

THE ALEXANDER STRING QUARTET has performed in the major music capitals of five continents, securing its standing among the world's premier ensembles over nearly three decades. Widely admired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart, and Shostakovich, the quartet has also established itself as an important advocate of new music through over 25 commissions and numerous premiere performances. The Alexander String Quartet is a major artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving there as directors of the Morrison Chamber Music Center at the School of Music and Dance in the College of Creative Arts at San Francisco State University and Ensemble in Residence of San Francisco Performances.

The Alexander String Quartet's annual calendar of concerts includes engagements at major halls throughout North America and Europe. The quartet has appeared at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York City; Jordan Hall in Boston; the Library of Congress and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington; and chamber music societies and universities across the North American continent. Recent overseas tours have brought them to the U.K., the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina, and the Philippines. The many distinguished artists to collaborate with the Alexander String Quartet include pianists Menahem Pressler, Gary Graffman, Roger Woodward, Jeremy Menuhin, and Joyce Yang; clarinetists Eli Eban, Charles Neidich, Joan Enric Lluna, and Richard Stoltzman; cellists Lynn Harrell, Sadao Harada, and David Requiro; violist Toby Appel; and soprano Elly Ameling. Among the quartet's more unusual collaborations has been numerous performances of Eddie Sauter's seminal Third Stream work, *Focus*, in collaboration with Branford Marsalis, David Sánchez, and Andrew Speight.

The Alexander String Quartet's 25th anniversary as well as the 20th anniversary of its association with New York City's Baruch College as Ensemble in Residence was celebrated through a performance by the ensemble of the Shostakovich string quartet cycle. Of these performances at the Baruch Performing Art Center Engelman Recital Hall, *The New York Times* wrote, "The intimacy of the music came through with enhanced power and poignancy in the Alexander quartet's vibrant, probing, assured and aptly volatile performances. ... Seldom have these anguished, playful, ironic and masterly works seemed so profoundly personal." The Alexander was also awarded Presidential Medals in honor of their longstanding commitment to the Arts and Education and in celebration of their two decades of service to Baruch College.

Highlights of the 2010-2011 season include a two multiple concert series for San Francisco Performances, one presenting the complete quartets of Bartók and Kodály and the other music of Dvořák; the conclusion of a Beethoven cycle for Mondavi Center; and a continuing annual series at Baruch College in New York City. The quartet also performs an all-Beethoven program at the Lied Center of Kansas, two tours of Spain (including the inaugural performances of a new festival in Godella), and a second tour of Argentina. They also continue their annual residencies at Allegheny College, Lewis & Clark College, and St. Lawrence University.

Over the past decade the Alexander String Quartet has added considerably to its distinguished and wide-ranging discography. Currently recording exclusively for the FoghornClassics label, the Alexander's most recent release (June 2009) is a complete Beethoven cycle. *Music Web International* has described the performances on this new Beethoven set as "uncompromising in their power, intensity and spiritual depth," while *Strings Magazine* described the set as "a landmark journey through the greatest of all quartet cycles." The FoghornClassics label released a three-CD set (*Homage*) of the Mozart quartets dedicated to Haydn in 2004. Foghorn released the a six-CD album (*Fragments*) of the complete Shostakovich quartets in 2006 and 2007, and a recording of the complete quartets of Pulitzer prize-winning San Francisco composer, Wayne Peterson, was released in the spring of 2008. BMG Classics released the quartet's first recording of Beethoven cycle on its Arte Nova label to tremendous critical acclaim in 1999.

In celebration of the Alexander String Quartet's forthcoming 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, San Francisco Performances has commissioned a new work for string quartet and mezzo-soprano from Jake Heggie; the work will be premiered in a performance in collaboration with Joyce DiDonato in February 2012 at the Herbst Theater. Other recent Alexander premieres include *Rise Chanting* by Augusta Read Thomas, commissioned for the Alexander by the Krannert Center and premiered there and simulcast by WFMT radio in Chicago. The quartet has also premiered String Quartets Nos. 2 and 3 by Wayne Peterson and works by Ross Bauer (commissioned by Stanford University), Richard Festinger, David Sheinfeld, Hi Kyung Kim, and a Koussevitzky commission by Robert Greenberg.

The Alexander String Quartet was formed in New York City in 1981 and the following year became the first string quartet to win the Concert Artists Guild Competition. In 1985, the quartet captured international attention as the first American quartet to win the London International String Quartet Competition, receiving both the jury's highest award and the Audience Prize. In May of 1995, Allegheny College awarded Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees to the members of the quartet in recognition of their unique contribution to the arts. Honorary degrees were conferred on the ensemble by St. Lawrence University in May 2000.

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