

2017 Preview Notes • Week Two • Persons Auditorium

Saturday, July 22 at 8:00pm



String Quartet in D Major, Op. 50, No. 6 (1787)

Joseph Haydn

Born March 31, 1732 • Died May 31, 1809

Duration: approx. 25 minutes • Marlboro Premiere

With a nickname like the “Frog,” one might expect this Haydn string quartet to be a staple at Marlboro, where frogs abound both by nature and by the design of pranksters. However, this performance, which marks the 39th of Haydn’s 68 string quartets to be performed here, is a Marlboro premiere. The exuberance of this piece draws from the resonance of the open strings allowed by the key of D Major. This is used to fine effect in the final movement when Haydn utilizes a technique called *bariolage*, where the musicians alternate rapidly between playing the same pitch on an open string and an adjacent string. The resultant sound evokes the croaking of frogs, from which the quartet derives its playful name.

Participants: Stephen Tavani, *violin*; Sirena Huang, *violin*; Samuel Rhodes, *viola*; Matthew Zalkind, *cello*



8 Etudes and a Fantasy (1950)

Elliott Carter

Born December 11, 1908 • Died November 5, 2012

Duration: approx. 20 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2014

As befitting an etude—essentially a study—each movement of this piece focuses on a challenging element of wind playing. That these etudes are written for not just one instrument but for an entire wind quartet allows for further complexity and a good amount of musical irony. The musicians must keep an accurate pitch, keep track of their own line, and blend with the other musicians even as the etudes fancifully require them to play only a single chord (number three), a single repeated rhythm (number four), or at the unexpected extreme of their ranges, with the oboe and bassoon on top and the flute and clarinet on bottom (number four). After the eight etudes, the fantasy incorporates all the elements that are explored in the etudes, allowing the instrumentalists to demonstrate their skills in a broader, more melodious context.

Participants: Francesco Camuglia, *flute*; Emily Beare, *oboe*; Charles Neidich, *clarinet*; Catherine Chen, *bassoon*



String Sextet in A Major, Op. 48, B. 80 (1878-79)

Antonín Dvořák

Born September 8, 1841 • Died May 1, 1904

Duration: approx. 30 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2015

The String Sextet in A Major was the first of Dvořák’s works to be premiered outside of Bohemia. It was first played in Berlin—and soon after as far as London—during the period that Slavonic, folk-inspired music was becoming increasingly popular. Like Dvořák’s String Quartet in E-flat Major, which we heard last Saturday and which was composed during the same year, the string sextet features a *dumka* in the second movement. Following the pensiveness of the *dumka*, which is a form inspired by the solemnness of the Ukrainian epic ballad, the third movement features a stylization of a merry Bohemian dance, the *furiant*. The sextet ends with a jaunty set of variations.

Participants: Stephen Tavani, *violin*; Scott St. John, *violin*; Rosalind Ventris, *viola*; Rebecca Albers, *viola*; Alice Yoo, *cello*; Judith Serkin, *cello*

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Sunday, July 23 at 2:30pm



Canticle III: Still falls the Rain (1954)

Benjamin Britten

Born November 22, 1913 • Died December 4, 1976

Duration: approx. 12 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2014

Edith Sitwell's poem, *Still falls the Rain*, is subtitled *The raids 1940. Night and dawn*. Though explicitly referencing the wartime tragedies of 1940, the poem returns repeatedly to descriptions of Christ's death on the cross, raising questions about the nature and necessity of suffering and sacrifice. Britten's composition follows the poem's irregularities in rhyme and meter, avoiding a melodic setting in favor of a free recitative for tenor and piano that alternates, verse by verse, with a duet for horn and piano. Only in the final stanza are the tenor and horn heard together, following each other in rhythm but holding shimmering dissonances between them. The concluding stanza is the only one in which the opening words—Still falls the Rain—are not heard. Instead, the final lines evoke the voice of God in a direct account of the Passion.

Participants: Miles Mykkanen, *tenor*; Nicolee Kuester, *horn*; Lydia Brown, *piano*



String Quartet No. 2, Op. 17 (1915-17)

Béla Bartók

Born March 25, 1881 • Died September 26, 1945

Duration: approx. 30 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2015

Arnold Steinhardt recently reminisced about his first experience performing a Bartók quartet, describing how the inimitably lively and demanding Alexander Schneider commanded him "to perform Bartók's Second String Quartet in four days from now" at Marlboro. Steinhardt describes Schneider as a "benevolent dictator" who guided the group through the contrasts between the dreamy mutability of the first movement, the driving rhythmic urgency of the second movement, and the elegiac finitude of the third movement. This Sunday's performance is the beneficiary of not four days but four weeks of rehearsal, which is more characteristic of Marlboro's mission to provide musicians with what the *New York Times* called "the luxury of time" to recognize the intricacies of a piece through extensive discussion, rehearsal, and exploration.

Participants: Sirena Huang, *violin*; Scott St. John, *violin*; Pei-Ling Lin, *viola*; Matthew Zalkind, *cello*



Piano Trio in B-flat Major, D. 898 (1828)

Franz Schubert

Born January 31, 1797 • Died November 19, 1828

Duration: approx. 40 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2014

Finished in Schubert's final year, his Piano Trio in B-flat Major is largely untouched by the darkness that is exhibited in his other late compositions. Of the trio, Schumann wrote that "One glance at Schubert's Trio (Op. 99) and the troubles of our human existence disappear and all the world is fresh and bright again." The piece features hints of other works and other forms. Writers have noted traces of Beethoven's *Pathétique* in the second movement, the lively folk rhythm of the *Ländler* in the third movement, and a possible quote of Schubert's own *Lied*, "Skolie," in the final movement. But Schubert's melodic writing is bountiful as ever, and he develops the trio's musical themes throughout its notably substantial 40-minute length with characteristic panache.

Participants: Mitsuko Uchida, *piano*; Alexi Kenney, *violin*; Efe Baltacıgil, *cello*