



UMS PRESENTS

EMERSON STRING QUARTET

Eugene Drucker, *Violin*
Philip Setzer, *Violin*
Lawrence Dutton, *Viola*
Paul Watkins, *Cello*

Saturday Evening, September 27, 2014 at 8:00
Rackham Auditorium • Ann Arbor

**Second Performance of the 136th Annual Season
52nd Annual Chamber Arts Series**

Photo: Emerson String Quartet; photographer: Lisa-Marie Mazzucco.

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven

String Quartet No. 11, Op. 95

Allegro con brio

Allegretto ma non troppo

Allegro assai vivace ma serio – Più Allegro

Larghetto espressivo – Allegretto agitato – Allegro

Mr. Setzer, *First Violin*

Lowell Liebermann

String Quartet No. 5, Op. 126

Mr. Drucker, *First Violin*

World Premiere, UMS co-commission

INTERMISSION

Dmitri Shostakovich

String Quartet No. 3 in F Major, Op. 73

Allegretto

Moderato con moto

Allegro non troppo

Adagio – Moderato

Mr. Setzer, *First Violin*

Tonight's performance is made possible by endowed support from the Ilene H. Forsyth Chamber Arts Endowment Fund, which supports an annual presentation on the UMS Chamber Arts series in perpetuity.

Media partnership is provided by WGTE 91.3 FM.

Lowell Liebermann's *String Quartet No. 5* was commissioned by Music Accord for the Emerson String Quartet.

Emerson String Quartet records exclusively for Sony Classical.

Emerson String Quartet appears by arrangement with IMG Artists, LLC.

String Quartet No. 11 in f minor, Op. 95 ("Serioso") (1810)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 15 or 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Detroit Philharmonic Club, March 1893 in Newberry Hall (current home of the Francis W. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.)

SNAPSHOTS OF HISTORY...IN 1810:

- Napoleon annexes the Kingdom of Holland
- English actress Sarah Booth debuts at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden in London
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe publishes his *Theory of Colours*
- The US annexes the Republic of West Florida
- The first steamboat sails on the Ohio River

The *String Quartet in f minor, Op. 95* (or "Quartetto serioso," as Beethoven himself called it) was written at the end of Beethoven's extremely prolific "second period." It was his last string quartet before the magnificent set of late quartets written in the last years of his life. It sums up, in extremely concise form, most of the qualities of the "heroic" second period: robust force, melodic poignancy, formal concentration, abrupt interruptions, bold key changes, and an irresistible rhythmic drive.

All four movements of the *Quartet in f minor* are built of melodic gestures of an astonishing simplicity — one might almost call it bluntness. The unison figure that opens the piece — repeated, in typical Beethovenian fashion, a half-step

higher — is only one of many examples. That dramatic gesture sets the stage for a first movement of uncommon emotional intensity. The second movement is in D Major, a key very distant from the original f minor — Beethoven never chose a more remote key relationship between movements than he did here. Starting with a mysterious, unaccompanied scale, the movement continues with a lyrical melody followed by a fugue, and has an open ending leading directly into the scherzo. The latter is based on a single motif consisting of a scale, heard both in descending and ascending form. The slow movement's D Major is revisited in the quiet and expressive Trio, which moves in equal long notes with accompanying flourishes in the first violin. The finale proceeds from an introductory "Larghetto espressivo" through a passionate "Allegretto agitato" to the extremely fast coda, in which the tonality suddenly changes from f minor to F Major and the "serioso" character gives way to cheerfulness, even humor, for the few remaining moments. (The sequence of events in this last movement runs remarkably parallel to Beethoven's "Egmont" Overture, written in the same year 1810, and also consisting of a slow introduction and passionate "Allegro" in f minor, followed by an exultant coda in F Major.)

Program note by Peter Laki.

String Quartet No. 5, Op. 126 (2014)

Lowell Liebermann

Born February 22, 1961 in New York City

World Premiere

String Quartet No. 5, Op. 126 was commissioned by Music Accord for the Emerson String Quartet, to whom the work is dedicated. It is such an honor (and not an unintimidating one!) to write for an ensemble that has been, through their many recordings, such an iconic presence in my own musical development.

This Quartet, like much of my instrumental music, has no extra-musical program – it is as absolute and abstract as music can be – yet, at the same time, I have no doubt that my mindset while composing the piece and its resultant overriding elegiac tone was at least partly influenced by any number of depressing/terrifying events of the kind with which we are all bombarded daily, in what seems more and more like a world gone mad.

The work's mysterious opening, marked *Limpido* (still), introduces a number of motives which are heard and developed throughout the Quartet. Structurally, the Quartet is in one arc-like symmetrical movement consisting of two mostly slow sections flanking a fast section whose structure is, in and of itself, symmetrical. If we think of that central fast section as being akin to a scherzo and trio, then the reprise of the scherzo section is actually an intervallic inversion of its first statement, while the trio section divides at its midpoint, the second half being a mirror image of the first half.

Program note by Lowell Liebermann.



Scan for an interview! UMS chats with Emerson String Quartet cellist Paul Watkins, who also serves as artistic director of the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival.

Download a free QR code reader app on your smart phone, point your camera at the code, and scan to see multimedia content; or visit www.umslobby.org to find these stories.

UMS is especially proud to co-commission and present this evening's world premiere of **Lowell Liebermann's *String Quartet No. 5***, written specifically for the Emerson Quartet. UMS's commitment to the commissioning of new work is an important part of its history and mission. Independently as well as through partnerships with peer and industry organizations including **Music Accord**, a commissioning consortium comprised of top classical music presenting organizations throughout the US, **UMS has commissioned 67 new works since 1989**. Music Accord's goal is to create a significant number of new works and to ensure presentation of these works in venues throughout the US as well as internationally.

Since its formation in 1997, Music Accord has commissioned more than 20 new works through its collaboration with composers including William Bolcom, Elliott Carter, Mario Davidovsky, David Del Tredici, Gabriela Lena Frank, Lukas Foss, Osvaldo Golijov, Steven Mackey, Augusta Read Thomas, Kevin Puts, Roberto Sierra, Bright Sheng, and performing artists and ensembles including Jeremy Denk, Stephanie Blythe, Borromeo String Quartet, Brentano Quartet, Chanticleer, Thomas Hampson, eighth blackbird, St. Lawrence Quartet, Frederica von Stade, and Tokyo String Quartet.

Music Accord Partners are:

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 San Francisco Performances
 Tanglewood Festival/Boston Symphony Orchestra
 UMS at the University of Michigan

String Quartet No. 3 in F Major, Op. 73 (1946)

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906 in St. Petersburg, Russia

Died August 9, 1975 in Moscow

*UMS premiere: Borodin String Quartet,
February 1967 in Rackham Auditorium*

SNAPSHOT OF HISTORY...IN 1946:

- A tornado on the Detroit River kills 17 people
- Eugene O'Neill writes *The Iceman Cometh*
- Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements* is first performed
- Major famine in the Soviet Union: an estimated one million people die
- Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* is published

Shostakovich's Third Quartet was written in 1946, one year after the end of World War II. It begins with a humorous, almost flippant melody that sets the tone for a light-hearted movement full of wit and charm, although not devoid of a few slightly harsher accents, especially in the strongly contrapuntal development section. The real clouds don't start gathering until the second movement. The simple broken triads of the viola, in unchanging quarter-notes, sound rather menacing from the outset, as the accompaniment to a chromatic theme in the first violin. By the time all four instruments have entered, the mood is one of intense nervousness, manifested by the second theme that grows out of a palpitating *staccato* motif, played extremely softly by the entire group.

The third movement is one of Shostakovich's "brutal" scherzos; its melodic material unfolds over a set of "angry" rhythmic *ostinatos* (repeated figures). A more playful second theme, introduced by the viola, functions as the trio (middle section). The recapitulation is intensified by added contrapuntal imitation and harmonies that are even more astringent than they were the first time.

The fourth movement is a deeply tragic "Adagio," written in the form of a *passacaglia* (variations upon an unchanging bass theme). Its pathos-filled melody is first presented in a powerful unison by second violin, viola, and cello; it is later repeated by the first violin, softly, like a lament. With the final repeat of the theme, played by the viola with only the sparsest of accompaniments in the cello, we reach the lowest depths of despair.

The finale is the longest and most complex movement of the quartet. It opens with an enigmatic cello melody punctuated by the *pizzicato* (plucked) notes of the viola. This theme – gently lilting but filled with chromatic tension – is developed at length, joined by a beautifully singing second melody and a humorous third one, which recalls the first movement. Yet at the climactic point the tragic lament melody of the fourth movement returns with devastating power. After this outburst, the humorous theme reappears, but in the minor mode instead of major, losing much of its cheerfulness. And the lilting first theme ends up as a solitary *adagio* melody for first violin, reaching the instrument's highest register in a subdued *pianissimo* as the other instruments play a single F Major chord held for a full 26 measures.

In the Third Quartet, Shostakovich managed to reverse completely the traditional "darkness-to-light" sequence so often found in classical music. Moving from a cheerful opening to four movements of increasing seriousness and drama, the work strongly suggests that for Shostakovich in 1946, happiness was a very fragile emotion. Even though the war was over, the memory of past suffering was not about to go away easily, and laughter could turn into tears at any moment.

Program note by Peter Laki.



Photo: Lisa Marie Mazzucco

The **EMERSON STRING QUARTET** has an unparalleled list of achievements over three decades: more than 30 acclaimed recordings, nine Grammys (including two for “Best Classical Album”), three Gramophone Awards, the Avery Fisher Prize, *Musical America’s* “Ensemble of the Year” and collaborations with many of the greatest artists of our time.

The arrival of Paul Watkins in 2013 has had a profound effect on the Emerson Quartet. Mr. Watkins, a distinguished soloist, award-winning conductor, and devoted chamber musician, joined the ensemble in its 37th season, and his dedication and enthusiasm have infused the Quartet with a warm, rich tone and a palpable joy in the collaborative process. The reconfigured group has been greeted with impressive critical and public accolades.

The Quartet’s summer 2014 season began with engagements in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and a pair of concerts in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Following a tour of Japan, the Quartet performed at the Ravinia, Tanglewood, Chamber Music Northwest, Aspen, Domaine Forget, Toronto, Austin, Norfolk, Cape Cod, and Mostly Mozart festivals. In a season of over 80 quartet performances, mingled with the Quartet members’ individual artistic commitments, Emerson highlights feature numerous concerts on both coasts and throughout North America. In October, Paul Watkins performs with the Emerson Quartet for the first time in Carnegie Hall. The program includes the Schumann *Piano Quintet* with acclaimed pianist and colleague Yefim Bronfman. Multiple tours of Europe comprise dates in Austria, Ireland, Switzerland, France, Germany, and the UK. The Quartet

continues its series at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC for its 35th season, and, in May, is presented by colleagues David Finckel and Wu Han for the two final season concerts at Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in Alice Tully Hall. Guest artists Colin Carr and Paul Neubauer join the Emerson in a program that also includes the New York premiere of Lowell Liebermann's *String Quartet No. 5*, commissioned by a consortium of presenters, including UMS, through Music Accord.

As an exclusive artist for Sony Classical, the Emerson recently released *Journeys*, its second CD on that label, featuring Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir de Florence* and Schoenberg's *Verklaerte Nacht*. Future recordings are planned with Mr. Watkins.

Formed in 1976 and based in New York City, the Emerson was one of the first quartets formed with two violinists alternating in the first chair position. In 2002, the Quartet began to stand for most of its concerts, with the cellist seated on a riser.

The Emerson Quartet took its name from the American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and is Quartet-in-Residence at Stony Brook University. In January of 2015, the Quartet will receive the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award, Chamber Music America's highest honor, in recognition of its significant and lasting contribution to the chamber music field.



UMS ARCHIVES

This evening's performance marks the **Emerson String Quartet's** 16th appearance under UMS auspices. The Emerson Quartet made their UMS debut in March 1989 in a program featuring works by Mozart, Janáček, and Brahms at Rackham Auditorium. The Quartet most recently appeared in Ann Arbor in September 2011 in a program of Mozart's Late Quartets at Rackham Auditorium. UMS welcomes Emerson Quartet cellist **Paul Watkins**, who makes his UMS debut this evening.