Concordia Chamber Players

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cover art by Joseph Crilley
(1920–2008)
Concordia Chamber Players
Artistic Director, Michelle Djokic

SUNDAY
APRIL 23
3:00 PM

Ernst Bloch
Meditation and Processional
for viola and piano

Johannes Brahms
Piano Quartet in C minor

Bedrich Smetana
Piano Trio in G minor, Opus 15

John Novacek – piano, Carmit Zori – violin,
Dimitri Murrath – viola, Michelle Djokic – cello

Trinity Episcopal Church
6587 Upper York Road
Solebury, Bucks County, PA

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Children 18 years and under admitted free of charge.

Concordia Chamber Players
Sunday - February 26, 2017

Program
Michelle Djokic, Artistic Director

String Quartet, ‘Company’
Philip Glass
(b. 1937)

I. \( \dot{\text{d}} = 96 \)
II. \( \dot{\text{d}} = 160 \)
III. \( \dot{\text{d}} = 96 \)
IV. \( \dot{\text{d}} = 160 \)

String Quartet, Opus 10
Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Animé et très décidé
Assez vif et bien rythmé
Andantino doucement expressif
Très modéré

intermission

Quintet in E-flat major, Opus 97
Antonin Dvorák
(1841-1904)

for 2 violins, 2 violas and cello

Allegro nan tanto
Allegro vivo
Larghetto
Finale. Allegro giusto

Artists
Emily Daggett Smith, Francisco Fullana – violin
Mark Holloway, Sharon Wei – viola
Michelle Djokic – cello
"I liked the idea of using the medium of the String Quartet that would allow for both an introspective and passionate quality well suited to the text. Beckett picked four places in the work which he referred to as the "interstices, as it were”. Not surprisingly these four short movements have turned out to be a thematically cohesive work which now, as my String Quartet No.2, has taken on a life of its own."

The four movements of this quartet are very short and very individual in character. The first is basically a chord whose voicing is constantly in a state of metamorphosis. The different instruments trade notes to change texture, although the lower note in the cello is mostly a constant ‘A’. There are little melodic fragments that weave through the filmy texture of the sound. The second movement is faster, with chords that change more often. The main melody is in the cello, often with chords heard in the upper voices. The character of this movement is far brighter and more positive than the first. The third movement, the shortest of all, is a more complex admixture of melodic and rhythmic ideas from all the instruments simultaneously. There is an unexpected outburst of loud chords about half way through. These have the exciting effect of breaking up the contrapuntal nature of the opening music. The fourth movement, the longest of the quartet, has a repeated pattern heard quietly in all the parts. It is relieved occasionally by loud outbursts that shortly recede to allow the more predominant quiet texture of the opening to finish the movement and the quartet itself.

These movements work together to create four musical moments of contrasting character that each have a kind of minimalist internal unity. The work, as the composer intended, stands on its own beyond its original connection with the Beckett novel/play.

Philip Glass is certainly the most prominent American musician who represents an aesthetic movement called “Minimalism.” This movement, which includes visual, dramatic, literary and musical arts, focuses on reducing the amount of subject matter that might be found in a work of art. In music, this often results in works that use a minimal amount of melody, harmony and rhythm. And there is generally a lot of repetition. In fact, many of Glass’s longer compositions have been criticized for repetition that seems, to some critics, to go on for too long a time.

His Second String Quartet is, however, not subject to such criticism because while there is an economy of material in the work, there is also an economy of time and space. The four movements are little gems of minimalist ideas in rhythm, melody and harmony that are extended for what seems like just the right amount of time. These movements range from 1½ to just over 2 minutes each.

By way of background, the listener should know that this string quartet was not originally conceived as a free-standing composition. It was to be a kind of incidental music that would be heard along with a one-man dramatic production of Samuel Beckett’s short novel titled *Company*. With the author’s approval, the book was transformed to a monologue performed by Frederick Neuman. For the “interstices” between verbal passages, Glass composed short movements that seemed to respond to, or echo the feelings of the old and dying man’s monologue. In Glass’s own words:

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String Quartet, Op. 10

Claude Debussy

((1862-1918))

Claude Debussy, best known as the French “impressionist” composer, an adjective he didn’t like, was 31 years old when he first met the celebrated Belgian violinist, Eugene Ysaÿe in the winter of 1893. They became good friends, and in the following summer the French composer wrote a work for the violinist’s string quartet. One might note that the 1890s were productive years for Debussy. They witnessed the composition of many of his masterpieces, such as the tone poem, Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune, the seductive Nocturnes, most of his work on the opera Pelléas et Mélisande, and even the ever popular Clair de lune for solo piano. These works are all quite modernistic in their subjects and in their musical styles.

The string quartet, the only work for this medium by Debussy, would appear to be an outlier. The string quartet was one of the oldest and most traditional genres in western music. Some of Debussy’s contemporaries who were used to very new sounds from their friend may have been surprised to find him undertaking such a work. But if they were concerned that he might compose in a more old-fashioned mode, they need not have worried. The composition, while showing respect for the grand string quartet tradition, was a unique and fresh breath of air by the innovative young Frenchman.

Debussy’s quartet is in the traditional four movements: a fast sonata form, a rhythmic scherzo, a slow, lyrical third movement, and an energetic finale. In addition, it is written in a pattern often called cyclic. This implies that themes, or melodies, heard in earlier movements often return later and impart a sense of order to the work. This approach was often used by César Franck, an established French composer who was both older than Debussy and, at times, his mentor at the Conservatoire in Paris. Debussy’s attitude toward Franck was one of respect, but also one of disdain toward his old-fashioned ideas.

Within the old-fashioned template of the string quartet, Debussy’s music was strikingly original and new. He broadened the sound and texture of the string quartet with a variety of effects. He used exotic scales (as he might have heard in the Javanese gamelan orchestras playing in the Indonesian pavilion at the celebrated 1889 World’s Fair in Paris), unconventional chord progressions and unexpected key changes. He also used a kind of rhythmic vitality that was prominent in some exotic music with quickly changing tempos and cross-rhythms. But perhaps more important than all these specific devices, he created a panoply of tone colors that one wouldn’t expect from a consort of like-sounding instruments.

The quartet opens with a distinctive theme which becomes the foundation of the quartet’s cyclic structure. This theme permeates all the movements, although less in the third than in the second and the fourth. While it is not always easily recognizable (he transforms it to fit the character of each movement much like his French musical ancestor, Berlioz, did with his idée fixe in his Symphonie fantastique), it gives the overall quartet a sense of unity.

The first movement, Animé e très décidé, opens with the main theme which is soon contrasted by a more lyrical second one. At the end of the movement, the main theme comes back with force and vigor. The second movement, Assez vif e bien rythmé, is exuberant and exciting. It opens with all the strings playing pizzicato except for the viola which gets its great moment in the sun with the principal melody. As the movement progresses, there are additional kaleidoscopic colors, rhythms, and thematic mutations. Toward the end, there is a very exciting pizzicato section which gives way to a more calm and legato closing.

The third movement, Andantino, doucement expressif, begins with the instruments all playing with mutes to create a lovely rich color surrounding the melody. There is a middle section with a reference to the original “cyclic” theme from the first movement, after which the players return to using mutes and the movement ends in blissful calm. The fourth movement, Très modéré, begins softly, but builds to a fiery tempo and rich texture that takes the listener back again to the opening of the first movement.

Much has been said about this unique quartet. It has been considered a landmark in the emergence of 20th century modernism and a “cornerstone of the quartet literature.” Regardless, it has become one of the most beloved in the repertoire partly because of the stunning sensual beauty and variety of textures Debussy manages to create with these four homogenous string instruments. Especially striking is the quartet’s rhythmic vitality with swiftly changing tempi, a wealth of dazzling figurations, cross-rhythms and the special shimmering or hovering pulsations typical of his music.
String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97  
Antonín Dvořák  
(1841-1904)

Antonín Dvořák was born in Czechoslovakia and always felt a strong cultural identity with his homeland. So it was not altogether surprising that the wealthy patroness of the arts, Mrs. Jeannette Thurber, turned to the well-known Czech to become the director for her new National Conservatory of Music in New York City. She was a visionary and wanted her new conservatory to serve both women and men, even African Americans, and she wanted it to encourage the creation of truly American music. Dvořák, whose reputation as a Czech nationalist preceded him, was a logical choice. And when he arrived, he showed his respect for her ideas in the following statement: “I did not come to America to interpret Beethoven or Wagner. This is not my work, and I wouldn’t waste my time on it. I came to discover what young Americans had in them and to help them express it.”

Dvořák’s attitude, while seemingly idealistic, did not always find agreement with American composers who were already writing music they thought was expressive of their culture. Bostonian Edward MacDowell, for one, commented:

“We have been offered a pattern for an ‘American’ national musical costume by the Bohemian – though what Negro melodies have to do with Americanism in art remains a mystery. Music that can be made by ‘recipe’ is not music, but ‘tailoring.’ Masquerading in the so-called nationalism of Negro clothes cut in Bohemia will not help us.”

Clearly some American composers resented being told how to be American by the Czech Bohemian!

Dvořák, however, was not to be deterred. In 1893, his first year in New York, he began his famous “Symphony from the New World,” which was performed to great acclaim the following year. And during the summer of 1893 he went to Spillville, Iowa, a small farming community where there were many Czech immigrants whose company he loved. While he was finishing the “New World” symphony that summer, he also wrote the String Quartet in F, Op. 96, which he called the “American” and the String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97, also called the “American” until he dropped the title later on. Perhaps we can understand the consternation of the American composers by Dvořák’s glib titling of these works!

As with the New World Symphony, the real question is how the works are “American.” We will, of course, limit our thoughts to the quintet on this program. There is one interesting anecdote surrounding the work. According to contemporary sources, during the summer “a group of Kickapoo Indians visited Spillville to sell their medicinal herbs, and they performed their music and dances to attract a crowd.” It is thought that some of the ostinato drumming effects in the Quintet, especially in the second movement, originated from these performances. Like virtually everything that is said about the “Americanisms” in Dvořák’s “new world” music, this is speculative but it seems logical. We don’t know enough about the Kickapoo tribe’s music to determine how much it influenced Dvořák at this time. In fact, it is not even certain if the Native Americans visiting Spillville were Kickapoo; there are reports of the presence of Chippewa as well.

The quintet is written for two violins, two violas and one cello, the same instrumentation made famous by Mozart in his “viola” quintets about 100 years earlier. With the two mid-range instruments, the textures can be rich and thick. It is not surprising that Dvořák was attracted to this ensemble since he was a violist himself. The first movement, Allegro non tanto, opens with a melody in the pentatonic scale (a five-note scale that can be found by playing only the black notes on the piano). This scale always sounds exotic, but has been absorbed into so many musical cultures that it is hard to tell just where it would be considered truly exotic! In this case, it does give the movement an unusual character that one might imagine is Native American, even though it could just as easily be Czech. The movement is rich and cast in an extensive sonata form with two principal themes. The second theme has some rhythmic bounce that has been ascribed to likely dance rhythms in Kickapoo music.

The second movement, a fast scherzo, could be a cheerful Bohemian folk dance or a tame Native American dance. Critics have again identified the opening rhythms as those of Native American drumming. It is followed by a doleful trio whose melody is first heard played by a viola accompanied by the other strings playing pizzicato. The cheerful scherzo returns to round out the movement. The third movement, Larghetto, is a beautiful set of five variations on a two-part melody. The second part of this melody was allegedly to be offered by Dvořák as a new national anthem for the U.S. to be set to the words “My Country ’Tis of Thee.” This, of course, never happened. Still, in these beautiful variations, one often thinks about how far the composer wanders from the original theme: not far enough is tedious; too far and the theme is completely lost. In this movement, Dvořák finds the perfect middle ground. We can always sense the theme lurking in the background, but the character and feeling of the music changes with each variation.

The finale, Allegro giusto, is a delightful rondo romp. The rondo theme itself which begins the movement is jaunty, if not exuberant, with its catchy rhythms again reminding us of the dance-like rhythms in the first movement. The melody is particularly friendly and suggests the charming folk melodies one might hear in the Bohemian countryside. On the other hand, the “episodes” that occur between statements of the rondo are occasionally either slow or in a minor key, or both, providing real contrast. As a result, we feel glee and relief with each return of the rondo theme. And we feel super glee after the exuberant coda that ends the entire work.
Michelle Djokic
Artistic Director

Cellist Michelle Djokic is Founder and Artistic Director of the Concordia Chamber Players. Since its inception in 1995 this series has brought together the brightest talents of the chamber music world in thoughtful and adventurous programming with their performances broadcast regularly on WWFM in Princeton, NJ. Concordia Chamber Players commissioned “Obrigado”, Quintet for mandolin and string quartet by young Brazilian superstar, Clarice Assad, which received its world premier in the spring of 2011 with Mike Marshall on the mandolin. Michelle joined pianist, John Novacek at the 2011 Festival Mozaic for the world premier of Novacek’s “Singular Piece” for cello and piano commissioned by the Seattle Commissioning Project. Her recording with Quartet San Francisco entitled “QSF Plays Brubeck” earned a 2010 Grammy Nomination in Best Classical Crossover. In 2007 she became a member of the New Century Chamber Orchestra with whom she released the highly acclaimed recording “Together” in 2009. Upon moving to Northern California from the East Coast in 2005 Michelle served as Assistant Principal Cellist of the San Francisco Symphony for two seasons.

Her greatest passion is chamber music collaborations with her colleagues around the world and sharing in the development of young musicians. Previous concert seasons have included collaborations with Brooklyn Chamber Music Society, Festicamara in Medellin, Colombia, Ensemble Matheus of France, Princeton Festival, Mainly Mozart, Music in the Vineyards and the Mozaic Festival.

Michelle made her debut as soloist with Philadelphia Orchestra at the age of 12 and made her Carnegie Hall debut as soloist with the New Jersey Symphony in 1985. She was awarded the coveted People’s Prize in the 1981 International Casals Competition and the Prince Bernard Award for Excellence at the Scheveningen International Cello Competition in addition to capturing first prize in numerous young artist competitions in the US.

Michelle received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music Degrees from The Juilliard School as a student of Leonard Rose and Channing Robbins.
He has appeared on some of the world’s finest stages, including the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Spanish National Hall and Seoul Arts Center. Francisco has been conducted by distinguished artists such as Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Colin Davis, Christoph Poppen, Alondra de la Parra, Adrian Leaper, Salvador Brotons, Pablo Mielgo, Luis de Pablo, Álvaro Albiach, Justin Brown, Philippe Bender, and many others.

As the recent First Prize winner of the 2015 Munetsugu International Violin Competition in Japan, he was awarded the loan of the 1697 “Rainville” Stradivari violin. Francisco was also awarded all four special prizes, including the Audience and Orchestra awards.

The First Prize winner at the 2015 Pro Musicais International Awards and the 2014 International “Johannes Brahms” Violin Competition in Austria, Fullana was also the First Prize winner at the 2006 Pablo de Sarasate National Violin Competition and a multiple prizewinner at the 2014 “Henri Marteau” International Violin Competition. Other prizes include First Prize of the 2012 American Protegé International Competition, 2012 First Prize and Audience Award at the Atlantic Symphony Concerto Competition, First Prize at the 2010 TIM “Torneo Internazionale di Musica” and First Prize at the “Julio Cardona” International Violin Competition, as well as the Maria Paula Alonso Award.

Francisco is a very active chamber musician and is a founding member of Quartet Senza Misura as well as part of the artist roster of Marlboro Music. He has appeared in festivals such as Yellow Barn, Da Camera Society, Perlman Music Program and Jupiter Chamber Players, alongside members of the Guarneri, Juilliard, Takacs and Cleveland Quartets. He has also performed with renowned artists Mitsuko Uchida, Nobuko Imai, Viviane Hagner and Charles Neidich, among many others. Since 2013, he is the concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of San Antonio.

A graduate of The Juilliard School, where he obtained Bachelor and Master degrees with Don Weilerstein and Masao Kawasaki, he is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma at the University of Southern California under the renowned violinist Midori Goto. Francisco started violin with Bernat Pomar in his hometown of Palma de Mallorca, Spain, and is also a graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Madrid, where he studied with Manuel Guillén.

Since 2013, Francisco has been a recipient of the Stradivari Society of Chicago. He performs on the 1697 “Rainville” Stradivarius, kindly on loan from the Yellow Angel Foundation of Japan.
Emily Daggett-Smith
violin

Violinist Emily Daggett-Smith has been praised as having “a very beautiful tone” (thegatheringnote.com) and giving performances with “poised elegance” (seenandheard-international.com) and “irrepressible élan” (The Seattle Times). With regular performances as soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States and abroad, Ms. Smith is emerging as one of the most compelling artists of her generation. Highlights of past concert seasons include a debut recital in Chicago including the commission and world premiere of Dan Visconti’s Silvertone, performances of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons with Lionel Party and the Lenape Chamber Ensemble, a performance of Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante with the Festival Mozaic Orchestra in California, and appearances as guest Principal Second violin of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Ms. Smith won first place in the Juilliard concerto competition and at 21 years old made her New York concerto debut in Alice Tully Hall, playing the Beethoven Violin Concerto with the Juilliard Orchestra and conductor Emmanuel Villaume. A native of Boston, MA, she won various competitions in New England and has performed concerti with the Brockton, Newton and Waltham Symphonies. Other concerto appearances include the New York Classical Players and the Landmark Orchestra series at the Hatch Shell in Boston.

Equally passionate about chamber music, Ms. Smith has appeared at various festivals including the Seattle Chamber Music Society, Ravinia’s Steans Institute, the Olympic Music Festival, The Jupiter Chamber Players and Lenape Chamber Series, and the Festival Mozaic. Ms. Smith has performed in the most prestigious venues around the world including Carnegie Hall, Zankel Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Shanghai Grand Theatre and the Vienna Konzerthaus. She has collaborated with world renowned musicians including Toby Appel, Andrés Díaz, James Ehnes, Claude Frank, and Joseph Kalichstein. Of her performance last season of Brahms’ String Sextet in B-flat at the Seattle Chamber Music Society, Dana Wen of TheSunBreak.com writes: “Up-and-coming youngster Emily Daggett-Smith shone on first violin, bringing energy and eagerness to the hefty role. Her bright, clear tone provided a fascinating contrast with first violinist Toby Appel’s bold, rich sound, especially in the call-and-response sections of the first movement.” Ms. Smith’s performances have been featured on PBS’s national broadcast Live from Lincoln Center, NPR’s From the Top, and Classical King FM in Seattle.

Ms. Smith is the founding first violinist of the Tessera Quartet, who recently recorded a world-premiere album of Harold Brown’s complete works for String Quartet on Albany Records. Other highlights for the quartet include performances at (le) Poisson Rouge, the New School (Schneider) Concerts series, Brooklyn Friends of Chamber Music, and the Tri-I Noon Recital Series at Rockefeller University, as well as recital appearances with renowned pianists Claude Frank and Hamish Milne and multiple performances of Lowell Liebermann’s Piano Quintet with the composer at the piano.

Ms. Smith holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School. She performed as Concertmaster of the Juilliard Orchestra under the direction of many renowned conductors including Michael Tilson-Thomas, Leonard Slatkin and Nicholas McGegan. Her teachers have included Soovin Kim, Joel Smirnoff, Laurie Smukler, Masuko Ushioda, and Donald Weilerstein. Ms. Smith plays on a Johannes Cuypers violin and a Vuillaume bow, both generously donated by Dr. Marylou Witz.

Music is the expression of the movement of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes

— Claude Debussy
Violist Mark Holloway is a chamber musician sought after in the United States and abroad. He has appeared at prestigious festivals such as Marlboro, Ravinia, Caramoor, Music@Menlo, Cartagena, Taos, Music from Angel Fire, Mainly Mozart, and the Boston Chamber Music Society. Performances have taken him to far-flung places such as Chile and Greenland, and he plays regularly at Musique de Chambre à Giverny in France, Musikdorf Ernen in Switzerland, and at the International Musicians Seminar in Prussia Cove, England. He also frequently appears as a guest with the New York Philharmonic and Orpheus. Mr. Holloway has been principal violist at Tanglewood and of the New York String Orchestra, and has played as guest principal of the American Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Camerata Bern, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. He has performed at Bargemusic, the 92nd Street Y, the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico, and on radio and television throughout the United States and Europe, most recently a Live From Lincoln Center broadcast. Hailed as an “outstanding violist” by American Record Guide, and praised by Zürich’s Neue Zürcher Zeitung for his “warmth and intimacy,” he has recorded for the Marlboro Recording Society, CMS Live, Naxos, Music@Menlo LIVE and Albany labels. An artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Mr. Holloway was a student of Michael Tree at The Curtis Institute of Music and received his bachelor’s degree from Boston University.

Canadian violist Sharon Wei is a dynamic and varied musician, establishing herself as one of the most respected violists on the scene today. She has appeared throughout North America, Europe and Asia. She has been guest principal violist of the Cincinnati Symphony, Canadian Opera Company and Ensemble Matheus. Sharon has played chamber music with Lynn Harrell, Gary Hoffman, Claude Frank, James Levine, Peter Frankl, Joseph Silverstein, the St Lawrence Quartet and Amernet Quartet and appeared at festivals including Marlboro, Verbier, Curtis Summerfest, Scotia Festival and Prussia Cove.

Sharon co-founded Ensemble Made in Canada which won a CBC rising stars award. Sharon has been the recipient of grants through the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council. She has toured under the auspices of Debut Atlantic and Prairie Debut.

Sharon was on the faculty at Yale and Stanford and is currently Assistant Professor of Viola at Western University. Sharon has created a course for performance majors in which students learn important off-stage initiatives such as networking, concert production, grant writing, website design, and managing finances.
Stand Partners, is a unique program which allows Foundation Academy Charter School students the opportunity to play with and learn from professional musicians. The program brings together world class musicians to train and inspire honors music students. Michelle Djokis, cellist and a founder of the Concordia Chamber Players, guides the program and teaches master classes at the school, preparing string players for their recital at Ellarslie Mansion. At this annual event, students share the stage with professional musicians from Concordia and together, promote chamber music in Trenton.
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