



**The Diablo Regional Arts Association
presents the**

**2003-2004 Season
Program II**

**Cathy Down, violin
Robin Mayforth, violin
Linda Wang, violin
Christina King, viola
Madeline Prager, viola
Barbara Andres, cello
Nina Flyer, cello
Sonia Leong, piano**

**Grace Presbyterian Church
Sunday December 14, 2003 4pm**



Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

String Quartet No. 1, Op.25
(1941)

- I Andante sostenuto - Allegro vivo
- II Allegretto con slancio
- III Andante calmo
- IV Molto vivace

Robin Mayforth, violin
Christina King, viola

Cathy Down, violin
Barbara Andres, cello

Paul Schoenfield
(1947-)

Café Music for Violin, Cello and Piano
Op. 17 (1986)

- I Allegro con fuoco
- II Andante Moderato
- III Presto

Linda Wang, violin *Nina Flyer, cello*
Sonia Leong, piano

Intermission

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

String Quintet in B flat, Op. 87
(1845)

- I Allegro vivace
- II Andante scherzando
- III Adagio e lento
- IV Allegro Molto vivace

Linda Wang, violin *Robin Mayforth, violin*
Madeline Prager, viola *Christina King, viola*
Barbara Andres, cello



Our sages developed music from time immemorial for the mind to take shelter in that pure being which stands apart as one's true self. Real music is not for wealth, not for honors, or not even for the joys of the mind - it is a kind of yoga, a path for realization and salvation to purify your mind and heart and give you longevity.

Ali Akbar Khan

Britten has been, since the start of his career, a boy wonder. Something of the aura of the boy wonder still hangs about him. I know of no other composer alive today who writes with such phenomenal flair. Other composers write with facility, but Britten's facility is breath-taking. He combines an absolutely solid technical equipment with a reckless freedom in handling the more complex compositional textures. The whole thing is carried off with an abandon and verve that are irresistible. The resultant music may not always be of the best quality, but it is certainly of a unique quality - for there is no one in contemporary music who is remotely like him.

Aaron Copland

Copland on Music (1947)

Obviously it is no use having a technique unless you have the ideas to use this technique; but there is, unfortunately a tendency in many quarters to believe that brilliance of technique is a danger rather than a help. This is sheer nonsense. There has never been a composer worth his salt who has not had supreme technique. I'll go further than that and say that in the work of your supreme artist you can't separate inspiration from technique. I'd like anyone to tell me where Mozart's inspiration ends and technique begins.

Benjamin Britten

From a broadcast talk "The Composer and the Listener" (1946)

Benjamin Britten - Lord Britten of Aldeburgh (1913 - 1976)
String Quartet No. 1, Op. 25 (1941)

According to his biographer, Eric Walter White, Britten started piano lessons at age 5. He composed his first string quartet at age 9, started studying viola at age 10, and by the time he left preparatory school at age 14, had composed six string quartets, twelve piano sonatas, dozens of songs, violin sonatas, cello sonatas, suites, waltzes, rondos, fantasies, variations, a tone poem entitled *Chaos and Cosmos*, an oratorio *Samuel*, and a symphony for gigantic orchestra. His opus numbers surpassed the one hundred mark. None of this vast amount of work was published. However, he did incorporate some of his early piano pieces and songs into his *Simple Symphony* of



1925 (revised 1934). Before attending the Royal College of Music, he studied theory and composition privately with Frank Bridge, who made a profound impression on him. His homage to Bridge, the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* for String Orchestra, Op. 10 (1937) gained him international recognition.

Britten composed all forms of music: symphonies, chamber music, operas, choral and vocal music. He had a particular gift for vocal writing, and his long relationship with tenor Peter Pears resulted in many fine works for accompanied voice. He also composed music for the theater, film scores, and radio music. Britten accepted commissions of every kind - "*Hack work will not hurt an artist's integrity provided he does his best work with every commission.*" Among his operas *Peter Grimes* (1944) has won a permanent place in the repertory.

Britten had an affinity for and love of English music of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, and in particular the music of Henry Purcell (1659 - 95) characterized by Britten as having "*clarity, brilliance, tenderness and strangeness*". This was English music before Handel and the House of Hanover "Germanified" it. His embracing of this music was not based on parochial nationalism. Rather, in studying early music Britten and other Twentieth Century composers found procedures, relationships, and usage which was outside the circumscribed world of the major-minor tonal system, and quite compatible with their own musical language.

The Quartet No. 1 in D was composed as the result of a commission from Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge. Britten and tenor Peter Pears had come to the United States for a stay that would last from 1939 - 42, with a letter of introduction from his former teacher Frank Bridge; himself a friend and recipient of support from Mrs. Coolidge.

According to Phillip Reed in his notes accompanying a recording of this Quartet by the Sorrel Quartet on Chandos Records, this work "was composed during the summer of 1941 while the composer and Pears were staying at the California home of the two-piano duo of Rae Robertson and Ethel Bartlett." Reed goes on to say "From Escondido, California Britten wrote a note to his publisher Ralph Hawkes on June 14, 1941: '*Mrs. Coolidge came over to see us this afternoon- & has definitely commissioned me to do a quartet for her - to be played next September over here! Short notice & a bit of a sweat to do it so quickly, but I'll do it as the cash will be useful!*'". According to Melvin Berger in his *Guide to Chamber Music*, "It



was in July 1941, while living in the small seashore town of Amityville, Long Island that he composed his first string quartet under a commission from Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge.” Well... I am willing to split the difference and say that this Quartet was composed in Dwight, Kansas!...Not that it matters, but Britten received \$400 for the work. And again, according to Mr. Reed, “The day after finishing it, he wrote to Elisabeth Mayer: *‘It is quite a big work (about 24 minutes) and I’m very bucked with it so far. It’s got a few rather lame bars in it, but I hope to have them “hotted up” in a few days.’*”

Both Berger and Reed concur that the work received its premier performance in Los Angeles on September 21, 1941 by the Coolidge Quartet. At its east Coast premiere in Washington D.C., Britten received the Coolidge Medal for “eminent services to Chamber Music”. As a whole the work abounds in highly contrasted sections; dreamy and athletic, with strange and beautiful tone color - especially evident in the Quartet’s opening. In fact, one could aptly apply Britten’s characterization of Purcell’s music to this Quartet. By the way...“con slancio” means “with dash”

This is not the kind of music for relaxation, but the kind that makes people sweat: not only the performer, but the audience.

Paul Schoenfield

Paul Schoenfield (1947-)
Café Music for violin, cello and piano (1986)

Not to worry, this music is by SchoenFIELD, not SchoenBERG. And despite the ominous quote above, while the music may indeed make the performers sweat, it will surely bring more than a smile or two to the lips of the audience.

Much, if not most, of the information contained below about Schoenfield comes from a biographical article about him from The Milken Archive of American Jewish Music.

Freelance composer and pianist Paul Schoenfield studied music at Converse College and Carnegie Mellon University. He received his doctorate in music at the University of Arizona. Schoenfield has divided his time between living in the US and Israel. He has received many grants and commissions from such organizations as the National Endowment for the Arts, the



Rockefeller Fund, the Bush Foundation, Meet the Composer, and Chamber Music America. His compositions have been performed by the New York Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, and the Haifa Symphony Orchestra. As a performer, he toured with Music from Marlboro and has recorded the complete works for violin and piano of Bartok with Sergiu Luca.

According to the composer, in his liner notes to the CD *Café Music*¹, he was inspired to write *Café Music* after sitting in for the pianist of the trio that regularly performs at a restaurant in Minneapolis called Murray's. "My intention was to write a kind of high-class dinner music - music which could be played at a restaurant, but might also (just barely) find its way into a concert hall."

The most striking thing about *Café Music* is its blend and juxtaposition of many musical styles; from Ragtime, Viennese schmaltz, Broadway, gypsy, to the Hassidic folk music which he incorporates into many of his works. The second movement of *Café Music* incorporates one such lovely Hassidic melody. While Schoenfield, somewhat slyly, claims not to regard himself as an art-music [serious music] composer, yet this good-humored, enjoyable work represents a trend by some contemporary composers to synthesize the musics and styles of the last century, if not millenium into something new, yet free from the preaching, teaching, scolding, shocking qualities that 20th artists in all media felt incumbent to display in order to be taken seriously.

Café Music was commissioned by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and was premiered during a chamber concert in January 1987.

1 *Café Music* - Paul Schoenfield Innova Recordings #544

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)

Quintet in B flat, Op. 87 (1845)

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 7, 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”.

Chamber music played a relatively small part in Mendelssohn's musical output. He wrote only 2 string quintets, Op. 18 and Op.87. The string quintet - a string quartet with, usually, the addition of a second viola was used to perfection by Mozart. The Quintets of both Beethoven and Mendelssohn are given short shrift when compared to those of Mozart. The standard reference works, if they mention the Mendelssohn quintets at all have only to say that



they are unjustifiably neglected. Of the two works in this genre by Mendelssohn, the Op .87 quintet is the darker and more dramatic work. It was composed during a summer stay at Bad Soden (*like I know where that is*). The high point of the work is the bold third movement Adagio e lento which is almost symphonic in conception. According to the composer's friend, pianist-composer Ignaz Moscheles, Mendelssohn was somewhat dissatisfied with the last movement - as I am with the end of this article.

Program Notes by Joseph Way

The Musicians

Cathy Down, violin, was 5 years of age when she began taking lessons, emulating her mother who was a professional violinist. She attended the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where she received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees, studying with Zaven Melikian. Her desire for travel led her to move to Europe where she played as Second Concertmaster with the Baden-Baden Orchestra in Germany for one year and as Associate Concertmaster of the National Orchestra of Belgium for 3 years. In September 1993 Cathy moved back to the Bay Area and played with the New Century Chamber Orchestra and Sacramento Symphony until joining the San Francisco Symphony as an acting member in 1994. She became a member of that orchestra in September of 2001.

Robin Mayforth, violinist, is a founding member of the Pegasus String Quartet and currently serves as the Concertmaster of Symphony Silicon Valley. She has also served as concertmaster of the San Jose Symphony, the San Diego Opera, the Utah Festival Opera Company, the Performance Orchestra of Philadelphia and the Queens Philharmonia, NY. She has taught on the violin faculty at Stanford University and Santa Clara University. As a soloist, she has appeared with the Lancaster, Newark and Kennett Square Symphonies, as well as with the Delaware Chamber and Repertoire Orchestras. Robin received her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from the Juilliard School where she studied with Dorothy Delay, Hyo Kang and Paul Kantor.

Linda Wang, violin, made her debut with Zubin Mehta and the New York Philharmonic at the age of nine, and has performed throughout the United States. She has also been the guest soloist with Sir Georg Solti and the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival Orchestra, Salzburg Chamber Orchestra, the Czech Republic's Southern Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra, with whom she toured. Her solo concerts have taken her to New York City's Carnegie Hall, Amsterdam's Beurs van Berlage and the Berlin Schauspielhaus. She studied at The Juilliard School (Pre-College Division) and the University of Southern California. Awarded



a Fulbright Scholarship, she pursued advanced studies at the famed Salzburg Mozarteum. Her principal teachers have been Dorothy DeLay, Alice Schoenfeld and Ruggiero Ricci. Linda performs on a 1767 J.B. Guadagnini, and is Assistant Professor of Violin and chamber music at the University of the Pacific's Conservatory of Music.

Christina King, viola, joined the San Francisco Symphony's viola section in the Fall of 1996. She has been a member of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, was principal violist in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, (training orchestra of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and has also played with Lyric Opera of Chicago and various orchestras in Mexico City. She received a Master's in Music from Northwestern University, and an A.B. in English from Barnard College/Columbia University.

Madeline Prager, viola, has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician in Europe, where she lived for 25 years. After receiving a BA in Music from UC Berkeley, and a Masters degree in Germany studying with Bruno Giuranna, she performed as principal violist of the Wuerttemberg Chamber Orchestra and the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra. Until two years ago she held a Professorship of Viola at the Music Conservatory in Karlsruhe, Germany. She has won several prizes and competitions including a Hertz Memorial Performing Arts Scholarship from UC Berkeley. 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.

Barbara Andres, cello, is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music where she studied with Lynn Harrell and Stephen Geber. She has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1977. She was cello performance coach for the San Francisco Youth Orchestra for four years and since 1999 has performed the same role as mentor and coach for young performers at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is active as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout the Bay Area, and has appeared as Principal Cellist of the Sierra Chamber Society for the last twelve seasons.

Nina Flyer, cello, has toured and recorded throughout Europe, Scandanavia, and America. She has been principal cellist with the symphonies of Jerusalem, Bergan (Norway) and Iceland, and has held the post of acting principal cellist with the San Diego Symphony. She 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. She also records for the TV and motion picture industry. Ms. Flyer plays regularly with Composers Inc. and the San Francisco Chamber Music Players. She is a featured soloist on two recent CD's: a concerto by Shulamit Ran performed by the English Chamber Orchestra, and solo and chamber works by Lou Harrison, both released by KOCH International and nominated for Grammy awards.

Sonia Leong, piano, has performed in Canada, the United States, England, Romania, Switzerland, and Hong Kong. She has appeared with the Filarmonica de Stat Dinu Lipatti in Satu Mare, Romania, as well as with the Banff Festival Chamber Orchestra, and has performed live on Radio Suisse Romande in Geneva. She also plays with the contemporary music group Music Now, and is a member of the New Pacific Trio, based at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA. She was a prizewinner at the Concours Piano 80, in Switzerland, and a finalist at the Concorso Pianistico Nazionale "Città de Cesenatico" in Italy. Sonia studied at the University of British Columbia and at the Peabody Conservatory, earning her doctorate from the University of Montreal in 1998. In addition, she received a concert recital diploma from the Guildhall School of Music in London, where she studied on a Commonwealth Scholarship. Dr. Leong has served on the faculty of the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA, and currently teaches at the University of the Pacific.

Sierra Chamber Society 2003-2004 Season

February 8, 2004

Haydn - String Quartet from Op. 33
Dahl - Concerto a tres for Clarinet, Violin, and Cello
Korngold - String Quartet No. 2

April 25, 2004

Bach - Flute Sonata
Bartok - Contrasts
Ligeti - Bagatelles for Wind Quintet
Poulenc - Sextet for Piano and Wind Quartet

June 13, 2004

Boccherini - Guitar Quintet
Ravel - Duo for Violin and Cello
Brahms - Piano Quintet in F minor

The Sierra Chamber Society:
Stevan Cavalier, General Director
Greg Mazmanian, Executive Director
Joseph Way, Artistic Director
Richard A. Gylgayton, Program Editor

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