



# PROGRAM: EMERSON STRING QUARTET MARCH 24 / 7:30 PM BING CONCERT HALL

## ARTISTS

Emerson String Quartet  
Eugene Drucker, *violin*  
Philip Setzer, *violin*  
Lawrence Dutton, *viola*  
Paul Watkins, *cello*

The Emerson String Quartet appears by  
arrangement with IMG Artists.

[www.emersonquartet.com](http://www.emersonquartet.com)

## PROGRAM

### Maurice Ravel: *String Quartet in F Major (1902–1903)*

*Allegro moderato – Très doux*  
*Assez vif – Très rythmé*  
*Très lent*  
*Vif et agité*  
(Philip Setzer, *first violin*)

### Alban Berg: *String Quartet, op. 3 (1910)*

*Langsam*  
*Mässiger viertel*  
(Philip Setzer, *first violin*)

## INTERMISSION

### Claude Debussy: *String Quartet in G Minor, op. 10 (1893)*

*Animé et très décidé*  
*Assez vif et bien rythmé*  
*Andantino, doucement expressif*  
*Très modéré – Très mouvementé et avec passion*  
(Eugene Drucker, *first violin*)

**PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE.** Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.

**MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)**  
**STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR**  
**(1902–1903)**

Even though Ravel worked on his sole string quartet from late 1902 to April 1903, while he was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire, it is far from a student work. The piece integrates the several styles that he had incorporated into his own musical vocabulary. A major influence was Debussy, particularly Debussy's Quartet in G Minor, with its Impressionist quality and fascinating tone colors. At the same time, the clear and transparent textures, impelling logic, and tight control of the basic organization bear testimony to Ravel's strong Neoclassical proclivity and admiration for Mozart. Finally, some of the strange and unfamiliar tonal effects reflect an interest in the exotic music of the Far East.

The generally excellent initial reactions to the quartet included some sharp criticism, with a few commentators even suggesting that Ravel make extensive revisions. Debussy, a good if not intimate friend of Ravel's, advised the younger composer, "In the name of the gods of music, and in mine, do not touch a single note of what you have written in your quartet." Despite this evidence of Debussy's support and approval, a comparison of the Debussy and Ravel quartets became a prime subject of newspapers and café debates in Paris, resulting in a breach between the two men. Eventually Ravel was moved to comment sadly, "It's probably better for us, after all, to be on frigid terms for illogical reasons."

The quartet opens with a thematic group that contains two distinctive ideas: a rich, warmly scored melody involving the entire quartet and a first-violin melody of a similar character over rapid figures in the second violin and viola. After speeding up to a climax, the music quiets, and the soaring second theme is stated by the first violin and viola playing two octaves apart, producing a most striking tone color. Although the rest of the movement follows the dictates

of regular sonata form, the precise writing, exciting tonal effects, and powerful climaxes make this a most impressive movement.

Ravel conjures up the sound of a Javanese gamelan orchestra in the swiftly moving pizzicato opening of the second movement by having the outer instruments playing in 3/4 meter (three groups of two eighth notes to a measure) while the inner parts play in 6/8 meter (two groups of three eighth notes in the same measure). Trills and tremolos create a lustrous sheen as the movement continues. The cello alone plays a transition to the slow, moody middle section. Although they are not exactly parallel, the extremely lyrical themes here seem to grow from the second subject of the first movement. A shortened reprise of the opening section concludes the movement.

Ravel achieves an improvisatory rhapsodic feeling in the slow third movement, with its continually shifting tempi and episodic construction. He is also able, with consummate skill, to weave the opening melody of the quartet in with the new melodic content. As in the previous movements, there is an ever-changing progression of new and imaginative tone colors—a remarkable achievement considering the fact that Ravel had at his disposal only the four instruments and not the strings, winds, and percussion of a symphony orchestra.

The vigorous finale opens with an angry snarl followed by a long held note, repeated twice before the movement starts moving forward. Its awkward five-beat meter, possibly Russian in inspiration, lends it an unsettling character. The rest of the movement alternates the contrasting expressive and lyrical melodies, including returns of the first-movement theme, with repeats of the opening outburst.

The quartet, which was dedicated to Fauré, was introduced in Paris by the Heymann Quartet on March 5, 1904.

**ALBAN BERG (1885–1935)**  
**STRING QUARTET, OP. 3 (1910)**

Berg's musical talent grew and flourished under the tutelage of Arnold Schoenberg. The String Quartet, his last apprentice work, was "received directly from Schoenberg," according to Berg himself. Most experts, though, also consider the quartet Berg's first mature composition. Written during the spring and early summer of 1910, it exhibits freshness, assurance, and mastery of technique.

The work approaches the boundary between tonality and atonality. Certain devices recall the musical vocabulary of Wagner, Mahler, and other late-19th-century composers, who had already stretched the limits of tonal relationships. But in other respects, it looks ahead to the 20th century's rejection of traditional tonality.

The quartet contains just two movements: the first is introspective and lyrical, and the second is intense and agitated. There are the usual two subjects in the first movement. The opening-movement theme includes all 12 notes of the chromatic scale, although they are not treated as a tone row. After a short silence and some portentous sounds, played *sul ponticello* (on the bridge) by the cello, the tender second subject is introduced by the violin. In the unusually brief development section that follows, Berg is mostly concerned with working out the second theme. A new march-like figure is introduced in the recapitulation, characterized by a glassy *ponticello* sound. An extended slow coda, based on the march melody and the other material heard before, ends with a reminder of the opening theme.

The second movement is in rondo form, with five repeats of one theme separated by four contrasting episodes. Each appearance of the melody, though, is not an exact restatement but a free transformation of the original. Towards the end of the movement, Berg brings back the first movement's opening subject, effectively unifying the entire quartet.

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The String Quartet, op. 3, was first presented on April 24, 1911, in Vienna by an ad hoc quartet made up of Brunner, Holzer, Buchbinder, and Hasa. It was, however, the performance by the Havemann String Quartet at the First International Festival for Chamber Music in Salzburg on August 2, 1923, that attracted wide attention and established Berg's worldwide reputation in musical circles.

### CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918) STRING QUARTET IN G MINOR, OP. 10 (1893)

The period around 1890 was a crucial time in Debussy's life. The composer had just returned to Paris after a two-year Prix de Rome residency in Italy and was eager to rid himself of the restraints of the academicians. One of the first works in which he struck out in a new artistic direction was the Quartet in G Minor, which, along with *L'après-midi d'un faune* from the same time, established what is called the Impressionist style in music. Its varied tonal effects, soulful beauty, and freedom of form and structure provide an excellent musical counterpart to the Impressionist paintings and Symbolist poetry of the time.

The opening notes of the first movement are of overriding importance. They make up the germ, the melodic cell, from which the entire quartet unfolds and grows. This germinal motif is a rather rough-sounding motto; rhythmically complex and melodically convoluted, it zigzags back and forth within a comparatively limited tessitura. A distinguishing feature is the rapid three-note ornamental fillip at the central turning point.

Following the short motif and its repetition, three other melodies are heard. They come between restatements of the motif, each one in a slightly different form. The various themes, and especially the opening motto, are then heard in an imaginative procession of transformed shapes and guises—now surging with great passion, now stated in stentorian splendor, now stretched and drawn



out in length, now plaintively sung—until the movement races to its climactic resolution.

The second movement offers a profusion of sparkling tonal effects, led by the viola playing an obstinately repeated, quickened version of the motif. Above, beneath, and all around this ostinato figure, the other instruments furnish brilliant pizzicato flourishes and scintillating cross-rhythms. The cello brings this section to a close and establishes the murmuring accompaniment for the first violin playing the opening motif in leisurely augmentation. Sections of new and derived melodic material follow, including a rhythmically attractive pizzicato passage in which the original motto is transformed into five-beat meter. Then, just as the cello seems to be starting the murmuring accompaniment again, the movement fades away.

After false starts by the second violin and viola, the third movement starts with the first violin softly singing a languid melody that rocks gently back and forth in pitch. The viola next seizes one fragment of the melody and expands it into a slightly faster theme. Another theme, also introduced by the viola, includes the three-note figure of the opening motto. It is worked up to an impassioned climax before a return of the quiet rocking theme brings the movement to a subdued conclusion.

The introduction to the final movement, also based on the original motif, continues the quiet mood. The music grows somewhat more animated as the cello starts a fugue-like passage, using further transformation of the germinal motif. The fast part of the last movement then starts with a rapid, cluster-of-notes theme in the viola. From the final notes of this theme, Debussy spins out another melody. The shared notes of both themes become the accompaniment for the motif, this time in grandiose elongation. A reminder of the opening theme of this movement leads to a coda and conclusion that provide a final, exciting glimpse of the considerably altered germinal motto.

Completed early in 1893, the quartet was dedicated to the Ysaÿe Quartet, which gave the first performance in Paris on December 29, 1893.

—Notes by Melvin Berger from *Guide to Chamber Music*, published by Anchor/Doubleday

### EMERSON STRING QUARTET

The Emerson String Quartet has amassed an unparalleled list of achievements over four decades including 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 had a profound effect on the Emerson String Quartet. Watkins, a distinguished soloist, an award-winning conductor, and a 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 praised by critics and fans alike around the world. “The Emerson brought the requisite virtuosity to every phrase. But this music is equally demanding emotionally and intellectually, and the group’s powers of concentration and sustained intensity were at least as impressive” (*New York Times*).

The 2016–2017 season marks the Emerson’s 40th anniversary, and highlights of this milestone year reflect all aspects of the quartet’s venerable artistry, with high-profile projects, collaborations, commissions, and recordings. Universal Music Group has reissued its entire Deutsche Grammophon discography in a 52-CD boxed set. After recent engagements together at the Kennedy Center and Tanglewood, the illustrious soprano Renée Fleming joins the Emerson at Walt Disney Concert Hall, performing works by Alban Berg and Egon Wellesz from their first collaborative recording, released by Decca in the fall of 2015. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center has programmed celebratory concerts at Alice Tully Hall, as well as in Chicago and Purchase, New York, in October: the Calidore String Quartet teams up with the Emerson for the Mendelssohn Octet, and the Emerson gives the New York premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage’s *Shroud* (co-commissioned by CMS). Former Emerson cellist David Finckel appears as a special guest for Schubert’s Quintet in C Major, and in May 2017, legendary pianist Maurizio Pollini will join the quartet for a performance of the Brahms Quintet at Carnegie Hall. Additional highlights include a concert with clarinetist David Shifrin as part of the ensemble’s season-long residency at Chamber Music Northwest

in Portland, Oregon, as well as a collaboration with cellist Clive Greensmith for the Schubert Quintet at the Soka Performing Arts Center in Aliso Viejo, California. The Emerson continues its series at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., for its 38th season, and the quartet members have been selected as artistic advisors for Wolf Trap’s Chamber Music at The Barns in Virginia, curating the series in celebration of its 20th season.

Multiple tours of Europe include dates in Austria, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom (including Wigmore Hall for its 40th Anniversary Gala). The quartet also visits Mexico for the Festival Internacional Cervantino.

Formed in 1976 and based in New York City, the Emerson String Quartet was one of the first quartets whose violinists alternated 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, which took its name from the American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, is quartet-in-residence at Stony Brook University. During the spring of 2016, full-time Stony Brook faculty members Philip Setzer and Lawrence Dutton received the honor of becoming Distinguished Professors, and part-time faculty members Eugene Drucker and Paul Watkins were awarded the title of Honorary Distinguished Professor. In January 2015, the ensemble received 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.

## THE CONJURED LIFE THE LEGACY OF SURREALISM



René Magritte (Belgium, 1898–1967), *Les merveilles de la nature (The Miracles of Nature)*, 1927. Oil on canvas. Collection: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. MCA # 1992.46. Gift of Joseph and Jay Shapiro. © René Magritte/Anastasiya Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Nathan Key © MCA, Chicago

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The *Conjured Life: The Legacy of Surrealism* is organized by the Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University. This presentation builds upon the exhibition *Surrealism: The Conjured Life* organized by Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago with support generously provided by The Prisker Traubert Collection Exhibition Fund, Helen and Sam Zell, Carol and Douglas Cohen, Carolyn S. Bucksbaum, Anonymous, Betsy and Andrew Rosenfield, Richard and Ellen Sandor Family, and Mary E. Ittelton. The Cantor Arts Center gratefully acknowledges support of this presentation from the Loughlin Family Exhibition Fund, The Clumbeck Endowment Fund, The Elizabeth Swindells Hulsey Exhibitions Fund, the Contemporary Collectors Circle, and Museum Members.