

presents...

ALEXANDER STRING QUARTET | Ensemble-in-Residence

Zakarias Grafilo | Violin
Yuna Lee | Violin

David Samuel | Viola
Sandy Wilson | Cello

ROBERT GREENBERG | Music Historian-in-Residence

Saturday, October 28, 2023 | 10am

Herbst Theatre

Music as a Mirror of Our World: The String Quartet from 1905 to 1946

Program 1: 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

WEBERN

Five Movements for Strings, Opus 5

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

**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.

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. 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** stands among the world's premier ensembles, having performed in the major music capitals of five continents. The quartet is a vital artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving since 1989 as Ensemble in Residence of San Francisco Performances. Widely admired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart, and Shostakovich, the quartet's recordings have won international critical acclaim. Founded in New York City in 1981, the ensemble quickly captured attention, initially winning the Concert Artists Guild Competition in 1982, and then becoming the first American quartet

to win the London (now Wigmore) International String Quartet Competition in 1985. The members of the Alexander String Quartet are recipients of honorary degrees from Allegheny College and St. Lawrence University, and Presidential medals from Baruch College (CUNY).

Since its inception, the Alexander String Quartet has maintained an unyielding and passionate commitment to education. For decades, the ensemble has trained generations of gifted performers, emerging string quartets, and talented young musicians destined to pass on their knowledge and love of music as teachers in schools across the globe. The 2023–24 season marks the beginning of a new initiative that brings together the quartet's expertise in education and devotion to its community. Partnering with schools, arts organizations, and community institutions in the Bay Area and beyond, the Alexander String Quartet will be hosting a series of innovative workshops, performances and collaborations that are designed to support and bolster chamber music awareness and education for individuals from all walks of life.

The Alexander String Quartet has performed at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum, Jordan Hall, the Library of Congress, and appeared as guests at universities including Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Lewis & Clark, UCLA, and many more. Numerous overseas tours include the U.K., the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal,

Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina, Panama, 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*.

Joyce Yang, Marc-André Hamelin, Richard Stoltzman, Joyce DiDonato, Midori, Lynn Harrell, Branford Marsalis, David Sánchez, Jake Heggie, Augusta Read Thomas, Tarik O'Regan, Wayne Peterson, and Samuel Carl Adams are only a few of the many distinguished instrumentalists, singers, and composers with whom the Alexander String Quartet has collaborated in performance and recording projects crossing genres from classical to jazz, rock, and folk in its more than four decades of music making. Their most recent collaborative project, "British Invasion," brings the Quartet together with guitarist William Kanengiser to explore the music of Sting, Led Zeppelin, John Dowland, and the Beatles by way of contemporary composers Ian Krouse, Dušan Bogdanović, and Leo Brouwer. The quartet continues to enjoy a longstanding collaboration with the richly entertaining composer-lecturer, Robert Greenberg, with whom it presents series of concerts every season with San Francisco Performances and at the Mondavi Center at the University of California in Davis. These concerts, which have also reached audiences at the Library of Congress in Washington, Merkin Concert Hall in New York, and many other venues, provide a deep dive into the history and essence of the works being presented in addition to a full performance of each piece.

Recording for the Foghorn Classics label, the Alexander String Quartet's extensive recording catalogue includes complete string quartet cycles by Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms, Kodály, and Shostakovich. Their most recent release is the third installment of a Mozart chamber music project, *Apotheosis Volume 3*, featuring the string quintets of Mozart with violist Paul Yarbrough. *Apotheosis Volumes 1 & 2*, released in 2018 and 2019, featured the late string quartets and piano quartets (with Joyce Yang) of Mozart. Both recordings received critical acclaim ("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 recordings include the 2020 release of the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets (with Eli Eban) and the 2019 release, *Locale*, featuring Dvořák's "American" quartet and piano quintet (with Joyce Yang). Their re-

ording catalogue also includes the Mahler Song Cycles in transcriptions for mezzo-soprano (with Kindra Scharich) and string quartet by the Quartet's first violinist, Zakarias Grafilo.

The Alexander String Quartet performs on Michael Fischer and unlabeled circa 1800 Italian violins, a Hiroshi Iizuka viola, and a Francis M. Kuttner cello. They have also had the distinct honor on numerous occasions to record and perform on a matched set of instruments known as the Ellen M. Egger Quartet, made in San Francisco by the late Francis M. Kuttner.



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 Library 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 Califor-

nia, 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

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 music 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 Bee-

thoven'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 busy-ness of this music. But it is not idle busy-ness, 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 *ausdruckvoll*: "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 10-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 toward 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 40 seconds.

4. *Sehr langsam* (Very slow). Just 13 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



CASTALIAN STRING QUARTET NOVEMBER 15

JANÁČEK: String Quartet No. 1 *Kreutzer Sonata*

MARK-ANTHONY TURNAGE: *Awake* (composed for Castalian Quartet, premiering 2023)

BEETHOVEN: String Quartet in B-Flat, Op. 130, with Grosse Fuge ending, Op. 133



CALDER QUARTET with ANTOINE HUNTER | Choreographer URBAN JAZZ DANCE COMPANY MARCH 16

The Mind's Ear: Motion Beyond Silence

With Music by **JOHN CAGE**, **BEETHOVEN**, **JESSIE MONTGOMERY**, **CAROLINE SHAW**, and **JULIUS EASTMAN**



DOVER QUARTET with LEIF OVE ANDSNÆS | Piano APRIL 25

TURINA: *La oración del torero* (*The Bullfighter's Prayer*), Op. 34

DOHNÁNYI: Piano Quintet No. 2 in E-flat Minor, Op. 26

BRAHMS: Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34

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