

presents...

ALEXANDER STRING QUARTET | Ensemble-in-Residence

Zakarias Grafilo | Violin
Frederick Lifszitz | Violin

David Samuel | Viola
Sandy Wilson | Cello

ROBERT GREENBERG | Music Historian-in-Residence

Saturday, January 28, 2023 | 10am
Saturday, February 18, 2023 | 10am
Herbst Theatre

Music as a Mirror of Our World: Chamber Music at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

JANUARY 28: *Austria*

SCHOENBERG

String Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, Opus 7

*Nicht zu rasch; Kräftig (nicht zu rasch); Mässig, langsame Viertel;
Mässig, heiter*

INTERMISSION

WEBERN

Langsamer Satz

Five Movements for Strings, Opus 5

*Heftig bewegt
Sehr langsam
Sehr bewegt
Sehr langsam
In zarter Bewegung*

FEBRUARY 18: *Hungary*

BARTÓK

String Quartet No. 2, Sz.67

Moderato

Allegro molto capriccioso

Lento

INTERMISSION

KODÁLY

String Quartet No. 2, Opus 10

Allegro

Andante; Allegro giocoso

**The Saturday Morning Series is sponsored in part by the
Mark D. Kaplanoff Lecture Fund of San Francisco Performances' Endowment.**

The **Alexander String Quartet** is Ensemble-in-Residence with San Francisco Performances in association with San Francisco State University and the May T. Morrison Chamber Music Center.

The **Alexander String Quartet** is represented by Besen Arts
7 Delaney Place, Tenafly, NJ 07670-1607 besenarts.com

The Quartet frequently performs and records on a matched set of instruments by the San Francisco-based maker Francis Kuttner, circa 1987.



ARTIST PROFILES

The Alexander String Quartet celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2021. The Quartet has been Ensemble-in-Residence since 1989 with San Francisco Performances, the result of a unique partnership between SF Performances and The Morrison Chamber Music Center at San Francisco State University. Starting in 1994, the Quartet joined with SF Performances' Music Historian-in-Residence, Robert Greenberg, to present the Saturday Morning Series exploring string quartet literature.

The Quartet has appeared on SF Performances' mainstage Chamber Series many times, collaborating with such artists as soprano Elly Ameling and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato; clarinetists Richard Stoltzman, Joan Enric Lluna and Eli Eban; pianists James Tocco, Menahem Pressler, Jeremy Menuhin, and Joyce Yang; and composer Jake Heggie.

Robert Greenberg, in addition to his programs with the Alexander String Quartet, lectures frequently for SF Performances.

The **Alexander String Quartet** has performed in the major music capitals of five continents, securing its standing among the world's premier ensembles, and a major artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving since 1989 as Ensemble-in-Residence of San Francisco Performances and Directors of The Morrison Chamber Music Center Instructional Program at San Francisco State University.

Widely admired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart, and Shostakovich, the quartet's recordings have won international critical acclaim. They have established themselves as important advocates of new music commissioning dozens of new works from composers including Jake Heggie, Cindy Cox, Augusta Read Thomas, Robert Greenberg, Cesar Cano, Tarik O'Regan, Paul Siskind, and Pulitzer Prize-winner Wayne Peterson. Samuel Carl Adams' *Quintet with Pillars* was premiered in 2018 and has been widely performed across the U.S. by the Alexander with pianist Joyce Yang.

The Alexander String Quartet's annual calendar includes engagements at major halls throughout North America and Europe. They have appeared at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum, Jordan Hall, the Library of Congress, and chamber music societies and universities across the North American continent including Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Lewis and Clark, Pomona, UCLA, the Krannert Center, Purdue and many more. Recent overseas tours include the U.K., the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina, Panamá, and the Philippines. Their visit to Poland's Beethoven Easter Festival is beautifully captured in the 2017 award-winning documentary, *Con Moto: The Alexander String Quartet*.

Distinguished musicians with whom the Alexander String Quartet has collaborated include pianists Joyce Yang, Roger Woodward, Menachem Pressler, Marc-André Hamelin, and Jeremy Menuhin; clarinetists Joan Enric Lluna, Richard Stoltzman, and Eli Eban; soprano Elly Ameling; mezzo-sopranos Joyce DiDonato and Kindra Scharich; violinist Midori; violist Toby Appel; cellists Lynn Harrell, Sadao Harada, and David Requiro; and jazz greats Branford Marsalis, David Sanchez, and Andrew Speight. The quartet has worked with many composers including Aaron Copland, George Crumb, and Elliott Carter, and enjoys a close relationship with composer-lecturer Robert Greenberg, performing numerous lecture-concerts with him annually.

Recording for the FoghornClassics label, their 2021 recording of the complete string quartet of Brahms has been praised by *MusicWeb International*: "The joy of this quartet's playing is immediately apparent in the ferocious opening movement of the C minor quartet: they play with all the verve, drive and passion you could wish for but never at the expense of homogeneity or intonation—and the sustained warmth and depth of their string tone are a constant delight." *Fanfare* lauded their 2020 release of the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets (with Eli Eban) as "clearly one of the Alexander Quartet's finest releases." Their release in 2019 of Dvořák's "American" quartet and

piano quintet (with Joyce Yang) was selected by *MusicWeb International* as a featured recording of the year, praising it for interpretations performed “with the bright-eyed brilliance of first acquaintance.” Also released in 2019 was a recording of the Late Quartets of Mozart, receiving critical acclaim (“Exceptionally beautiful performances of some extraordinarily beautiful music.” –*Fanfare*), as did their 2018 release of Mozart’s Piano Quartets with Joyce Yang. (“These are by far, hands down and feet up, the most amazing performances of Mozart’s two piano quartets that have ever graced these ears” –*Fanfare*.) Other major releases have included the combined string quartet cycles of Bartók and Kodály (“If ever an album had ‘Grammy nominee’ written on its front cover, this is it.” –*Audiophile Audition*); the string quintets and sextets of Brahms with violist Toby Appel and cellist David Requirol (“a uniquely detailed, transparent warmth” –*Strings Magazine*); the Schumann and Brahms piano quintets with Joyce Yang (“passionate, soulful readings of two pinnacles of the chamber repertory” –*The New York Times*); and the Beethoven cycle (“A landmark journey through the greatest of all quartet cycles” –*Strings Magazine*). Their catalog also includes the Shostakovich cycle, Mozart’s Ten Famous Quartets, and the Mahler Song Cycles in new transcriptions by Zakarias Grafilo.

The Alexander String Quartet formed in New York City in 1981, capturing international attention as the first American quartet to win the London (now Wigmore) International String Quartet Competition in 1985. The quartet has received honorary degrees from Allegheny College and Saint Lawrence University, and Presidential medals from Baruch College (CUNY). The Alexander plays on a matched set of instruments made in San Francisco by Francis Kuttner, known as the Ellen M. Egger quartet.

Dr. Robert Greenberg was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1954 and has lived in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1978. He received a B.A. in Music, magna cum laude, from Princeton University in 1976 and a Ph.D. in music composition, *With Distinction*, from the University of California, Berkeley in 1984.

Greenberg has composed more than 50 works for a variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Performances of his works have taken place across the United States and Europe.

Dr. Greenberg has received numerous honors, including commissions from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Li-



brary of Congress, the Alexander String Quartet, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, San Francisco Performances, and the XTET ensemble. His music is published by Fallen Leaf Press and CPP/Belwin and is recorded on the Innova label.

Greenberg is a Steinway Artist.

Dr. Greenberg is currently the Music Historian-in-Residence with San Francisco Performances, where he has lectured and performed since 1994. He has served on the faculties of the University of California, Berkeley; California State University, East Bay; the Advanced Management Program at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business; and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he chaired the Department of Music History and Literature from 1989 to 2001.

Dr. Greenberg has lectured for some of the most prestigious musical and arts organizations in the United States, including the San Francisco Symphony (where for 10 years he was host and lecturer for the symphony’s nationally acclaimed Discovery Series), the Chautauqua Institution (where he was the Everett Scholar-in-Residence during the 2006 season), the Ravinia Festival, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Van Cliburn Foundation, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Villa Montalvo, the Phoenix Orchestra, the University of British Columbia (where he was the Dal Grauer Lecturer in September 2006), and Philadelphia’s College of Physicians (where he has been the Behrend Lecturer since 2017).

In addition, Dr. Greenberg is a sought-after lecturer for businesses and business schools and has spoken for such diverse organizations as S. C. Johnson, Deutsche Bank, the University of California/Haas School of

Business Executive Seminar and the Goldman School of Public Policy, the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, Harvard Business School Publishing, Kaiser Permanente, the Young Presidents’ Organization, the World Presidents’ Organization, and the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco. Dr. Greenberg has been profiled in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Inc. Magazine*, the *Times of London*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among other publications.

For 15 years, Dr. Greenberg was the resident composer and music historian for NPR’s *Weekend All Things Considered* and *Weekend Edition, Sunday* with Liane Hansen. His show *Scandalous Overtures* can be seen on www.ora.tv/shows.

In May 1993, Greenberg recorded a 48-lecture course entitled “How to Listen to and Understand Great Music” for The Great Courses/The Teaching Company. (This course was named in the January 1996 edition of *Inc. Magazine* as one of “The Nine Leadership Classics You’ve Never Read.”) Dr. Greenberg has since recorded 30 additional courses. The most recent, “The Great Music of the 20th Century,” was released in January 2018.

In February 2003, Maine’s *Bangor Daily News* referred to Dr. Greenberg as the Elvis of music history and appreciation, an appraisal that has given him more pleasure than any other.

Dr. Greenberg is currently “blogging, vlogging, performing, Zooming, reviewing, opining, and bloviating 4-6 times a week” on his subscription site at [Patreon.com/RobertGreenbergMusic](https://www.patreon.com/RobertGreenbergMusic).

PROGRAM NOTES JANUARY 28

String Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, Opus 7

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG
(1874–1951)

Schoenberg began his *String Quartet No. 1* during the summer of 1904, just as he turned 30, and completed it a year later, in September 1905. This was a time of incredible activity and growth for the young composer: he was teaching in Vienna, putting on concerts of new music, and maturing rapidly as a composer. His *Verklaerte Nacht* had been premiered in 1903, and he had recently completed sketches for the massive *Gurrelieder*. Around him, the world of mu-

sic was in similar ferment: as Schoenberg composed his *String Quartet No. 1*, Mahler completed his *Seventh Symphony*, Debussy wrote *La Mer*, and Strauss finished *Salome*.

If Schoenberg was reaching out in new directions and beginning to rethink the limits of tonality in these years, his *String Quartet No. 1* remains firmly conscious of its past even as it pushes toward new territory. It is tonal music (it has key signatures throughout), and it is in classical forms: its four component sections correspond to the four movements of the classical string quartet. Yet both harmony and form are under considerable tension in this music. Schoenberg declares that the quartet is in D minor but admits that it passes through “vagrant harmonies” before it moves to a peaceful conclusion in D major. Even more striking is the form. This quartet is in one large movement that spans 45 minutes, and within that vast span Schoenberg offers sections that seem to mirror classical structure: sonata form, scherzo, slow movement in ternary form, and a concluding rondo. But to describe the quartet that way risks oversimplifying it, and some have instead described it as one large sonata-form movement into which Schoenberg inserts component interludes. Schoenberg said that his model here was the first movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica*, but audiences should not search for thematic resemblances between the two works (this quartet does not sound like the *Eroica*). Instead, Schoenberg meant that he was striving for the same vast and dramatic movement built on the same kind of motivic development that Beethoven had employed in the symphony.

A brief overview: the opening movement (marked “Not too fast”) opens immediately with the quartet’s seminal theme, sounded here by the first violin. This theme will supply much of the material—thematic, harmonic, textural—of the entire quartet, and one immediately senses the intensity and busyness of this music. But it is not idle busyness, and virtually every sound in this quartet has a thematic function. A long transition leads to the second subject, again announced by the first violin and here marked *ausdrucksvoll*: “expressive.” The development is active and extended, as is the recapitulation. The music proceeds directly into the second section, marked simply *Kräftig*: “powerful.” Once again, the relation to classical form is clear: this is a scherzo-and-trio, with a buoyant scherzo and a muted, nocturnal trio section, but the return is not literal, and Schoenberg

continues to develop material heard in the opening section.

The quartet evolves somewhat at the third section, which is a ternary-form slow movement. Here Schoenberg introduces new material, as the first violin begins all by itself, and the viola has the lovely second subject over pulsing cello accompaniment; these two themes are combined in the closing part of this section. The concluding section is in rondo form, and once again the first violin leads the way. The rondo theme is a transformation of the violin theme from the slow movement, and some have noted that while we can identify the influence of Brahms, Wagner, and Beethoven on early Schoenberg, we should also note the influence here of Franz Liszt, who built large structures on a similar transformation of thematic material. The closing minutes of this vast quartet come as a complete surprise: after all the tensions, after all the concentrated thematic development, after all the formal complexity, Schoenberg’s *String Quartet No. 1* ends in luminous calm. The music moves into D major and concludes with a romantic postlude that sounds all the more peaceful after what has gone before.

The premiere of this quartet was given in Vienna on February 5, 1907, by the Rosé Quartet, and that performance touched off a near-riot—the audience banged chairs and hissed as the quartet played. Mahler, a supporter of Schoenberg, leaped up and confronted one of the noisemakers, crying out: “Let me just see what sort of fellow it is who hisses.” The two nearly came to blows, and the demonstrator was escorted out of the hall. On the front steps of the auditorium, he turned and shouted: “Calm down, I hiss at Mahler concerts too!”

Mahler confessed that he could not always respond to Schoenberg’s music, but the day after that premiere he wrote to Richard Strauss in Berlin, saying that the quartet had made “a significant and indeed impressive impact on me.” He enclosed a copy of the score and recommended that Strauss sponsor a performance in Berlin.

Langsamer Satz

ANTON WEBERN
(1883–1945)

Webern entered the University of Vienna to study musicology in the fall of 1902, when he was 19, and two years later he began composition lessons with Schoenberg; these private studies would continue until

1908. Early in his work with Schoenberg—in 1905—Webern wrote a movement for string quartet as a composition exercise, and this is called today simply *Langsamer Satz*: “slow movement.”

Listeners who usually flee at the thought of Webern may be surprised by this music. Composed before Webern had abandoned tonality, the *Langsamer Satz* makes clear just how deeply rooted he was in the music of late nineteenth-century Vienna. In fact, hearing this music without knowing its composer, one might well guess either Brahms or Mahler. The influence of Brahms (dead only eight years when the *Langsamer Satz* was written) can be felt in the lush sound and the romantic theme-shapes; the influence of Mahler (then director of the Vienna Opera and composing his *Seventh Symphony*) appears in the scrupulous attention to sound and the intensity of the development. The harmonic language is quite traditional (this music begins in C minor and progresses to the relative major, E-flat), as is the form. This eleven-minute movement is based on two themes; both of these develop, and the music moves to a climax, resolving quietly on fragments of the opening idea.

Particularly striking is the expressiveness of this music. We have so much come to think of Webern as the supremely intelligent and detached manipulator of tone rows and complex canons that it may surprise some to hear the romantic arc of these themes and to sense the intensity of feeling in the music. The score is littered with such performance markings as “very warm,” “with deep feeling,” “expressive,” and “very calm.”

Webern probably never heard this music. He wrote it as an exercise, and doubtless he and Schoenberg went over it in some detail, revising and refining. But the *Langsamer Satz* remained unpublished, and the manuscript was eventually discovered in the Webern archives that musicologist Hans Moldenhauer established at the University of Washington. The first known performance took place in Seattle on May 27, 1962, over half a century after the music was written and 17 years after the composer’s death.

Five Movements for Strings, Opus 5

Webern wrote these five brief movements in 1909, when he was 25 and working as an operetta conductor in Austria. He had just completed four years of study with Schoenberg, and his music was moving to

ward a free tonality. The *Five Movements for Strings* are miniatures. In the score, Webern suggests that they should last a total of about eight minutes, but most performances run closer to 10 or 12. In the same year that Webern wrote these tiny pieces for string quartet, Mahler was writing his 80-minute *Ninth Symphony*, Ravel his opulent *Daphnis and Chloe*, and Stravinsky *The Firebird*, employing what that composer himself called a “wastefully large” orchestra. Webern’s *Five Movements* can be understood as a movement away from those extremes of length and orchestration and toward a fierce concentration of materials. This is not to say that Webern is unconcerned with color. Far from it. These brief pieces use almost every known string technique: pizzicato, harmonics, *col legno* (bowing with the wood of the bow), and *ponticello* (bowing on top of the bridge).

Listeners usually dismayed at the prospect of hearing Webern will find these pieces quite approachable. They are now over a century old, and many film scores today—which give audiences no trouble—are written in a much more difficult idiom. Those new to the *Five Movements* can approach them by listening for the variety of sound Webern produces or his treatment of thematic motifs, tiny thematic cells that appear in many guises. These motifs recur throughout the *Five Movements* and are modified slightly as they proceed, though the pieces are so short that they lack real development sections. Anyone who thinks Webern a detached and emotionless composer should see his careful instructions to the performers: “With tenderest expression,” “Utmost delicacy,” “Transitory,” “Dying away.”

1. *Heftig bewegt* (Moving vehemently). The first of the pieces begins fiercely, with snapping pizzicatos and dry *col legno* cracks. Soon the cello plays the brief thematic cell that will recur throughout the *Five Movements* in various forms. This movement goes through great dynamic extremes, ending with a barely audible pizzicato stroke.

2. *Sehr langsam* (Very slow). Muted throughout, this movement is only 14 measures long. The viola immediately sounds the theme, which undergoes very slow transformations before the music dies away on a second violin phrase marked “Hardly audible.”

3. *Sehr bewegt* (Moving rapidly). This movement might be considered the scherzo of the *Five Movements*. Over a rapid cello pizzicato, the upper strings flit and sing, with

the first violin breaking into waltz-like fragments before the sudden rush to the close. The entire movement lasts forty seconds.

4. *Sehr langsam* (Very slow). Thirteen measures long, this slow movement opens with violin tremolos, very softly extends the theme, and ends with a tiny brush of violin sound.

5. *In zarter Bewegung* (With delicate movement). The longest of the five movements, this opens quietly with the thematic cell in the cello, moves very quietly to a sudden, modest climax, then dies away on a sustained chord. The variety of sound in this final movement is particularly impressive.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger

PROGRAM NOTES FEBRUARY 18

String Quartet No. 2, Sz. 67

BÉLA BARTÓK
(1881–1945)

In 1912, depressed by the state of musical life in Hungary and the failure of his own music to find an audience, Bartók withdrew from public life. With his wife and infant son, he moved to the village of Rákoskeresztúr, then a suburb of Budapest. He stopped composing, gave no concerts, and introduced no new music, choosing instead to concentrate on teaching and folk-music research. World War I brought musical life in Hungary to a virtual halt, and Bartók—with time on his hands and perhaps refreshed by a self-imposed silence that had lasted three years—resumed composing. In 1915 he wrote the *Romanian Folk Dances*, a product of his folk-music research (and—a century later—still one of his most popular compositions). In that same year, Bartók began work on his *Second String Quartet*, completing it two years later, in October 1917. The Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet gave the first performance in Budapest on March 3, 1918.

The most immediately striking feature of the new quartet is its form. Bartók’s *First Quartet* had offered a dizzying accelerando across its three-movement span. His *Second Quartet* is also in three movements, but these take a wholly unexpected order: a moderately-paced opening movement is followed by a very fast central movement, and the quartet concludes with a very slow movement. Some years later, in 1936, Bartók was asked to provide an analysis of this quar-

ter, but he refused, saying: “There is in any case nothing extraordinary in the form. The first movement is in normal sonata form, the second a kind of rondo with a development-like section in the middle, and the last the most difficult to define: ultimately it is some kind of augmented ABA form.” This statement is accurate as far as it goes, but it does not begin to suggest the complexity and ingenuity of each movement or of the quartet as a whole. Nor does it suggest the emotional impact of this music. Few of Bartók’s works have produced the sort of rhapsodic reaction that the *Second Quartet* has. Critics have described it as “romantic” and “lyrical,” and one has even gone so far as to call this quartet “conceivably the most beautiful work Bartók composed.”

The opening *Moderato* does seem to be in sonata form—it introduces several different theme-groups and develops all of them. But for all their contrast, these themes are cousins—they all grow out of the first violin’s gently-soaring opening melody, and one of the pleasures of this music is recognizing the many ways this shape and sequence of intervals recur throughout the movement. While there are moments of power here, the fundamental impulse in this movement is lyric, and one of the incarnations of the opening shape—marked *tranquillo* on each appearance—sings with a breathtaking loveliness. It is on this shape that the movement trails off into silence.

Commentators invariably link the *Allegro molto capriccioso* with Bartók’s one folk-music gathering trip to Africa. In 1913, two years before he began this quartet, Bartók had visited Biskra, in the desert of Algeria, and collected about 200 local melodies. Anchored on its pounding opening rhythm (a drumbeat rhythm often described as “barbaric”), the powerful, dancing opening theme will return in various forms throughout the second movement. There is a wildness to this music, which is full of the exotic sounds of swooping glissandos and snapping pizzicatos. Bartók relaxes the pace for a more lyric central episode, but the opening energy soon returns. The ending of this movement is dazzling; Bartók mutes all four instruments for the *Prestissimo* coda. The upper three voices are in 6/4, but the cello is in 4/4 as this music races ahead, first at a whisper and then—as the mutes come off—at a shout. The movement is cut off by a fierce recall of the drumbeat rhythm from the very beginning.

After the volcanic energy of the middle movement, the end of the quartet brings a surprise, for it concludes with a somber

and very slow movement, drained of the color and vitality of the previous movement. While the tempo is quite slow (the marking is *Lento*), Bartók subtly varies the pace—there are *several* slow tempos here. This movement has been described as episodic, but it really offers a series of variations on its opening figures. What is not so readily apparent is that these theme-shapes are themselves derived from the violin melody at the very beginning of the quartet—the unity of this quartet is extraordinary. The final movement makes its somber way to the close, where it concludes with two ambiguous pizzicato strokes. The color and energy of the opening movements are left far in the past, and this stunning music comes to a bleak and uncertain conclusion.

and Bartók sought of a fusion of Hungarian folk music with classical form. Kodály does not quote Hungarian folk melodies in his *Second Quartet*—all the thematic material is his own—but the melodic shapes and inflections of the Hungarian folk music (and language) he loved so much give this quartet much of its distinctive flavor.

The structure of the *Second Quartet* is unusual. It opens with a concise sonata-form movement and concludes with a long movement that performs the function of both slow movement and finale. The opening *Allegro* is built on three separate melodic ideas, all of which proceed along a gently-rocking 6/8 meter. The tone of this movement is subdued (though not somber), and it draws to a quiet close. The concluding section opens with a long An-

dante that Kodály specifies should be *Quasi recitativo*. It is built on a series of solos structured on *parlando* inflections: mirroring the sound of speech. The music proceeds without pause into the finale, aptly marked *Allegro giocoso* (“fast, happy”). This movement is a series of dances—it is built on six different thematic ideas—and it bursts to life with a vigorous dance over what sounds like the drone of bagpipes. Kodály moves from the swaying 6/8 of the opening movement to the fundamentally duple meter of Hungarian folk music here, leaping between dances and finally driving his *Second Quartet* to its exciting conclusion on a great *accelerando*.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger

String Quartet No.2, Opus 10

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY
(1882–1967)

Zoltán Kodály wrote a comparatively small number of chamber works, completing them early in his career—all were composed during the second decade of the twentieth century. During these years, Kodály was teaching at the Academy of Music in Budapest, collecting folksongs with his friend Béla Bartók, and composing, and those two composers were fortunate to have as their champions the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet. Made up of four distinguished young musicians who had dedicated themselves to the cause of Hungarian music (and of new music in general), the quartet gave the premieres of the first string quartets of both Bartók and Kodály in 1910 (and that same year gave the Budapest premiere of the Debussy *String Quartet*, with the composer present). The quartet continued its support of Bartók and Kodály during the difficult years of World War I, and in 1918 it gave the first performances of the second quartets of Kodály and Bartók. Bartók, who remained interested in chamber music throughout his life, would go on to write four more quartets, but Kodály changed course about 1920, turning first to orchestral music and later to choral works. He wrote no more quartets after his *Second Quartet*.

That is our loss. Unlike Bartók, who played no string instrument, Kodály played violin, viola, and cello, and his quartet-writing is idiomatic and assured. Further, his quartets show that ideal idiom he



NICOLA BENEDETTI | Violin
LEONARD ELSCHENBROICH | Cello
ALEXEI GRINYUK | Piano

MAR 22

SCHUBERT: Piano Trio No. 2 in E-flat Major, D. 929
TCHAIKOVSKY: Piano Trio in A Minor, Op. 50

Sought-after soloists on their own, this “super-trio” has always devoted time to performing together since they were students in London. The result is an uncanny performance precision and warm camaraderie on stage. The *London Telegraph* enthused, “If any piano trio could achieve star status, it’s surely this one.”

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