of 1893. While there, Dvorak wrote three major works that illustrate what is often called his “American” style. They are this Quintet, the “American” Quartet, Opus 96 and the “New World” Symphony.

All three of these works show the influence, to some degree, of the folk and popular music that he had heard during his midwestern summer.

Dvorak, apparently, cherished his days in Spillville, particularly after he returned to the crowded, busy and noisy life of New York City. He is reported to have said that he would have liked to spend the rest of his days in Spillville. A year before he died, in 1904, he told a friend that “Spillville was the ideal spot, that’s where I felt happy, and I should have stayed there.”

The Quintet was first performed at Music Mountain on Sunday, July 22, 1962 by the Berkshire String Quartet and David Schwartz, Viola.

The broadcasts of these Music Mountain concerts throughout the United States and worldwide on the Internet are underwritten by Edward R. Hamilton Bookseller Company, Falls Village, CT
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