



**Chameleon**  
Arts Ensemble  
*of Boston*

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Chameleon Arts Ensemble of Boston**

*Deborah Boldin, Artistic Director*

#### **2021-2022 chamber music season chamber series 1: as the seasons return**

Saturday, October 23, 2021, 8 PM at First Church in Boston

Sunday, October 24, 2021, 4 PM at First Church in Boston

#### **Program:**

Samuel Barber, *Summer Music* for wind quintet, Op. 31

Kenneth Fuchs, *Quiet in the Land* for flute, English horn, clarinet, viola & cello

Zoltán Kodály, *Serenade* for two violins & viola, Op. 12

Anton Bruckner, *String Quintet in F Major*, WAB 112

#### **Program notes by Gabriel Langfur Rice**

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**Samuel Barber** (1910-1981) was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, began piano lessons at age six, and made his first forays into composition by the time he was seven. At fourteen he entered the Curtis Institute of Music as part of its inaugural class, studying piano, composition, conducting, and voice. He won many awards, including the Bearn's Prize of Columbia University in 1928 and 1933, a Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship, and the American Prix de Rome, all of which helped him to travel and study in Italy, where he met Toscanini, one of the early and important champions of his music. Barber was also elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received two Pulitzer Prizes, in 1958 for the opera *Vanessa*, with a libretto by his partner Gian Carlo Menotti, and in 1962 for his Piano Concerto. Barber's musical language is clearly rooted in tonality and the tradition of lyrical romantic expressiveness. In fact, he was often criticized or dismissed for being unoriginal and backward-looking, but his angular melodic lines, effective use of dissonance, and rhythmic energy place him firmly in the twentieth century, with a uniquely expressive voice that has always communicated directly and immediately with concert audiences.

In 1953 Barber received a commission from the Detroit Chamber Music Society for a septet: three winds, three strings and piano. He was hard at work on *Vanessa* at the time, however, and it wasn't until a year later that he was able to give it serious attention. Furthermore, he decided to scrap the idea of a septet after attending a concert by the New York Woodwind Quintet at Blue Hill, Maine. Inspired primarily by their performance of a quintet by Jean Francaix, he asked them to help him complete the work on the Detroit commission. The premiere of *Summer Music*

finally took place in Detroit in 1956, and then Barber revised the work again to the form we know today.

*Summer Music* has earned a central place in the wind quintet repertoire, as it is both idiomatic for the instruments and challenging for the performers. It's also always satisfying for audiences, with a light, breezy atmosphere pervading the single movement. The title was intended to simply suggest the relaxed mood of a hot day, or, as Barber put it: "It's supposed to be evocative of summer – summer meaning languid, not killing mosquitoes."

**Kenneth Fuchs** has recorded for Naxos five albums with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by JoAnn Falletta; the latest won the 2018 GRAMMY® Award for "Best Classical Compendium." He has composed music for orchestra, band, voice, chorus, soloists, and various chamber ensembles. With Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lanford Wilson, Fuchs created three chamber musicals. The National September 11 Memorial & Museum presented Fuchs's operatic monodrama *Falling Man* (text by Don DeLillo, adapted by J. D. McClatchy) in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of 9/11. In August 2020, Naxos released *Point of Tranquility* (Seven Works for Symphonic Winds), recorded by the United States Coast Guard Band.

An album of Fuchs's chamber music, released by Naxos in April 2013, includes *Falling Canons* (Christopher O'Riley, piano), *Falling Trio* (Trio21), and String Quartet No. 5 "American" (Delray String Quartet). The album has received outstanding reviews in print and at online sources, including *Fanfare* magazine, *Gramophone* magazine, and *MusicWeb International*. The highly successful album Kenneth Fuchs: String Quartets 2, 3, 4, performed by the American String Quartet, was released by Albany Records. Following the release of this album, American Record Guide stated quite simply, "String quartet recordings don't get much better than this."

Fuchs has received numerous commissions to write for orchestra, band, and chamber groups. His music has achieved significant global recognition through performances, media exposure, and digital streaming and downloading throughout North and South America, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Australia. SiriusXM Satellite Radio has showcased his music on its "Symphony Hall" and "Pops" channels during "Music Discovery Week" and on the programs "Ask a Musician," "Composers Roundtable," and "JoAnn Falletta – Rediscovering Holst and Discovering Hailstork and Fuchs."

He describes his style as follows: "My music communicates emotions with clearly articulated gestures that can be understood on first hearing. My compositions for orchestra, voice, chorus, soloists, and chamber ensembles are lyrical and developed with counterpoint and innovative formal structures. The optimistic vigor and stylistic elements of the mid-20th-Century American Symphonic School continue to inspire me."

Fuchs serves as Professor of Music Composition at the University of Connecticut. He is a graduate of the University of Miami and received master of music and doctor of musical arts degrees from The Juilliard School. His composition teachers include Milton Babbitt, David Diamond, and Vincent Persichetti. His music is published by Bill Holab Music, Hal Leonard

LLC, Edward B. Marks Music Company, and Theodore Presser Company, and it has been recorded by Albany and Naxos Records.

#### Composer's Program Note:

*Quiet in the Land* was composed March through May 2003 in Norman, Oklahoma. As with my recent orchestral work, *An American Place*, I found inspiration in the extraordinary architectural, geographical, and spiritual contrasts between the Northeastern Corridor, where I spent most of my formative and adult years, and the Prairie.

Although it is a purely abstract musical composition, *Quiet in the Land* can also be heard as a sonic ode to the expansive landscapes and immense arching sky of the great Midwestern Plains. The work was composed during the height of the war in Iraq, and throughout the compositional process, I wondered how quiet the spirit of our land might be. I considered the thousands of families, friends, and loved ones of those involved in the war who sent messages of faith and hope through daily prayer, phone calls, e-mail messages, letters, and care packages. Thus, the work has an ambiguous quality, represented particularly by the inconclusive nature of the harmonic language.

*Quiet in the Land* is cast in one movement and is unified by a chorale, which, hesitantly stated at the outset, reappears throughout the composition, alternating with lyrical fragments played contrapuntally by all instruments. The principal musical elements of the entire composition are the intervals of a minor second, major and minor thirds, a perfect fifth, and a minor seventh.

**Zoltán Kodály** (1882-1967) grew up in the Hungarian countryside, where his father was an employee of the Hungarian state railway system assigned as station master to posts in Szob, Galánta, and Nagyszombat. Both of his parents were amateur musicians – his father played the violin and his mother sang and played the piano – so as a child he heard both classical music and original Hungarian folk music as sung by his schoolmates. With very little instruction, he learned to play the violin, viola, cello, and piano well enough to read chamber music and play in the school orchestra.

While attending Budapest University to study Hungarian and German, Kodály also began attending the Academy of Music, earning diplomas in composition and teaching, and received a PhD in 1906 for his thesis titled *A Magyar népdal strófaszervezete* (“The Stanzaic Structure of Hungarian Folksong”), which was particularly perceptive in analyzing the relationships of music and speech patterns. There was already some material on this subject to read, but much of his work was based on his own field research, often with Béla Bartók at his side. The two men became close friends and collaborators, determined not only to document and expand on Hungarian music, but also to lift up the people of Hungary with a music education system rooted firmly in their own traditions. Also in 1906, Kodály received a scholarship for six months of study in Paris, where his most memorable experience was hearing the music of Debussy. Upon his return, Kodály was appointed to the faculty of the Academy of Music.

The defeat of Germany in World War I led to the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a Hungarian Democratic Republic, which was quickly overturned by the communist Hungarian Republic of Councils. The new government elevated the Academy of Music to university status and named Kodály its deputy director, but the timing could not have been worse; the Republic of Councils was overturned just as quickly, and Kodály was made a scapegoat for the musical leadership of the country. His music was banned for approximately two years from 1919 to 1921, and it took campaigning by his friend Bartók to bring it back to the concert stage. The Serenade for two violins & viola, Op. 12, was the only work to come out of this period.

The designation of this unusual trio as a Serenade is somewhat odd; a Serenade typically has 5 or more movements, often following a pattern including stylized dances. In this case, the three movements do not exhibit typical forms, and the second in particular sounds like a programmatic conversation between the first violin and viola, with tremolo in the 2<sup>nd</sup> violin seeming like some sort of theatrical backdrop. More than one commentator has speculated what the story of the dialogue might be, but Kodály gave no such indication. The final movement does bring in some lively dance-like figures, and despite the difficult circumstances of its composition brings the Serenade to a light and spirited close.

In order to help bolster the public reputation of his friend, Bartók wrote the following review of the Serenade:

This composition, in spite of its unusual chord combinations and surprising originality, is firmly based on tonality, although this should not be strictly interpreted in terms of the major and minor system. The time will come when it will be realized that despite the atonal inclinations of modern music, the possibilities of building new structures on key systems have not been exhausted. The means used by the composer—the choice of instruments and the superb richness of instrumental effects achieved despite the economy of the work—merit great attention in themselves. The content is suited to the form. It reveals a personality with something entirely new to say and one who is capable of communicating this content in a masterful and concentrated fashion. The work is extraordinarily rich in melodies.

Bartók's advocacy was ultimately successful. Publication of Kodály's scores by Universal Edition beginning in 1921 and the resounding successes of *Psalmus Hungaricus* and the singspiel *Háry János* put his career firmly back on track.

Even as Kodály's international reputation grew he remained mostly in Hungary, carrying out his mission for the good of the Hungarian people. During the Second World War he focused mostly on patriotic music, sometimes even as he and his wife were taking refuge for safety. Following the war he again began traveling internationally, recognized as a leader in the study of folk music and receiving honorary doctorates from the universities of Budapest (1957), Oxford (1960), East Berlin (1964) and Toronto (1966), and honorary membership of the Belgian Academy of Sciences (1957), the Moscow Conservatory (1963) and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1963). He was named president of the International Folk Music Council in 1961 and honorary president of the International Society of Music Education in 1964. In 1965 he was

awarded the Herder Prize for his work in furthering East–West cultural relations.

Bartók wrote further: “If I were to name the composer whose works are the most perfect embodiment of the Hungarian spirit, I would answer, Kodály. His work proves his faith in the Hungarian spirit. The obvious explanation is that all Kodály’s composing activity is rooted only in Hungarian soil, but the deep inner reason is his unshakable faith and trust in the constructive power and future of his people.”

**Anton Bruckner** (1824-1896) was born in the rural village of Ansfelden, Austria, now a suburb of Linz. His father, a poor but well-respected schoolteacher, organist and church music director, who was also his first music teacher, passed away when Anton was only thirteen years old. As the oldest of eleven children, he was sent away to be a chorister at the nearby Augustinian monastery of St. Florian, a place that remained close to his heart for the rest of his life. His education there included more studies of the violin and organ, but his first occupation upon coming of age was as a schoolteacher like his father.

Within a few years he had returned to St. Florian as a teacher, and a few years after that assumed the duties of singing instructor to the choirboys. Both mastery of the organ and composition became increasingly important to him personally and in his duties, and over time he began to seek out other opportunities. In 1855 Bruckner moved to Linz, where he had been appointed organist of the cathedral. He began studying counterpoint by correspondence with the Viennese theorist Simon Sechter, setting aside composition until he had mastered more techniques. Following completion of that course he began intensive study of orchestration and instrumentation, at the same time as his reputation as a virtuoso organist was growing and he was cultivating an interest in the contemporary music of Wagner and Liszt.

Toward the end of Bruckner’s years in Linz, as dissatisfaction with the provincial culture and his professional ambitions were building (as well as his failure to marry), he suffered a nervous breakdown and had to be confined to a sanatorium. His most obvious symptom was an obsession with numbers, counting leaves on trees, buttons on clothing, beads on necklaces, even stars in the sky. It’s not far-fetched at all to hear this kind of obsessive mind behind his music; in fact, scholars who have studied his notebooks point to the numerous revisions he would make as he tried to make the forms and counterpoint perfect in every way – he was particularly concerned about when doubling at the octave was an orchestration technique and when it was parallel octaves forbidden by the orthodox voice-leading rules – and the elaborate “metrical grid” he would construct for every piece to systematically analyze its large-scale phrase structure.

In 1868, Bruckner secured a position at the Vienna Conservatory as Professor of Harmony and Counterpoint and teacher of organ. He moved to the capital, and within a few years found himself in the center of the great musical controversy of the age. He established an international reputation as a virtuoso organist, with tours to France and England and frequent performances at the Hofkapelle (which pushed the acceptable musical boundaries often enough to get him demoted to playing minor services). He also began composing symphonies, which slowly earned him a reputation as a composer to take note of, if not all for the positive. The critic Eduard Hanslick, who had sided with Brahms as a representative of “tradition” and so vehemently

condemned the innovations of Wagner and Liszt, placed Bruckner firmly in the latter's camp and treated him with just as much vitriol.

Bruckner cut an odd figure in the sophisticated cultural capital of Vienna. He maintained his staunch Catholic faith, never changed his mode of dress or style of speaking from the habits of his rural upbringing, and never absorbed the social mores and manners of the capital. As a result, he was never fully welcomed into the cosmopolitan circles of the other composers he so admired. It was not until the middle of the 1880s, with performances of his Seventh Symphony in other European capitals, that he began to be regarded as one of the great composers of his age. In 1891 he had a stomach disorder that was only the first in a series of ailments that would slow him down and ultimately lead to his death in 1896. By the terms of his will, his remains were interred in the crypt under the great organ at St. Florian, the site of his musical upbringing and his spiritual home.

The String Quintet in F Major is Bruckner's only mature piece of chamber music, composed in 1878-1879 at the request of the famed violinist Joseph Hellmesberger, director of the Vienna Conservatory and leader of a string quartet bearing his name. Whether because the piece was a quintet rather than a quartet, or because it presented unusual technical challenges, Hellmesberger did not perform it until 1885. The premiere was given by the Winkler Quartet with violist Franz Schalk in December 1881, and it became one of Bruckner's most often performed works by the time of his death. Chamber music lovers who do not often go out of their way to hear Bruckner symphonies get a lot of the effect with the quintet; the themes and harmonies are just as bold and impassioned as in his symphonies, and the scale is very nearly as epic. Indeed, there are few pieces like it in the repertoire, balancing such a symphonic richness of contrast with the intimate expression of chamber music.

- *Gabriel Langfur Rice*

Fuchs biography & notes supplied by the composer, edited by Gabriel Langfur Rice  
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