

Sunday, September 22, 2024

ESCHER STRING QUARTET

Adam Barnett-Hart, violin
Brendan Speltz, violin
Pierre Lapointe, viola
Brook Speltz, cello
with special guest

BRANDON PATRICK GEORGE, FLUTE

Theme and Variations for Flute and String Quartet, Op. 80 (1916)

Amy Beach (1867–1944)

- I. Theme. Lento di molto, sempre espressivo
- II. Variation I. L'istesso tempo
- III. Variation II. Allegro giusto

with Brandon Patrick George, flute

String Quartet (1903)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Assez vif
- III. Très lent
- IV. Vif et agité

INTERMISSION

Adagio from String Quartet, Op. 11 (1936)

Samuel Barber (1910–1981)

Flute Quartet No. 1 in D Major, K. 285 (1777)

W.A. Mozart (1756–1791)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Rondeau: Allegretto

with Brandon Patrick George, flute

Impresiones de la Puna for Flute and String Quartet (1934)

Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983)

- I. Quena: Lento
- II. Canción: Moderato
- III. Danza: Animado

with Brandon Patrick George, flute

Management for ESCHER QUARTET: Arts Management Group, Inc.
Discography for ESCHER QUARTET: Naxos, Bis
Management for BRANDON PATRICK GEORGE: Jensen Artists
Discography for BRANDON PATRICK GEORGE: Haenssler Classics

*This concert is made possible by the generous support of David Scudder
in memory of his wife, Marie Louise Scudder.*

NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

Chamber music for flute and strings gets too little time in the sun, and yet the repertoire for the combination is rich and varied. I have admired Brandon Patrick George's gorgeous playing for a long time, so when he teamed up to explore this music with the wonderful Escher Quartet, I had to bring them to the Museum. Given the Museum's long association with the brilliant star of American flutists Paula Robison, a chance to hear these works in Calderwood Hall is especially welcome.

The flute quintet of the great Boston composer Amy Beach (an acquaintance of Isabella Stewart Gardner) is not often heard in concert, but it is one of her most beautiful works. Mozart wrote four flute quartets—all beauties. Ravel's luscious string quartet (dedicated to Isabella Gardner's friend Gabriele Fauré), Barber's celebrated Adagio (in its original form as the slow movement of a string quartet) and an early folkloric suite by the Argentine modernist master Ginastera round out a delightful program.

—George Steel, *Abrams Curator of Music*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Escher String Quartet has received acclaim for its profound musical insight and rare tonal beauty. A former BBC New Generation Artist and recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the quartet has performed at the BBC Proms at Cadogan Hall and is a regular guest at Wigmore Hall. In its home town of New York, the ensemble serves as season artists of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

The 2023–2024 season found the Escher Quartet embarking upon a major project: performances of the complete cycle of quartets by Béla Bartók, culminating in a single concert performance of all six at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Beyond Bartók, the Escher Quartet returned to many of the illustrious music centers and organizations in America, such as the Library of Congress, Phoenix Chamber Music Society, Duke University, Coleman Chamber Music Association, and Savannah Music Festival, among others. The Escher Quartet has made a distinctive impression throughout Europe, with recent debuts including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Berlin Konzerthaus, London's Kings Place, Slovenian Philharmonic Hall, Les Grands Interprètes Geneva, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and Auditorium du Louvre. The group has appeared at festivals such as the Heidelberg Spring Festival, Budapest's Franz Liszt Academy, Dublin's Great Music in Irish Houses, the Risør Chamber Music Festival in Norway, the Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival, and the Perth International Arts Festival in Australia.

Alongside its growing European profile, the Escher Quartet continues to flourish in its home country, performing at the Aspen Music Festival, Bravo! Vail, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Bowdoin Music Festival, Toronto Summer Music, Chamber Music San Francisco, Music@Menlo, and the Ravinia and Caramoor festivals.

The 2022–2023 season saw the release of two albums—string quartets by Pierre Jalbert and the Escher’s studio recording of the complete Janáček quartets and Pavel Haas quartet no. 2 with multi-award winning percussionist Colin Currie (BIS Label). Recordings of the complete Mendelssohn quartets and beloved romantic quartets of Dvořák, Borodin, and Tchaikovsky were released on the BIS label in 2015–18 and received with the highest critical acclaim. In 2019, *DANCE*, an album of quintets with GRAMMY® Award-winning guitarist Jason Vieaux, was enthusiastically received. In 2021, the Escher’s recording of the complete quartets of Charles Ives and Samuel Barber was met with equal excitement. The quartet has also recorded the complete Zemlinsky String Quartets in two volumes, released on the Naxos label in 2013 and 2014.

Beyond the concert hall, the Escher Quartet is proud to announce the creation of a new non-profit, ESQYRE (Escher String Quartet Youth Residency Education). ESQYRE’s mission as a non-profit classical music organization is to provide a comprehensive educational program through music performance and instruction for people of all ages. In addition to their non-profit work, the quartet has also held faculty positions at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX, and the University of Akron, OH.

Within months of its inception in 2005, the ensemble came to the attention of key musical figures worldwide. Championed by the Emerson Quartet, the Escher Quartet was invited by both Pinchas Zukerman and Itzhak Perlman to be Quartet in Residence at each artist’s summer festival: the Young Artists Program at Canada’s National Arts Centre; and the Perlman Chamber Music Program on Shelter Island, NY.

The Escher Quartet takes its name from the Dutch graphic artist M.C. Escher, inspired by Escher’s method of interplay between individual components working together to form a whole.

Brandon Patrick George is a leading flute soloist and GRAMMY®-nominated chamber musician whose repertoire extends from the Baroque era to today. He is the flutist of Imani Winds and has appeared as a soloist with the Atlanta, Baltimore, and Albany symphonies, American Composers Orchestra, and the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, among others. He has been praised as “elegant” by the *New York Times*, as a “virtuoso” by the *Washington Post*, and as a “knockout musician with a gorgeous sound” by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Brandon has performed at the Elbphilharmonie, the Kennedy Center, the Dresden Music Festival, and the Prague Spring Festival. In addition to his work with Imani Winds, Brandon’s solo performances include appearances at Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 92nd Street Y, Tippet Rise, and Maverick Concerts. In 2021, Brandon was part of the inaugural class of WQXR’s Artist Propulsion Lab, a program designed to advance the careers of early and mid-career artists and support the future of classical music. During his yearlong residency at WQXR, Brandon guest hosted *Evening Music*, interviewed Ford Foundation president Darren Walker about diversity and equity in the performing arts, and recorded with pianist Aaron Diehl and harpist June Han.

Prior to his solo career, Brandon performed as a guest with many of the world’s leading ensembles including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). With the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Brandon performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and at the Hollywood Bowl with Music Director Gustavo Dudamel.

In September 2023, Brandon's latest album, *Twofold*, was released on In a Circle Records. *Twofold*, Brandon's second solo album, explores musical dialogues that transcend

space, time, and identity by pairing canonical works for solo flute with new compositions. *BBC Music Magazine* gave *Twofold* a four-star rating for both the performance and recording, calling the album "a superb collection." *Twofold* follows the success of Brandon Patrick George's debut solo album, which was released in 2020 on Haenssler Classics. Brandon was featured in the *New York Times* around the album's release, in an article titled "A Flutist Steps into the Solo Spotlight," which described the album as "a program that showcases the flute in all its wit, warmth and brilliance."

Since late May 2020, Brandon Patrick George has received frequent invitations to serve on panels about diversity in classical music, being repeatedly asked what institutions can do to support and reflect the communities they serve. The many conversations, and desire to use his platform for change, inspired him to create his latest commissioning initiative, *BPG: The Community Concerto Project*. Brandon proposes a new concerto which features students that he will mentor during his collaboration in the community.

Raised by a single mother in Dayton, OH, Brandon is the proud product of public arts education. He draws on his personal experiences in his commitment to educating the next generation, performing countless outreach concerts for school children every year, and mentoring young conservatory musicians of color embarking on performance careers. Brandon trained at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Conservatoire de Paris, and the Manhattan School of Music. He serves on the faculty of the Curtis Institute and the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

For more information, visit www.brandonpatrickgeorge.com.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

Kindly turn off all electronic devices during the concert and refrain from any photography or filming in the hall. Also, please note the location of the emergency exit doors: across the hall from the doors through which you entered.

JULIA PERRY CENTENNIAL

CASTLE OF OUR SKINS

Sunday, September 29

BORROMEO STRING QUARTET WITH PAUL NEUBAUER, VIOLA

Sunday, October 6

AWADAGIN PRATT, PIANO

Sunday, October 20

SPHINX VIRTUOSI

WITH BRITTON-RENÉ COLLINS, PERCUSSION

Sunday, October 27

MUSIC OF THE BELLE ÉPOQUE AND THE GREAT WAR

Sunday, November 3

BOSTON CHILDREN'S CHORUS

November 9 at 2:00 PM

RAPHAËL FEUILLÂTRE, GUITAR

Sunday, November 10

FAZIL SAY, PIANO

Sunday, November 17

JULIUS EASTMAN X KYLE MARSHALL

Sunday, November 24

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum resides on the homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe, who belong to this place and continue to regard these lands and waters as sacred.

Music at the Gardner is supported by Nora McNeely Hurley / Manitou Fund. Hemenway & Barnes LLP is the lead corporate sponsor of the Weekend Concert Series. The Museum thanks its generous concert donors: The Coogan Concert in memory of Peter Weston Coogan; Fitzpatrick Family Concert; James Lawrence Memorial Concert; Alford P. Rudnick Memorial Concert; David Scudder in memory of his wife, Marie Louise Scudder; Wendy Shattuck Young Artist Concert; and Willona Sinclair Memorial Concert. The piano is dedicated as the Alex d'Arbeloff Steinway. The harpsichord was generously donated by Dr. Robert Barstow in memory of Marion Huse, and its care is endowed in memory of Dr. Barstow by The Barstow Fund. Music at the Gardner is also supported in part by New Music USA's Organization Fund, Nicie and Jay Panetta, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is supported by the state of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

