Central Washington University Department of Music

Guest Artist Series 2011-2012

Monday, October 24, 7:00 pm    Jazz Canvas

Friday, January 6, 7:00 pm     Pro Arte Quartet

Wednesday, May 23, 7:00 pm   Otis Murphy, saxophone

General Admission: $10       CWU Students with ID: FREE

For more information on these and other Music Department events,
visit: www.cwu.edu/~music

Music building parking is free after 4:30pm on weekdays and all day on weekends.

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The Calendar of Events changes frequently. For the most up-to-date calendar, visit our website at www.cwu.edu/~music or call (509) 963-1216.

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Please turn off your cell phone and refrain from the use of any electronic devices through the duration of your visit to our facility. Thank you.

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You can further the excellence of our Music Department! A contribution of $250 will contribute to the program of your choice, and inscribe your name, or the name of a loved one, on a chair in our beautiful Concert Hall. Find out more about “La Sedia” (The Music Chair) at www.cwu.edu/~music.
Langsamer Satz, M78 (1905)  
Anton Webern (1881-1945)

String Quartet No. 2 “Dreaming Butterfly” (2011)  
Walter Mays (b. 1941)  
(A Pro Arte Quartet Centennial Commission)

I.  Sleep Music I
II. 1st Adventure: Amoroso-scherzando
III. 2nd Adventure: Pizzicato
IV. 3rd Adventure: Scorrrevole
V.  Sleep Music II
VI. Codetta

While at work on his first quartet, Mr. Mays had immediate plans for a second, of very different character from the first. Beloved as a teacher, mentor, and musician, Walter Mays has continued his long affiliation with the Pro Arte, and his second quartet is the first of their 2011-2012 Centennial premieres.

The composer writes:
In the second chapter of the ancient Chinese book of Daoist philosophy, the Zhuangzi, Master Zhuang relates the following dream. One night Zhuangzi dreamed that he had been transformed into a beautiful butterfly, aimlessly fluttering here and there, having many adventures. He felt happy and completely free of worldly cares, having no idea that he was Zhuangzi. Suddenly he awoke, and found that he was again Zhuangzi But now a mystery remained. Was he Zhuangzi having dreamt of being a butterfly, or was he a butterfly dreaming that he was Zhuangzi? Surely there must be some distinction between Zhuangzi and the butterfly! This transformation reveals the Equality of All Things.

My Second Quartet, “Dreaming Butterfly,” is laid out in five connected sections, three scherzo adventures surrounded by two "sleep music" episodes. There is also a brief codetta, inspired by Zhuangzi’s idea that he might still be a butterfly. An important feature is the virtuosity of the first violin part, which represents the spirit of the butterfly. This work was commissioned by the University of Wisconsin, Madison for the Pro Arte Quartet as a part of the Quartet’s 2011-12 Centennial Celebration.

SARAH SCHAFFER / WALTER MAYS

Franck - String Quartet in D major (1889)

Franck’s only string quartet was begun in autumn 1898 and finished in January 1890. Its premiere performance the following April was a great success, but it proved to be the composer’s last chamber work, and his last major work of any kind, since he died on November 8, 1890. More interested in lyric clarity than architecture or development, Franck built his work upon themes that are strong and straightforward in the manner of Wagner, a profound melodic and harmonic influence on the composer and his French contemporaries. But the influence of Beethoven was also important, in Franck’s use of the so-called “cyclical” style of compositions popular in the later nineteenth century, in which themes recur through a work. In particular, Franck used the model of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: in its finale the themes of the prior movements are recalled and bypassed, and Franck designed his own finale in that fashion. For the Quatuor Pro Arte, this work had a very special meaning, since its members shared Belgian nationality with the composer.

Through the group's original history, from 1919 to 1940, the Franck Quartet was regularly included in its concert programs. It was, in fact, used to conclude the first concert the QPA played in the USA, at the Library of Congress on October 8, 1926. In the third year of the QPA’s recording work for HMV, and the first year in which it was allowed to move beyond Haydn into other areas of its repertoire, the group recorded this work on May 18, 1933. This constituted apparently the first appearance of the score in recordings. The technology of the day did, however, require one compromise from the group. Given the time limitations for a 78-rpm record side, the players were required to speed up by a good half-minute, to 4:45, the elfin Scherzo that they normally rendered in over five minutes. The present PAQ players recall being directed by their good friend Samuel Rhodes to this quartet, with which they readily fell in love.

JOHN W. BARKER

Intermission

String Quartet in D major, M.9 (1889)  
César Franck (1822-1890)

I. Poco lento - Allegro - Tempo I
II. Scherzo: Vivace
III. Larghetto
IV Finale: Allegro molto

David Perry, violin
Suzanne Beia, violin
Sally Chisholm, viola
Parry Karp, cello
Program Notes
Preserving a legacy, forging the future

Webern - Langsamer Satz (1905)

Known primarily as one of the founding fathers of the Second Viennese School and, along with Schoenberg and Berg, a leading exponent of serial atonality, the lush romanticism of Webern’s Langsamer Satz can come as a surprise. One of his earliest works, actually his first assignment as Schoenberg’s pupil, this highly charged, dramatic miniature, clearly rooted in post-Brahmsian tonality, is much indebted to his mentor’s string sextet, Verklärte Nacht written just three years earlier. In his diary, Webern paints a vivid picture of the impetus for the work, describing the intensity of a May hike in the Austrian woods with his cousin Wilhelmine Mörtl, with whom he was in love (and who he married in 1911, six weeks before the birth of their first child). The work spilled out quickly in June 1905, then disappeared during Webern’s lifetime, not resurfacing until the 1960s when the musicologist Hans Moldenhaur established his archive of Webern documents, manuscripts, and letters. After its belated premiere in 1962 the Langsamer Satz became very popular. Even wider circulation came in 1982, when Gerhard Schwartz, music director of the Seattle Symphony, premiered his orchestral arrangement of the piece.

From the start, the Belgian Pro Arte was a strong advocate for the music of the second Viennese School. Kolisch’s close ties to Schoenberg assured its stature in the Pro Arte Quartet of the 1950s. When Schoenberg died in 1951, the quartet toured widely, offering memorial concerts in tribute. And in 1952 the Pro Arte presented the long-overdue premiere of Schoenberg’s early D major quartet at the Library of Congress. In 1957, shortly after violinist Rich Blum replaced Bernard Milovsky, the musicians (with Kolisch) recorded Webern and Schoenberg. More recently, the Paulu Pro Arte performed the complete quartet works of Webern framed by the string chamber music of Brahms (1983).

The Langsamer Satz, approximately ten minutes long, is built on three lyric themes that are unhurriedly stated, combined in different ways, and subtly yet powerfully taken to a conclusion of considerable intensity. SARAH SCHAEFFER / RICHARD FREED

Mays - String Quartet No. 2, “Dreaming Butterfly” (2011)

Walter Mays’ String Quartet No. 2 was commissioned for the centennial of the Pro Arte Quartet. Major funding came from the UW-Madison Anonymous Fund through the Arts Institute in support of Year of the Arts initiatives on campus.

Walter Mays’ first quartet, String Quartet in G Minor, was written for the Pro Arte Quartet during the summer of 1998. A memorial to the conflict in Kosovo, it is an emotionally dark work reflecting the composer’s pessimism concerning the human propensity for violence. The harmonic language is a mixture of free atonality, polytonality and row techniques, with a strong turn toward the key of G minor at important structural points. The Pro Arte recorded this work on the Albany Record label, on a CD released in 2003.

Pro Arte Quartet
One Hundred Years

Any centennial invites celebration. The centennial of a string quartet is an unprecedented occasion for celebrating. And the centennial of the Pro Arte Quartet of the University of Wisconsin School of Music is freighted with extraordinary points of justification.

The Pro Arte Quartet’s history is one of unique survival and transformations. It began in 1911-12 as the idea of some teenage prodigies at the Brussels Conservatory. That idea survived the disruption of World War I, and inspired the development of what became one among a number of the world’s leading quartets. The crisis of World War II was catastrophic for music and musicians, but the Pro Arte, almost alone among its peer groups, survived that upheaval.

It survived, however, through transformation. Stranded in the USA in 1940 by the war’s outbreak, the quartet became established in Madison at the University of Wisconsin. Though shred in membership, its surviving Belgians melded with newcomers, mostly Americans, to become something else unique: the first professional string quartet to be identified with and supported by an American university. In this, it came to be a model for other, newer groups, in a pattern that almost surely guaranteed the survival of string quartets in the USA and the expansion of their public. At the University of Wisconsin, there have been crises and tensions over the decades since World War II. But the quartet has become a vital part of the UW’s School of Music performing and teaching programs. It has become a beloved and vital part of the musical life of Madison. And, as a part of the University’s enterprising programs of outreach, it has become a cultural dimension of the entire state of Wisconsin.

Through the years of the Quatuor Pro Arte, the Belgian members made a strong commitment not only to the existing repertoire of chamber music, but also to the new contributions of composers who were their contemporaries—adding up to a who’s-who of twentieth-century masters. The quartet’s Madison reconfigurations have continued that tradition, creating links with recent composers and supporting their work. So it is that a special dimension of the Pro Arte Quartet centennial celebrations is a set of commissions of new compositions that will be premiered and recorded by the group, as an appropriate tribute to the past and confirmation of the future. The 2011-12 season begins a remarkable adventure of celebration.

Current quartet personnel, together since 1995, are all faculty artists-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: violinists David Perry and Suzanne Beia, violist Sally Chisholm, and cellist Parry Karp.

The Pro Arte Quartet Centennial Anniversary Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>The American Premieres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>U.S. Tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>The Belgian and International Premieres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>International Tour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>