

## 2 From Bach

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### 1–5 Piano Quintet in g minor, op. 57 (1940)

**DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH** (1906–1975)

Prelude	4:34
Fugue	9:33
Scherzo	3:25
Intermezzo	5:50
Finale	7:22

GILBERT KALISH, *piano*; DANISH STRING QUARTET: FREDERIK ØLAND, RUNE TONSGAARD SØRENSEN, *violins*; ASBJØRN NØRGAARD, *viola*; FREDRIK SCHØYEN SJØLIN, *cello*

### 6 Rondo in A Major for Violin

and String Quartet, D. 438 (1816)

14:01

**FRANZ SCHUBERT** (1797–1828)

SEAN LEE, *solo violin*; JORJA FLEEZANIS, BENJAMIN BEILMAN, *violins*; RICHARD O'NEILL, *viola*; DAVID FINCKEL, *cello*

### 7–9 Piano Quintet (1879)

**CÉSAR FRANCK** (1822–1890)

Molto moderato quasi lento	14:50
Lento, con molto sentimento	9:49
Allegro non troppo, ma con fuoco	8:57

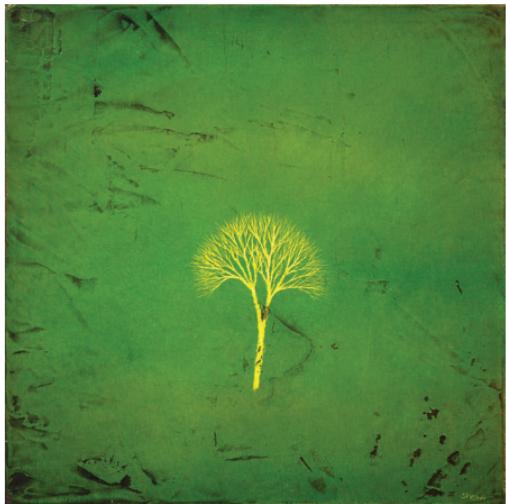
GILLES VONSATTEL, *piano*; ARNAUD SUSSMANN, IAN SWENSEN, *violins*; RICHARD O'NEILL, *viola*; DAVID FINCKEL, *cello*

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Recorded July 21, August 3, and August 9, 2013, The Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton. Recording producer and engineer: Da-Hong Seetoo. Steinway grand pianos provided courtesy of ProPiano. Cover art: *Imprint*, 2006, by Sebastian Spreng. Photos by Tristan Cook, Diana Lake, and Brian Benton. Liner notes by Patrick Castillo and Andrew Goldstein. Booklet design by Nick Stone. CD production: Jerome Bunke, Digital Force, New York. Production Assistant: Andrew Goldstein. Music@Menlo 2013 was made possible in part by a leadership grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation with additional support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and Koret Foundation Funds. American Public Media was the official radio and new-media broadcast partner of Music@Menlo 2013.

# Music@Menlo *LIVE*

## 2 From Bach



SHOSTAKOVICH

Piano Quintet in g minor

SCHUBERT

Rondo in A Major, D. 438

FRANCK

Piano Quintet

## 2 From Bach

Music@Menlo's eleventh season, *From Bach*, celebrated the timeless work of Johann Sebastian Bach, the composer whose profound legacy has shaped Western music over the two and a half centuries since his death. Each disc of the 2013 edition of Music@Menlo *LIVE* captures the spirit of the season.

Bach's lush writing for large ensemble set the course not only for the development of the concerto but similarly for the establishment of such genres as the modern piano quintet. Disc II features three staples of the chamber music literature: the virtuosic Rondo in A Major for Violin and String Quartet by Franz Schubert, written in the tradition of the concerto, bookended by two grand-scale piano quintets by Dmitry Shostakovich and César Franck.

### **DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)**

#### **Piano Quintet in g minor, op. 57 (1940)**

The Russian pianist and composer Dmitry Shostakovich composed his Opus 57 Piano Quintet in 1940, at the request of the Beethoven Quartet, one of Russia's preeminent chamber ensembles. The Beethoven Quartet had recently performed Shostakovich's String Quartet no. 1, op. 49, and was interested in having a piano quintet to perform with the composer. Though not a work that directly addresses the sociopolitical climate of Stalinist Russia, as much of Shostakovich's catalog does, the Piano Quintet shares the range of expressive power that characterizes such works as his Eighth String Quartet, famously dedicated to "victims of fascism and war." When the quintet was



Dmitry Shostakovich's Piano Quintet in g minor, op. 57. Gilbert Kalish and the Danish String Quartet.

premiered, one Russian newspaper praised it as "a portrait of our age...the rich-toned, perfect voice of the present." The following year, the quintet received the inaugural Stalin Prize, a newly established state prize recognizing excellence in the arts and sciences. The prize included a considerable cash award of 100,000 rubles, which Shostakovich contributed to charity benefitting Moscow's poor. The Piano Quintet begins with a nod to a Baroque convention particularly associated with Johann Sebastian Bach: its first two movements are a prelude and fugue. The prelude begins and ends solemnly around a quicker, but more introspective, middle section. The slow g minor fugue that follows represents the quintet's emotional center of gravity. Its deeply affecting subject, introduced by the first violin, captures the feeling of a melancholy Russian

folk tune, whose tension Shostakovich draws out exquisitely. Following the devastating fugue, Shostakovich offers the listener some measure of relief with the rambunctious scherzo. Against an exuberant string accompaniment, the piano issues a cheerful tune. The music's seeming naïveté gives way in short order to knowingly mischievous dissonances; a central dance-like melody is sardonic, perhaps, but remains light on its feet, never probing the gravity of the fugue. The quintet's fourth movement, a slow, plaintive intermezzo, proceeds without pause to the gently optimistic finale: a brighter statement, in G major, bringing a palpable sense of relief. So decisive is the finale's change in character that one of its themes actually quotes Russian circus music. Before long, however, the circus music becomes grotesque, yielding later to music redolent of the second-movement fugue. But the finale quickly returns to the affable gait of its opening measures, ending the quintet on a contented note.

—Patrick Castillo

## FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

### Rondo in A Major for Violin and String Quartet, D. 438 (1816)

Curiously, Franz Schubert—the Viennese musical icon credited by the American composer John Harbison with writing “the best piece in every genre he really tackled”—never tackled the quintessentially Romantic medium of concerto for solo instrument and orchestra. Only two pieces in his enormous body of work resemble the concerto medium: the *Konzertstück* in D Major for Violin and Orchestra and the Rondo in A Major for Violin and Strings. The latter—identified by Schubert as a rondo, the straightforward Classical form in which a central refrain recurs in alternation with contrasting sections of music—elevates the standard rondo form to a work of unexpected sophistication. The work begins with an *Adagio* prelude. The character of the music has a curtain-raising feeling about it, as if preparing the listener for the majestic breadth of the rondo to follow. From the mass of the full-ensemble sonority, the violin soloist emerges and presents the subject, an effervescent tune brimming with early nineteenth-century Viennese gaiety. Introducing an element of

Classical sonata form, Schubert presents a second theme, in the dominant key of E major. A dramatic sequence in c-sharp minor follows, driven by virtuosic passagework in the solo violin. But as quickly as it emerged, this ephemeral moment of *Sturm und Drang* slides back into the rustic second theme. The soloist leads this extended refrain—which more closely resembles the exposition of a sonata-form movement—to a closing tutti passage in E major. From here, Schubert traverses a series of different keys and characters, in recurring elements of the refrain as well as in contrasting episodes highlighting the soloist. The writing is wonderfully rich throughout, both in the elegance of the rondo's design and in Schubert's glorification of the solo instrument.

—Patrick Castillo

## **CÉSAR FRANCK (1822–1890)**

### **Piano Quintet (1879)**

The Piano Quintet in f minor was Franck's first chamber work in nearly thirty years. Though it received an overwhelmingly strong reception at its Société Nationale premiere on January 17, 1880, the work was a source of much controversy, both in Franck's personal and in his compositional life. It has been suggested that the brooding passion that Franck roots into his Piano Quintet was prompted by amorous feelings for his student Augusta Holmès; if true, this concealed admiration did not go unnoticed. Félicité, his wife of twenty-seven years, refused to attend the premiere of the quintet or any performance thereafter. The Marsick Quartet and pianist-composer Camille Saint-Saëns, to whom Franck had intended to dedicate the piece, premiered the work. Immediately following the performance, Saint-Saëns stormed offstage, leaving the baffled Franck behind holding the manuscript with his name affixed as the dedicatee. It is unclear whether Saint-Saëns was appalled by the quintet's frequent modulations and aesthetic complexity or he was actually motivated by jealousy about Holmès, whom, despite his being homosexual, he also admired. Nevertheless, the work was an instant success and quickly became a staple in the French repertoire—so much so that the Société staged a second performance of the work, which was unheard of at the time. The



Franz Schubert's Rondo in A Major for Violin and String Quartet, D. 438. L-R: Jorja Fleezanis, Benjamin Beilman, Sean Lee, David Finckel, and Richard O'Neill.

work is cast in cyclic form. The first movement begins with a stormy statement by the string quartet, followed by a thoughtful soliloquy in the piano. After some conversation between the two individual voices, the plot thickens and they join together to utter the first *Allegro* theme. A contrasting mysterious *tema ma con passione* is introduced, based on the introductory piano response. The slow movement, *Lento, con molto sentimento*, contemplatively continues Franck's modal shifts, with the turbulent scales adding a hesitant aura to the work. The finale's second theme presents a rhythmic derivation of the *Lento* and flirts with the *tema ma con passione* theme until the very end, when the entire work culminates in one grand statement of this ecstatic and sensuous decree.

—Andrew Goldstein



## About Music@Menlo

Music@Menlo is an internationally acclaimed three-week summer festival and institute that combines world-class chamber music performances, extensive audience engagement with artists, intensive training for preprofessional musicians, and efforts to enhance and broaden the chamber music community of the San Francisco Bay Area. An immersive and engaging experience centered around a distinctive array of programming, Music@Menlo enriches its core concert programs with numerous opportunities for in-depth learning to intensify audiences' enjoyment and understanding of the music and provide meaningful ways for aficionados and newcomers of all ages to explore classical chamber music.