



**The Diablo Regional Arts Association
presents the**

**2002-2003 Season
Program V**

**Clif Foster, violin
Kayo Miki, violin
Yasushi Ogura, violin
Karen Shinozaki, violin
Phyllis Kamrin, viola
Madeline Prager, viola
Nina Flyer, cello
Miriam Perkoff, cello
Mary Fettig, alto saxophone
Melanie Bryson, piano**

**Grace Presbyterian Church
Sunday June 8, 2003 4pm**



Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)
String Quartet No. 10 in A Flat Major, Op. 118 (1964)

What could brighten a lovely June afternoon (presuming, of course, that this is one) more than hearing a string quartet by Shostakovich? Answer: many...many...many things.

Now that the 20th Century has passed into history, it can be said that the fifteen string quartets of Dmitri Shostakovich hold the pre-eminent position in quartet writing, as did Beethoven's sixteen in the 19th century. This Tenth quartet has been described with words such as "untroubled," "gentle," "calm," "serene" and "optimistic." It was composed in 1964 quickly following the composer's Ninth quartet Op. 117 which gave him no small bit of trouble in its gestation. These two quartets, in turn, were sandwiched between his Thirteenth Symphony "*Babi Yar*" Op. 113 (1962), and the symphonic poem *The Execution of Stepan Razin* Op. 119 both works based on texts by Yevgeniy Yevtushenko. The composer referred to this prolific period in 1964, following a dry spell in 1963 as "creative diarrhea." The Tenth quartet was composed in the month of July during a summer vacation at the Composer's Retreat in Dilizhan, Armenia. The work was dedicated to his friend and colleague Moisey Vainberg. In *Shostakovich: A Life* Laurel Fay tells us that Shostakovich and Vainberg were engaged in a "playful competition" and Shostakovich had "admitted he had set his sights on overtaking Vainberg's record of nine quartets." Furthermore, she informs us that "the Shostakoviches celebrated the completion of the new quartet on the second anniversary of the composition of the Thirteenth Symphony."

The first movement opens with a theme that obscures the key rather than reinforcing it. The second lyrical theme is given to the cello, accompanied by a rhythmic, repeated staccato figure given to the viola. This is followed by yet another theme given to the violin. The movement plays itself out using these themes, though the volume level is kept soft throughout. By contrast the second movement is strident and loud, opening with a sardonic hiccoughing military march-like theme. The third movement returns to the quiet of the first with a passacaglia. The passacaglia is a set of variations played over a repeated bass line. Here, the bass line is given to the cello. What makes for a good passacaglia is that the variations flow seamlessly over the repeated bass line, rather than have the music stall and the listener be aware each time the bass melody is repeated. The theme is repeated nine times, (but who's counting?). The fourth movement follows without pause, from the passacaglia with a jaunty theme. It features new material as well as quotations of material from previous movements. After the movement's climax, the music gradually and literally winds down amid the quotations.

The Tenth quartet, along with the Ninth was given its premiere performance by the Beethoven Quartet on November 20, 1964 in Moscow. The next day the two quartets were performed in then Leningrad, now St. Petersburg.



“I have a tremendous passion for the fashionable dances and there are times when I go dancing night after night with dance hostesses [...] purely out of rhythmic enthusiasm and subconscious sensuality; this gives my creative work a phenomenal impulse, because in my consciousness I am incredibly earthly, even bestial...”

Erwin Schulhoff

from a letter to Alban Berg Feb.2, 1921

Erwin Schulhoff (1894- 1942)

Hot Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano (1930)

Schulhoff was born on June 8, 1894 to a German-speaking Jewish family in Prague – then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Recognized as a child prodigy by none other than Dvorak, he was admitted to the Prague Conservatory to study piano (1902-04). He continued his studies at the Vienna Conservatory (1904-08), after which he studied with Max Reger at the Leipzig Conservatory (1908-10), twice winning the Mendelssohn Prize, followed by a course of study at the Cologne Conservatory (1910-14), as well as some lessons from Debussy. Despite all these years of conservatory study, he emerged as a composer who plunged headlong into the Twentieth Century, and embraced the new currents in both popular and art music. Schulhoff quickly gained a reputation as a formidable pianist who, along with the classical repertoire, championed the avant-garde music of his time, giving performances of the works of Scriabin, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Hindemith, Bartok along with the quarter-tone piano music of Alois Haba. Schulhoff even gave free classes at the Prague Conservatory in quarter-tone music. A Prague music critic described him as “a distinguished virtuoso pianist, especially bred for new music, with a splendid technique, unequalled memory and radical interpretational will; a revolutionary composer, with both feet firmly planted on the ground.”

Schulhoff allied himself with the Dada art movement, of the post-WWI era, dedicating a work, *Pittoresken*, to the artist George Grosz. One of his other Dada inspired compositions *In Futurum* contains, as its middle movement, only a rest - marked “with feeling.” In yet another work, *Sonata Erotica*, designated “for Gentlemen only”, Schulhoff composed a piece for female voice, with obbligato chamber pot. The work was to evoke a woman having an orgasm, and more. (Today, a work such as this would have probably earned him a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, as long as he lost the “Gentlemen” business). Yes, the work has been recorded – more than once.

As might be expected, Schulhoff was attracted to American popular music – ragtime and jazz. Unlike Stravinsky, Milhaud, and Ravel, whose incursions into jazz were somewhat superficial and it must be said slightly condescending, Schulhoff worked as a jazz pianist in the "Hot Jazz" clubs of Europe in the Twenties. Though he composed many jazz-inspired compositions, more importantly he was also a jazz improviser. His compositions were welcomed in many of the contemporary music festivals of the time, as well as in the more traditional venues. In addition to his



“serious” works, he composed popular dance music and songs under pseudonyms.

Another interesting aspect of Schulhoff’s musical career was his work in radio. During his tenure as pianist for the Prague Radio Orchestra, he involved himself in creating works especially for live radio broadcast, as well as “studio work” involving the making of recordings. The Second Symphony and Concerto for String Quartet, both dating from 1932, were created especially for radio broadcast, exploiting his knowledge of microphones and sound mixing to achieve a scale and clarity suited to the new broadcast medium.

The rise of Nazism in Germany in the early Thirties, changed his fortune, and put him in jeopardy. As a Jew, his career in Germany, which had been quite successful in Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden was finished. He had always believed that there should be reconciliation between the Germanic and Czech cultures - not surprisingly, since by birth he belonged to both worlds. However, the Czech authorities of the time were suspicious of him for what they felt were his “pro-German views” – despite the fact that German artists who he was associated with were being persecuted by the Nazis. As if he didn’t have enough trouble, Schulhoff had become a communist. His commitment to communist ideals was such that he even set the Communist Manifesto to music, as a cantata for four soloists, three choirs and a brass band. He became a Soviet citizen in 1939. When the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, he sought to emigrate to the Soviet Union. While awaiting his Soviet visa, however, with the collapse of the non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin, he was arrested - as a Jew, a “Degenerate” (*Entartige*) artist, and a Soviet citizen. He was arrested in Prague and deported to the Bavarian concentration camp Wulzburg, along with his son, where he died of tuberculosis according to one source, typhus according to another, and torture according to a third. Had he escaped to the Soviet Union, one doubts that he would have fared much better-a guest in a Gulag. What advice might Shostakovich have given him about settling in Stalin’s People’s Paradise? What was it that caused him to seek refuge in the East rather than the West - America in particular, as did so many other musicians?

After the War his late “Socialist” works were somewhat revived in communist occupied Czechoslovakia. In 1962, manuscripts, which he had left in Moscow during a visit in 1940, were discovered, further enabling a resurrection of his works. Today there are a sizable number of his works available on recording; symphonies, concerti, piano music, songs, chamber music, ballet music and his opera *Flammen* (The Flames). Many of these works were recorded in the Czech Republic honoring the 100th anniversary of his birth in 1994.

In past seasons, the Sierra Chamber Society has presented works for string quartet by Erwin Schulhoff; Five Pieces for String Quartet and the String Quartet No.1 both composed in 1924. Today, something different.

The Hot Sonata, and a sonata it is, all four movements being in traditional sonata form, was composed in 1930. The work received its premier performance not in the concert



hall, but during a broadcast of the Berlin Radio Hour on April 10, 1930. Shulhoff himself performed the piano part, while jazz saxophonist Billy Barton of the London Savoy Orpheus Band played the alto sax. “Only musicians like this can play my Sonate,” Schulhoff was quoted as saying. It proved to be one of Schulhoff’s most popular works and was published the same year by Schott. The Hot Sonata may remind one of the works of George Gershwin, Zez Confrey, or Bix Biederbecke - though the opening may recall to some Frank Devol’s theme song to the old TV show “My Three Sons.” The lovely but ironic third movement blues is the most forward-looking of the entire work, anticipating some of Duke Ellington’s later work by more than 20 years. The final movement contains new material, as well as a reprise of the theme from the first movement.

“He started playing the piano at the age of four and was composing at eight, by which time he had memorized all the Beethoven symphonies and could play them on the piano. He may have even been superior creatively to Mozart as a young man, for Mendelssohn at sixteen had already written the Octet and was to follow it up in the following year with the Midsummer Night’s Dream Overture. Mozart at the same age had nothing comparable to show.”

Harold C. Schonberg

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Octet in E Flat, Op.20 (1825)

What could brighten a lovely June afternoon (presuming, of course, that this is one) more than hearing a string quartet by Shostakovich? Answer: many . . . many . . . many things, among them Mendelssohn’s Octet.

Felix Mendelssohn is surely one of music’s most celebrated child prodigies. His precocity manifested itself in both performance and composition. He appeared successfully as a pianist at age seven, and by 12 had composed sonatas, songs, cantatas, operas and symphonies.

Mendelssohn came from an upper-middle-class family. And while this meant that Felix never had to “work” for a living, he nevertheless drove himself to an early grave in an attempt to fulfill all of his many assumed musical responsibilities. It is said that he made the profession of music “respectable.” He was by all accounts a remarkable person. He possessed considerable talents as both a visual artist and writer. Languages came easy to him. His administrative and organizing talents were also considerable. Along with Robert Schumann and Ferdinand David, he founded the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843. (During the Nazi Era, his commemorative statue at the Conservatory was torn down.) He helped promote his contemporaries, among them Chopin, Berlioz and Schumann, whose symphonies he was the first to conduct, and was regarded as one of the finest conductors of his time. It is also to Mendelssohn that we owe the “modern” approach to performing the works of Bach and Handel.



Mendelssohn was adamant about sticking to the score – well almost, compared, that is, to the liberties then regularly taken. In this respect he ran afoul of most of his contemporaries who believed they could improve the scores of these past masters. He was also one of the great pianists of his day. Clarity, nuance, lack of mannerism, and again, fidelity to the score marked his playing. His style of playing eventually won out over the empty virtuosity, charlatanism, and showboating of many early 19th Century pianists. He also kept the keyboard works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven alive when they were eclipsed, much to his disgust, by those of Field, Hummel, and Kalkbrenner. In his work *The Great Pianists*, Harold Schonberg asserts that Mendelssohn was probably “one of the greatest improvisers of musical history.” The Octet for Strings was a product of his 16th year. It was most likely intended for the 19th century equivalent of jam sessions held at his parents home each week on Sunday mornings (what kind of musicians would be up on Sunday mornings?). Actually, they some of Berlins finest musicians, as well as those passing through the ‘hood on tour.

Young Felix dedicated the work to his violin and viola teacher Eduard Rietz, and took up the viola for the first performance in the fall of 1825. Though perhaps overshadowed by his *Overture to A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, it is in the Octet that Mendelssohn can be seen to have “come into his own” as a composer. For it is here that Mendelssohn’s talents have been allowed to flow, unhampered by past musical models. This is particularly evident in the sparkling melodic stream of the opening Allegro. The second movement is marked by bold harmonic excursions. The third movement Scherzo seems to be possessed by those spirits that will abound in the yet-to-be-composed Overture to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” However, according to the composer’s beloved sister Fanny, (a composer and pianist in her own right) the scherzo was inspired by the “Walpurgisnacht” scene from the first act of Goethe’s Faust. The final movement Presto, while filled with wonderful contrapuntal combinations, also features prominently a reintroduction of the Scherzo theme as well as a variant of the first movement’s second theme.

Program Notes by Joseph Way

*There is so much talk about music, and so little is really said.
I do not think words are at all adequate for the subject, and
if I found they were, I should end by writing no more music.*

Felix Mendelssohn



The Musicians

Clif Foster, violin, has been a regular member of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra since 1977. From 1994-1998, he toured as concertmaster for Yanni World Tours and is highlighted in the Albert Hall and Tribute videos. He has played in many orchestras, has been recorded in many film scores and loves playing chamber music. He lives in Benicia with his wife, Paula, where he maintains a garden.

Kayo Miki, violin, completed her Bachelor and Master's degree in Violin Performance from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York (1990-96). She has played with the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet Orchestras, as well as playing for numerous film scores and shows. Outside of music, her hobbies include running, cooking, going to beaches, watching old movies and spending time with friends.

Yasushi Ogura, violin, has appears regularly as a chamber musician and in recitals in the Bay Area, Los Angeles and in Japan. Currently he is Concertmaster of the Napa Valley Symphony, and concertmaster of the Diablo Ballet, where he was soloist in a choreographed performance of the Haydn G Major Violin Concerto. Mr. Ogura resides in Richmond with his wife and two sons.

Karen Shinozaki, violin, regularly performs with the New Century Chamber Orchestra, the Santa Rosa Symphony as Principal Second Violin, the Marin Symphony, the Sun Valley Summer Symphony, the Mendocino Music Festival Orchestra, and as an extra in the San Francisco Opera and Ballet Orchestras, and is a frequent chamber music collaborator, playing with diverse groups including the Santa Rosa Symphony Chamber Players (with Jeffrey Kahane).

Phyllis Kamrin, viola, has performed throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Ms. Kamrin has taught through the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Domenico School, the San Francisco Day School, and also teaches privately. Phyllis has played in the music soundtracks for IMAX films, several TV movies and feature films. Ms. Kamrin can be heard on the Kameleon, VQS and Harmonia Mundi labels.

Madeline Prager, viola, has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician in Europe, where she lived for 25 years. Ms Prager has



attended the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, and appears with the Nova Trio, Philharmonic Trio of Berlin, Villa Musica Ensemble, and the Ulf Hoelscher Ensemble, which recently performed, recorded, and released the world premiere of a newly discovered Octet by Max Bruch on the CPO record label. In addition to playing as much chamber music as possible, Madeline Prager teaches at the Crowden School, in the Berkeley Public schools, at the University of the Pacific, and in her private studio.

Nina Flyer, cello, is presently principal cellist of the Women's Philharmonic and the Bear Valley Music Festival, as well as cello and chamber music instructor and member of the faculty piano trio at the University of the Pacific. As a proponent of contemporary music Ms. Flyer plays regularly with Composers Inc. and the San Francisco Chamber Music Players.

Miriam Perkoff, cello, As a cellist, she performs frequently with the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet Orchestras. She co-founded the *New Century Chamber Orchestra* and was the founder of the *Modern Arts Trio*, a piano trio known for premiering works by composers from around the world. She can be heard on two CD volumes of cello ensemble works on Delos Records, both of which were nominated for a Grammy Award.

Mary Fetting, saxophone, has toured and recorded with Stan Kenton, Marian McPartland, Tito Puente, and Flora Purim. She has played in many shows including: *Phantom of the Opera*, *Le Miserables*, *Miss Saigon* and many others. She has recorded film scores and has performed with the San Francisco, Oakland and Napa Symphonies.

Melanie Bryson, piano, has performed with many artists, including Joe Henderson, Bernadette Peterson, Nancy Wilson and Samuel Ramey. Locally, she has performed with the Berkeley, Oakland, and California Symphonies, as well as the American Ballet Theatre. As an arranger and composer she has worked with Donald Byrd, the White Heat Swing Orchestra, Freddie Redd and the Johnny Nocturne Band. She has been pianist for movie and TV scores and is pianist and Music Director for San Francisco University High School.



Sierra Chamber Society 2003-2004 Season

Dates To Be Announced

Mozart - Violin and Viola Duet in B flat, K424

Juon - Piano Trio

Ravel - String Quartet

Britten - String Quartet Op. 25 No. 1

Schoenfeld - Cafe Music

Mendelssohn - String Quintet Op. 87 in B flat

Haydn - String Quartet from Op. 33

Bartok - Contrasts

Korngold - String Quartet No. 2

Bach - Flute Sonata

Dahl - Concerto a tres for Clarinet, Violin, and Cello

Ligeti - Bagatelles for Wind Quintet

Poulenc - Sextet for Piano and Wind Quartet

Boccherini - Guitar Quintet

Ravel - Duo for Violin and Cello

Brahms - Piano Quintet in F minor

The Sierra Chamber Society:

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♩ FUGUEMASTERS!!
For scrapin' my bleeding fingerprints from the keyboard!
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