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# CHAMBER MUSIC @ BEALL

## 2014-15



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UNIVERSITY  
OF OREGON  
School of Music  
and Dance

## EMERSON STRING QUARTET

Paul Watkins, cello | Eugene Drucker, violin | Philip Setzer, violin | Lawrence Dutton, viola

October 12, 2014 | 3 p.m. | Beall Concert Hall

**String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6** Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Scherzo: Allegro
- IV. La Maliconia: Adagio – Allegretto quasi Allegro

**String Quartet No. 2 in C Major, Op. 36** Benjamin Britten  
(1913-1976)

- I. Allegro calmo senza rigore
- II. Vivace
- III. Chacony

- INTERMISSION -

**String Quartet No. 3 in F Major, Op. 73** Dimitri Shostakovich  
(1906-1975)

- I. Allegretto
- II. Moderato con moto
- III. Allegro non troppo
- IV. Adagio
- V. Moderato

**Emerson String Quartet** appears by arrangement with IMG Artists, LLC,  
152 W. 52nd St. 5th Floor, New York, NY 10019. 212-994-3500  
**Emerson String Quartet** records exclusively for Sony Classical

In the late 1790s, 40 years after Haydn composed the first of his string quartets and 25 years after Mozart wrote most of his, Beethoven was keenly aware of his predecessors' towering stature in the genre. His own epoch-making quartets would later cast a long shadow, but as an artist in his late twenties seeking to distinguish himself in Vienna, he approached the form cautiously, studying earlier examples and laying the groundwork in piano and string trios. He finally produced a set of six quartets on a commission from Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz, one of his most important patrons, and published them in 1801 as his Op. 18. Like the rest, the sixth of the Op. 18 set shows how thoroughly Beethoven had internalized the models of Haydn and Mozart, but it is exceptional in offering a glimpse of his later quartets in the rhythmic dislocations of the Scherzo and the extraordinary harmonic wanderings and dynamic contrasts of the finale, which he titled *La maliconia* ("melancholy") and requested to be played "with the greatest delicacy."

Benjamin Britten, by contrast, jumped into quartet writing early. A precocious youth who started composing before he was ten, he wrote several quartets as a teenager, and after graduating from the Royal College of Music in 1932 he attempted his first large-scale example, *Three divertimenti* (also known by its subtitle, *Go play, boy, play*), the first of his quartets to be performed publicly. In the end he left just three numbered quartets, which in their striking originality deserve to be counted among the most important sets of the 20th century. He wrote the second in 1945, shortly after cementing his international reputation with the success of the opera *Peter Grimes*. At the same time, he was delving deeply into English tradition, specifically the music of Henry Purcell, an interest reflected in the lengthy third-movement Chacony, a theme and three sets of variations built on a ground bass in Baroque style. The shorter opening movements exhibit a radical approach to form, terse statements, sharp dynamic contrasts and striking string effects.

Like Beethoven, Dmitri Shostakovich took his time approaching the string quartet. He did not embark on a full-length quartet until he was 31, by which time he had already been stung by official censure, an experience that would cast a permanent shadow on his life and music. In 1946, he wrote his third in the wake of another traumatic experience, that of World War II, and initially gave its five movements programmatic titles: "Blithe unawareness of the future cataclysm"; "Rumblings of unrest and anticipation"; "Forces of war unleashed"; "Homage to the dead"; and "The eternal question: why, and for what?" (He later withdrew them, perhaps to avoid a crudely literal interpretation.) The music is quintessential Shostakovich in leading the listener from its glib opening Allegretto through grimly playful rhythms—waltz in the second movement, march in the third—to haunting reality in the austere textures and funereal mood of the finale.