Alexander String Quartet
with Robert Greenberg
Chamber Music of Antonín Dvořák

Sunday, December 4, 2022 • 2PM
Sunday, January 15, 2023 • 2PM
Sunday, April 2, 2023 • 2PM
Jackson Hall

20th Anniversary Season is presented by
The Nancy and Hank Fisher Family Fund

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Mondavi Center
UC Davis
Land Acknowledgment

We should take a moment to acknowledge the land on which we are
gathered. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin
people. Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil
DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel
Dehe Wintun Nation and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this
land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders
have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and
grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

https://diversity.ucdavis.edu
The opening of this venue marked a transformative moment for the arts, not just at UC Davis but for the entire region. Here is a space with impeccable acoustics and design, along with programming that brings world-class artistry right to the heart of Northern California.

The opening of the Mondavi Center also established a true gateway between UC Davis and the greater Sacramento region. It’s one of the few places where the UC Davis community and the general public join together regularly. Here, you are treated to a variety of art forms that leaves you entertained and inspired.

The Mondavi Center is much more than a platform for the performances. It stands as a bastion of community building, celebration and generating dialogue.

The Mondavi Center is a home for graduation ceremonies. It’s a home for speakers and comedians who challenge our notions of race, gender, justice and nationality. It’s a home for dancers who convey joy and suffering, empathy and apathy through body movement.

What a 20 years this has been.

This is a wonderful year of anniversaries at UC Davis, including my own. It was almost five years ago to the day that I arrived at UC Davis to serve as chancellor.

My wife LeShelle and I learned quickly that the Mondavi Center was one of the great perks of living in Davis. We’ve spent countless nights here in the audience. We’ve been dazzled by jazz legends like Wynton Marsalis and the Grammy-winning jazz singer Cécile McLorin Salvant. We’ve been awestruck by some of the world’s great symphony orchestras and dance troupes—all within walking distance of our neighborhood.

The Mondavi Center holds so many fond personal memories as well. The ceremony that inaugurated me as chancellor was held here in Jackson Hall. Through my Chancellor’s Colloquium series, I’ve had the opportunity to interview and spark dialogue with the great actor Alan Alda, the legendary rapper GZA and one of my own heroes, William Shatner of Star Trek fame.

As much as this is an opportunity to reflect on the past, this is also a chance to look forward and get excited about the future. That’s what the Mondavi Center is all about—always pushing forward, always looking for new ideas and inspirations.

This 20th-anniversary season welcomes back some familiar faces. But this is not a retrospective year. We’re seeing old friends who are doing new things and pushing their artistry into new realms. We’re welcoming even more diverse voices who help us better understand our world and find inspiration in their craft.

Looking ahead, I’m excited about the return of the Vanderhoef Studio Theatre as a performance space following its closure from the pandemic. And, I look forward to the Mondavi Center continuing to transform our region. This anniversary moment isn’t a victory lap: It’s a chance to consider where we want to head in the future.

Congratulations once again to the Mondavi Center on this wonderful milestone. Enjoy the show!

Gary S. May
Chancellor, UC Davis
Alexander String Quartet with Robert Greenberg

Zakarias Grafilo, violin
Frederick Lifsitz, violin
David Samuel, viola
Sandy Wilson, cello

Musicologist, author, and composer Robert Greenberg provides commentary throughout each concert.

Program

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2022

Guest Artist: Jeffrey LaDeur, piano

Terzetto for Two Violins and Viola in C Major, op. 74
Antonín Dvořák

(1841–1904)

Introduzione – Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto
Scherzo: Vivace
Tema con variazioni: Poco adagio – Moderato – Molto allegro

Quintet for Piano and Strings in A Major, op. 81

Allegro con fuoco
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Poco andante
Finale: Allegro assai
SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2023

Guest Artist: Paul Yarbrough, viola

String Quartet in F Major, op. 96 (“American”)  
Antonín Dvořák  
(1841–1904)

Allegro ma non troppo
Lento
Molto vivace
Vivace ma non troppo

String Quintet in E-flat Major, op. 97

Allegro non tanto
Allegro vivo
Larghetto
Allegro giusto

SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2023

String Quartet in G Major, op. 106  
Antonín Dvořák  
(1841-1904)

Allegro moderato
Adagio ma non troppo
Molto vivace
Finale: Andante sostenuto – Allegro con fuoco

String Quartet in A-flat Major, op. 105

Adagio, ma non troppo; Allegro appassionato
Molto vivace
Lento e molto cantabile
Allegro, non tanto

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Program Notes

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2022

Terzetto for Two Violins and Viola in C Major, op. 74 (1887)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
Born: Muhlhausen, Bohemia, September 8, 1841
Died: Prague, May 1, 1904

A terzetto is simply a trio. In opera, the term denotes a piece for three voices, but in chamber music it usually means a trio for some combination other than violin-cello-piano; it is in the latter sense that Dvořák uses the term, for his Terzetto is scored for the unusual combination of two violins and viola. He wrote it in the space of a week in January 1887, originally intending that he would play the viola and that an amateur violinist would play first violin. The music turned out to be too difficult for the amateur violinist, and Dvořák compensated for this by writing him a somewhat easier set of pieces (arranged by the composer for piano and violin, the easier set is known today as the Four Romantic Pieces, op. 75).

Dvořák felt no hesitation about composing for amateur musicians. In fact, he was adamant about the importance of writing for them, and while working on these pieces he wrote to his publisher: “I am now writing some small Bagatelles for two violins and viola, and this work gives me just as much pleasure as if I were composing a great symphony; what do you say to that? They are, of course, intended for amateurs, but didn’t Beethoven and Schumann also write quite insignificant material, and how?”

The Terzetto, though, is hardly “insignificant.” Good-natured as this music may be, it demands three accomplished musicians and shows some unusual technical features. Faced with the challenge of writing for three high voices (string quartet minus the cello), Dvořák had to provide a full harmonic palette and a bass line. He accomplished this by frequent multiple-stopping and by the viola’s active role in underpinning the harmony. One of the other surprising aspects of the Terzetto is the freedom with which Dvořák chooses keys. The first movement opens in C major, while the second is in E major; the third switches to A minor, but the finale begins in F major, moves through D-flat major, and concludes in the unexpected key of C minor.

The four brief movements require little comment. The first two are similar: both are lyric, both open gently, and both feature more animated material in the development. The third movement is a scherzo in ABA form. Its outer sections show some similarity to the furiant, a Bohemian folk-dance, while the middle section is a genial waltz. Longest of the movements, the finale is in theme-and-variation form; the theme itself is marked Poco adagio, but the five variations are quick-paced. Dvořák toys with the listener by moving through several different keys as he announces the theme; only eventually does it settle into C major, and then—as we have seen—he concludes in the unexpected key of C minor. This all sounds technical, and the listener should not be put off by it—Dvořák’s Terzetto is as genial, attractive, and good-spirited as anything the composer ever wrote.

Quintet for Piano and Strings in A Major, op. 81 (1887)

In the summer of 1887 Antonín Dvořák took his large family to their summer home at Vysoka, in the forests and fields about 40 miles south of Prague. It was a very good time for the 46-year-old composer. After years of struggle and poverty, he suddenly found himself famous: his Slavonic Dances were being played around the world, and his Seventh Symphony had been premiered to instant acclaim in London two years earlier. Dvořák found time to relax at Vysoka that summer, and he also found time to compose. Dvořák was usually one of the fastest of composers, able to complete a work quickly once he had sketched it. That August he began a new work, the Piano Quintet, but this one took him some time—he did not complete it until well into October, and it was premiered in Prague the following January.

Dvořák was now at the height of his powers, and the quintet shows the hand of a master at every instant. This is tremendously vital music, full of fire and soaring melodies—it is a measure of this music’s sweep that the first violin and piano are often set in their highest registers. As a
composer, Dvořák was always torn between the classical forms of the Viennese masters like his friend Brahms and his own passionate Czech nationalism. Perhaps some of the secret of the success of the Piano Quintet is that it manages to combine those two kinds of music so successfully: Dvořák writes in classical forms like scherzo, rondo, and sonata, but he also employs characteristic Czech forms like the dumka and furiant. That makes for an intoxicating mix, and perhaps a further source of this music’s appeal is its heavy reliance on the sound of the viola. Dvořák was a violist, and in the quintet the viola presents several of the main ideas—its dusky sound is central to the rich sonority of this music.

It is the cello, though, that has the opening idea of the Allegro, ma non tanto. This long melody—Dvořák marks it espressivo—suddenly explodes with energy and is extended at length before the viola introduces the sharply pulsed second theme. In sonata form, this movement ranges from a dreamy delicacy to thunderous tuttis, and sometimes those changes are sudden. The music is also full of beautifully shaded moments, passages that flicker effortlessly between different keys in the manner of Schubert, a composer Dvořák very much admired.

The second movement is a dumka, a form derived from an old Slavonic song of lament. Dvořák moves to F-sharp minor here and makes a striking contrast of sonorities at the opening episode. For the first 40 measures, Dvořák keeps both the pianist’s hands in treble clef, where the piano’s sound is glassy and delicate; far below, the viola’s C-string resonates darkly against this, and the rich, deep sound of the viola will be central to this movement. This opening gives way to varied episodes: a sparkling duet for violins that returns several times and a blistering Vivace tune introduced by the viola. The movement closes quietly on a return of its somber opening music.

Dvořák gives the brief Molto vivace the title Furiant, an old Bohemian dance based on shifting meters, but—as countless commentators have pointed out—the 3/4 meter remains unchanged throughout this movement, which is a sort of fast waltz in ABA form. Its dancing opening gives way to a wistful center section, marked Poco tranquillo, based on a variant of the opening theme.

The Allegro finale shows characteristics of both rondo and sonata form. Its amiable opening idea—introduced by the first violin after a muttering, epigrammatic beginning—dominates the movement. Dvořák even offers a brisk fugato on this tune, introduced by the second violin, as part of the development. The full-throated coda, which drives to a conclusion of almost symphonic proportions, is among the many pleasures of one of this composer’s finest scores.

—Eric Bromberger

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2023

String Quartet in F Major, op. 96 (“American”) (1893)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born: Muhlhausen, Bohemia, September 8, 1841
Died: Prague, May 1, 1904

During his three-year tenure as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York (1892–95), Dvořák was fascinated by life in the New World, but he missed his family—four of his six children had remained in Bohemia—and his homeland. Dvořák’s secretary in New York City was a young violinist named Josef Jan Kovařík, who had grown up in the Czech community of Spillville, Iowa. Kovařík invited Dvořák to spend the summer of 1893 in Spillville, and the composer gladly accepted. There, with his wife (and now all his children), Dvořák spent a happy and productive summer surrounded by familiar language, customs, and food. He was amazed by Iowa’s vast prairies and forests, he played the organ in the Spillville church, he heard native birds, and he watched as local Indians came into the village to sell herbs and dance.

Dvořák also composed that summer. He sketched the String Quartet in F Major in only three days (June 8–10, 1893) and had it completed in 15. Dvořák’s comment was concise: “Thank God. It went quickly. I am satisfied.” Early audiences were more than satisfied. The Kneisel Quartet gave the official premiere in Boston on January 1, 1894, and performed it 50 times over the next several seasons. The quartet quickly acquired the nickname “American.” The source of that nickname is uncertain, but it has become an inescapable part of how we think
Part of the charm of this quartet is precisely that it did turn “out so simply” and that it is so “melodious and straightforward.” The Quartet in F Major is full of instantly memorable tunes and boundless energy, and its sunny surface is seldom clouded by harmonic or textural complexities. One might not readily identify “Papa Haydn” as the father of this quartet, but that older master’s cheerful spirits and sophisticated writing for strings are very much part of this music.

It is the viola that leads the way into the opening of the Allegro ma non troppo, and that sharply inflected, rising-and-falling theme will give shape to much of the material that follows. A songful second subject in the violin has a rhythmic snap that some have felt to be American in origin, though such a snap is typical of the folk music of many lands. The development concludes with a brief fugal passage derived from the opening viola melody.

Many regard the Lento as the finest movement in the quartet—and one of the finest slow movements Dvořák ever composed. It is virtually a continuous flow of melody, as the violin’s lamenting theme—marked molto espressivo—sings hauntingly over undulating accompaniment. At the close the cello takes up this theme as the other instruments alternate pizzicato and bowed accompaniment.

The scherzo rips along cheerfully, its main theme sharing the rhythm of the quartet’s opening theme. About 20 measures into this movement, Dvořák gives the first violin a melody he heard a bird singing outside his window in Spillville. (This bird was long identified as the scarlet tanager, though recent research suggests that it may have been the red-eyed vireo.) The scherzo alternates this cheerful opening section with interludes that are minor-key variants of its opening theme.

The most impressive thing about the rondo-finale, marked Vivace ma non troppo, is its rhythmic energy, in both the themes themselves and the accompanying voices. The rondo theme, introduced immediately by the first violin, is one of those sparkling melodies that are impossible to forget. The central episode in this rondo is a quiet chorale, and some have heard it as a reminiscence of Dvořák’s experience of playing the tiny organ in the church at Spillville. Some of this movement’s interludes recall the shape of themes from earlier movements, and the blazing rush to the close is one of the most exhilarating Dvořák ever wrote.

Many have been quick to argue against the notion that there is anything distinctly “American” about this quartet, claiming instead that it is music composed by a thoroughly Bohemian composer while on vacation in this country. And perhaps they are right. But do we hear the influence of spirituals in the long, plaintive violin melody in the Lento? The rhythms of Native American drums in some of the accompaniment figures of the quartet’s outer movements? The song of an American bird in the scherzo? The gentle remembrance of a church organ in the finale?

Listeners may decide for themselves whether the nickname “American” is fitting for this quartet.

**String Quintet in E-flat Major, op. 97 (1893)**

Dvořák’s three years in America—from 1892 to 1895—as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City form a distinct chapter in his career. From these years came several of his finest scores, including the “New World” Symphony, the “American” Quartet, and the Cello Concerto. Enthusiastic Americans claimed that Dvořák had made use of American materials and that these were examples of “American music.” But Dvořák would have none of that, denouncing “that nonsense about my having made use of original American melodies. I have only composed in the spirit of such American national melodies.” Dvořák felt that all his music was “genuine Bohemian music,” but the “American” Quartet incorporates a birdcall Dvořák heard in America, the “New World” Symphony, the “American” Quartet, and the Cello Concerto. Enthusiastic Americans claimed that Dvořák had made use of American materials and that these were examples of “American music.” But Dvořák would have none of that, denouncing “that nonsense about my having made use of original American melodies. I have only composed in the spirit of such American national melodies.” Dvořák felt that all his music was “genuine Bohemian music,” but the “American” Quartet incorporates a birdcall Dvořák heard in America, the “New World” Symphony, the “American” Quartet, and the Cello Concerto. Enthusiastic Americans claimed that Dvořák had made use of American materials and that these were examples of “American music.” But Dvořák would have none of that, denouncing “that nonsense about my having made use of original American melodies. I have only composed in the spirit of such American national melodies.” Dvořák felt that all his music was “genuine Bohemian music,” but the “American” Quartet incorporates a birdcall Dvořák heard in America, the “New World” Symphony, the “American” Quartet, and the Cello Concerto. Enthusiastic Americans claimed that Dvořák had made use of American materials and that these were examples of “American music.” But Dvořák would have none of that, denouncing “that nonsense about my having made use of original American melodies. I have only composed in the spirit of such American national melodies.” Dvořák felt that all his music was “genuine Bohemian music,” but the “American” Quartet incorporates a birdcall Dvořák heard in America, the “New World” Symphony, the “American” Quartet, and the Cello Concerto. Enthusiastic Americans claimed that Dvořák had made use of American materials and that these were examples of “American music.” But Dvořák would have none of that, denouncing “that nonsense about my having made use of original American melodies. I have only composed in the spirit of such American national melodies.” Dvořák felt that all his music was “genuine Bohemian music,” but the “American” Quartet incorporates a birdcall Dvořák heard in America, the “New
World” Symphony evokes spirituals, and the question of specifically American influences on this most Bohemian of composers remains tantalizing.

Dvořák was fascinated by America. A train buff, he would sneak away from the Conservatory to watch locomotives pounding along New York City’s many rail lines. But after his first year in busy Manhattan, he took his family to Spillville, Iowa—a Czech community—for the summer of 1893. There, surrounded by familiar food, language, and customs, the Dvořák family could escape big-city life and relax. If Dvořák had been amazed by New York City, he found different kinds of surprises on the American prairie. Bands of Iroquois Indians came to Spillville, selling medicinal herbs, and in the evening, they gave programs of their dances and music. Those impromptu performances in the cool Iowa twilight had an immediate impact on the composer: The beat of Iroquois drums echoes through this quintet, composed that same summer.

The opening of the Allegro non tanto is dominated by the husky sound of the violas—in fact, the prominence of the violas gives this music its characteristically dark sonority. The main theme is delayed slightly, and when it first appears—in the first violin—it grows out of the violas’ introduction; many have felt that the movement’s dancing second theme echoes the sound of Native American drums. This movement, in sonata form, moves to a quiet close on a cadence derived from the main theme.

The drums of the Iroquois, however, pound relentlessly through the Allegro vivo. Dvořák uses one of the rhythms he heard in Iowa as the driving force in this movement: It appears immediately in the second viola and can be heard in various forms throughout the movement. The trio section, soaring and lovely, brings an interlude of calm before the opening material returns.

The Larghetto leaves the sound of Native American drums far behind. It is in theme-and-variation form, and in fact Dvořák had written the movement’s main theme before he left for America. The first viola announces this wistful little tune, and five variations follow. Even before the first variation begins, however, Dvořák takes the tune through a modification that makes the music sound as if it has come directly from a late Beethoven quartet; after the energy of the drums, such heartfelt and intense music comes as a surprise.

The concluding Allegro giusto is an energetic rondo that depends heavily on dotted rhythms. Dvořák interrupts the busy flow with two different theme groups, both lyric and haunting. The music rushes to its close on one of the most exuberant codas Dvořák ever wrote.

Dvořák was quite correct: He was Bohemian to the core, and so was his music. But this quintet—and the other scores he composed in America—represent a very special kind of music. It is Bohemian music, but Bohemian music flavored sharply by the sounds Dvořák heard in this country.

—Eric Bromberger

SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2023

String Quartet in G Major, op. 106 (1895)
ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born: Muhlhausen, Bohemia, September 8, 1841
Died: Prague, May 1, 1904

In April 1895 Dvořák returned to Czechoslovakia after three years as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. America had fascinated Dvořák, but during every moment in the New World he had been assailed by a stinging homesickness that even a long visit home could not cure. Once home for good, he spent the summer of 1895 happily at the family retreat at Vysoká, where he could roam the fields and woods and raise his pet pigeons. In his pleasure at being home, he even forgot about music for a while: “Since I came back from America, I haven’t put pen to paper. ... Here at Vysoká I grudge the time and prefer to enjoy the beauties of the countryside,” he wrote to a friend.

But in the fall he returned to Prague, where he took up his duties as professor of composition at the Conservatory, and during November and December he composed the String Quartet in G Major, his first work since coming home. Some critics have been quick to hear this quartet as “a hymn of thanksgiving,” an expression of joy at returning to his homeland, but we should be careful not to impose extra-musical “meaning” on a piece of pure music. This is intensely felt music, but by no means does it speak with unmixed joy. In fact, this complex, dramatic quartet rings at times with a vehemence unusual in chamber music.
This is big music, not just in its impressive length (40 minutes), but in its sound and range of expression. Dvořák’s score is littered with instructions that push the performers to the limits of their instruments (grandioso, con forza, appassionato, fortississimo), and he demands such techniques as rolled chords, double-stopped octaves, and tremolos, sometimes thought inappropriate in chamber music. We should be wary of making easy assumptions as to what “message” this powerful quartet expresses—far better to let it speak for itself simply as music.

The very beginning of the Allegro moderato is deceptive: The quiet leaps and swirling triplets offer no hint of the violence ahead, which erupts as this dramatic movement unfolds. Dvořák makes some surprising key changes along the way before the huge climax and powerful close. The slow movement is a series of variations on alternating themes. The grieving opening hardly sounds like music of thanksgiving, and throughout this impassioned movement Dvořák reminds his players: cantabile e molto espressivo and con sentimento e molto cantabile. The music rises to a tremendous C-major climax with a soaring, virtuoso part for first violin. The Molto vivace is a scherzo that sends the violins high above the lower voices, whose accompaniment bristles with complex rhythms. A brief slow introduction leads into the finale, a buoyant rondo. This movement features so many tempo (and mood) shifts that it has sometimes been compared to the dumka form. Its climax, which brings back first-movement themes, is dramatic and protracted.

**String Quartet in A-flat Major, op. 105 (1895)**

In America, Dvořák had written music that shows the influence of that strange new country—the “New World” Symphony, the “American” Quartet, and the Viola Quintet with its Iroquois drumbeats. In March 1895, just before he left America, Dvořák began a new string quartet and wrote about half of the first movement; he finished the quartet quickly in Prague the following December.

The striking thing about this quartet, which contains the last music Dvořák composed in America, is that it shows absolutely no American influences. Instead, saturated with Czech musical forms and the spirit of Czech music, it reflects Dvořák’s relief at being home. As he was completing the quartet that Christmas, Dvořák wrote to a friend: “We are, praise be to God, all well and rejoice at being spared after three years to spend this dear and happy Christmas festival in Bohemia. How different did we feel last year in America, where we were so far away in a foreign country and separated from all our children and friends. But the Lord God has vouchsafed us this happy moment and that is why we feel so inexpressibly content!” This happy spirit runs through the Quartet in A-flat Major. There are of course moments of shade, but the general mood of this music is one of celebration.

The first movement opens with a slow introduction built on terraced entrances; the shape of these entrances leaps ahead at the Allegro appassionato to become the movement’s main theme; at this faster speed, the theme has been compared to a trumpet call. Dvořák derives much of the first movement from this theme, though there is an attractive second idea built on triplets and dotted rhythms; the movement drives to a vigorous close.

The scherzo is in ABA form, with the outer sections based on the Czech furiant; the violin parts intermesh beautifully, even at a blistering tempo. By contrast, the middle section is calm and melodic; Dvořák derives one of the themes here from the aria “The smile of a child” from his opera The Jacobin. The marking for the third movement, Lento e molto cantabile, makes clear its character. It too is in ABA form, with a lyric opening and a somewhat gruff chromatic middle section; this rises to a climax marked molto appassionato before the return of the opening material, now subtly varied.

Dvořák rounds off the quartet with a finale built on three separate themes. There are some striking features here: tremolos used as accompaniment, fugal entrances, and a distinctly Czech third theme, marked molto cantabile. The development of this movement is extended, and Dvořák drives the quartet to its close with a quick-paced coda.

—Eric Bromberger
The Alexander String Quartet has performed in the major music capitals of five continents, securing its standing among the world’s premier ensembles, and a major artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving since 1989 as ensemble in residence of San Francisco Performances and directors of The Morrison Chamber Music Center Instructional Program at San Francisco State University. Widely admired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart, and Shostakovich, the quartet’s recordings have won international critical acclaim. They have established themselves as important advocates of new music, commissioning dozens of new works from composers including Jake Heggie, Cindy Cox, Augusta Read Thomas, Robert Greenberg, Cesar Cano, Tarik O’Regan, Paul Siskind, and Pulitzer Prize—winner Wayne Peterson. Samuel Carl Adams’ Quintet with Pillars was premiered in 2018 and has been widely performed across the U.S. by the Alexander String Quartet with pianist Joyce Yang.

The Alexander String Quartet’s annual calendar includes engagements at major halls throughout North America and Europe. They have appeared at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, and the Metropolitan Museum; Jordan Hall; the Library of Congress; and chamber music societies and universities across the North American continent including Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Lewis and Clark, Pomona, UCLA, the Kranzler Center, Purdue and many more. Recent overseas tours include the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina, Panama, and the Philippines. Their visit to Poland’s Beethoven Easter Festival is beautifully captured in the 2017 award-winning documentary, Con Moto: The Alexander String Quartet.

Distinguished musicians with whom the Alexander String Quartet has collaborated include pianists Joyce Yang, Roger Woodward, Menachem Pressler, Marc-André Hamelin, and Jeremy Menuhin; clarinetists Joan Enric Lluna, Richard Stoltzman, and Eli Eban; soprano Elly Ameling; mezzo-sopranos Joyce DiDonato and Kindra Scharich; violinist Midori; violin Toby Appel; cellists Lynn Harrell, Sadao Harada, and David Requiro; and jazz greats Branford Marsalis, David Sanchez, and Andrew Speight. The quartet has worked with many composers, including Aaron Copland, George Crumb, and Elliott Carter, and enjoys a close relationship with composer-lecturer Robert Greenberg, performing numerous lecture-concerts with him annually.

Recording for the FoghornClassics label, their 2021 recording of the complete string quartet of Brahms has been praised by MusicWeb International: “The joy of this quartet’s playing is immediately apparent in the ferocious opening movement of the C minor quartet: They play with all the verve, drive and passion you could wish for but never at the expense of homogeneity or intonation—and the sustained warmth and depth of their string tone are a constant delight.” Fanfare lauded their 2020 release of the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets (with Eli Eban) as “clearly one of the Alexander Quartet’s finest releases.” Their release in 2019 of Dvořák’s “American” quartet and piano quintet (with Joyce Yang) was selected by MusicWeb International as a featured recording of the year, praising it for interpretations performed “with the bright-eyed brilliance of first acquaintance.” Also released in 2019 was a recording of the Late Quartets of Mozart, receiving critical acclaim (“Exceptionally beautiful performances of some extraordinarily beautiful music.”—Fanfare), as did their 2018 release of Mozart’s Piano Quartets with Joyce Yang. (“These are by far, hands down and feet up, the most amazing performances of Mozart’s two piano quartets that have ever graced these ears”—Fanfare.) Other major releases have included the combined string quartet cycles of Bartók and Kodály (“If ever an album had ‘Grammy nominee’ written on its front cover, this is it.”—Audiophile Audition); the string quintets and sextets of Brahms with violist Toby Appel and cellist David Requiro (“a uniquely detailed, transparent warmth”—Strings Magazine); the Schumann and Brahms
piano quintets with Joyce Yang (“passionate, soulful readings of two pinnacles of the chamber repertory”—*The New York Times*); and the Beethoven cycle (“A landmark journey through the greatest of all quartet cycles”—*Strings Magazine*). Their catalog also includes the Shostakovich cycle, Mozart’s Ten Famous Quartets, and the Mahler Song Cycles in new transcriptions by Zakarias Grafilo.

The Alexander String Quartet formed in New York City in 1981, capturing international attention as the first American quartet to win the London (now Wigmore) International String Quartet Competition in 1985. The quartet has received honorary degrees from Allegheny College and Saint Lawrence University and Presidential medals from Baruch College (CUNY). The Alexander String Quartet plays on a matched set of instruments made in San Francisco by Francis Kuttner, known as the Ellen M. Egger quartet.

**Robert Greenberg**

Robert Greenberg was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1954 and has lived in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1978. Greenberg received a B.A. in music, magna cum laude, from Princeton University in 1976. His principal teachers at Princeton were Edward Cone, Daniel Werts, and Carlton Gamer in composition, Claudio Spies and Paul Lansky in analysis, and Jerry Kuderna in piano. In 1984, Greenberg received a Ph.D. in music composition, with distinction, from the University of California, Berkeley, where his principal teachers were Andrew Imbrie and Olly Wilson in composition and Richard Felciano in analysis.

Greenberg has composed over 50 works for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Recent performances of his works have taken place in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, England, Ireland, Greece, Italy, and The Netherlands, where his *Child’s Play for String Quartet* was performed at the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam.

Greenberg has garnered numerous honors, including being designated an official Steinway Artist and receiving three Nicola de Lorenzo Composition Prizes and three Meet-The-Composer Grants. Notable commissions have been received from the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Alexander String Quartet, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, San Francisco Performances, and the XTET ensemble. Greenberg is a board member and an artistic director of Composers, Inc., a composers’ collective/production organization based in San Francisco. His music has been published by Fallen Leaf Press and CPP/Belwin, and recorded on the Innova label.

Greenberg has performed, taught, and lectured extensively across North America and Europe. He is currently music historian-in-residence with San Francisco Performances, where he has lectured and performed since 1994. He has served on the faculties of the University of California at Berkeley, California State University East Bay, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he chaired the Department of Music History and Literature from 1989 to 2001 and served as the director of the Adult Extension Division from 1991 to 1996. Greenberg has lectured for some of the most prestigious musical and arts organizations in the United States, including the San Francisco Symphony (where for 10 years he was host and lecturer for the Symphony’s nationally acclaimed “Discovery Series”), the Chautauqua Institute (where he was the Everett Scholar-in-Residence during the 2006 season), the Ravinia Festival, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Van Cliburn Foundation, the Nasher Sculpture Center, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Villa Montalvo, Music@Menlo, and the University of British Columbia (where he was the Dal Grauer Lecturer in September 2006). In addition, Greenberg is a sought-after lecturer for businesses and business schools. For many years a member of the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania/Wharton School’s Advanced Management Program, he has spoken for such diverse organizations as S.C. Johnson, Canadian Pacific, Deutsches Bank, the University of California/Haas School of Business Executive Seminar, the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, Harvard Business School Publishing, Kaiser Permanente, the Strategos Institute, Quintiles Transnational, the Young Presidents’ Organization, the World Presidents’ Organization, and the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco. Greenberg has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal, INC. Magazine*, the *Times of London*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, the *University of California Alumni Magazine, Princeton Alumni Weekly*, and *Diablo Magazine*. For 15 years Greenberg was the resident composer and music historian to National Public Radio’s “Weekend All Things Considered” and “Weekend Edition, Sunday” with Liane Hansen.
In February 2003, The Bangor Daily News (Maine) referred to Greenberg as the “Elvis of music history and appreciation,” an appraisal that has given more pleasure than any other.

In May 1993, Greenberg recorded a 48-lecture course entitled “How to Listen to and Understand Great Music” for the Teaching Company/Great Courses Program of Chantilly, Virginia. (This course was named in the January 1996 edition of Inc. Magazine as one of “The Nine Leadership Classics You’ve Never Read.”) The Great Courses is the preeminent producer of college-level courses-on-media in the United States. Twenty-five further courses, including “Concert Masterworks,” “Bach and the High Baroque,” “The Symphonies of Beethoven,” “How to Listen to and Understand Opera,” “Great Masters,” “The Operas of Mozart,” “The Life and Operas of Verdi,” “The Symphony,” “The Chamber Music of Mozart,” “The Piano Sonatas of Beethoven,” “The Concerto,” “The Fundamentals of Music,” “The String Quartets of Beethoven,” “The Music of Richard Wagner,” and “The Thirty Greatest Orchestral Works” have been recorded since, totaling over 550 lectures. The courses are available on both CD and DVD formats and in book form.

Greenberg’s book, How to Listen to Great Music, was published by Plume, a division of Penguin Books, in April 2011.

Greenberg lives with children Lillian and Daniel, wife Nanci, and a very cool Maine coon cat named Teddy in the hills of Oakland, California.

**Jeffrey LaDeur**

Jeffrey LaDeur is known for his rare blend of insight, spontaneity, and approachable, communicative stage presence. Having inherited a rich tradition of pianism and interpretation from Annie Sherter, student of Vlado Perlemuter and Alfred Cortot, LaDeur has established himself as a compelling exponent of classic and new repertoire. In March 2018, LaDeur made his solo recital debut at Carnegie Hall on the centennial of Claude Debussy’s death. He appears regularly with orchestras and maintains a repertoire of over 40 concerti. LaDeur is the founder and artistic director of the San Francisco International Piano Festival and president of the American Liszt Society, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter.

A chamber musician of distinction, LaDeur’s collaboration with mezzo soprano Kindra Scharich has produced To My Distant Beloved, an album exploring the connections between Beethoven and Schumann through cycles in song and solo piano works. LaDeur has collaborated with distinguished artists such as Robert Mann, Bonnie Hampton, Ian Swensen, Axel Strauss, Geoff Nuttall, and the Alexander String Quartet. An active educator, LaDeur offers master classes as guest artist in universities throughout the United States and coaches gifted pre-college piano and string ensembles at Young Chamber Musicians in Burlingame, California. LaDeur holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and San Francisco Conservatory of Music in piano performance and chamber music, respectively. He counts among his teachers Mark Edwards, Douglas Humpherys, Yoshikazu Nagai, and Robert McDonald.

**Paul Yarbrough**

Paul Yarbrough, a celebrated violist, is a native of Clearwater, Florida. A founding member of the Alexander String Quartet, Yarbrough announced his retirement from the quartet in 2020. He will appear as a guest artist with the quartet for two seasons of quintet repertory, and he will continue to perform as a soloist while teaching and pursuing personal projects. His teachers have included Elaine Lee Richey, Lillian Fuchs, Raymond Page, and Sally Peck. A frequent soloist with orchestras, he has also given numerous solo recitals throughout the United States and was principal violist of the Chamber Orchestra of New England. In 1995, Yarbrough and his quartet colleagues received honorary doctorates of Fine Arts from Allegheny College for their service to the arts and education and an honorary degree from St. Lawrence University. Yarbrough serves on the board of the San Francisco Friends of Chamber Music.
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