



Maudslay Arts Center

August 22, 2010 2:00pm
Newburyport, Massachusetts

String Quartet Statements

Scott Parkman, ACM Artistic Director

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

String Quartet, op. 11 (1936)

- I. Molto allegro e appassionato
- II. Molto adagio - Molto allegro

Walter Piston (1894-1976)

Quintet for Flute and String Quartet (1942)

- I. Allegro moderato e grazioso
- II. Andante con espressione
- III. Vivace e leggiero
- IV. Allegro non troppo

Intermission

Arthur Foote (1853-1937)

Nocturne and Scherzo for Flute and String Quartet (1918)

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Lullaby for String Quartet (1919)

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

String Quartet No. 1 "A Revival Service" (1896)

- I. Chorale: Andante con moto
- II. Prelude: Allegro
- III. Offertory: Adagio cantabile
- IV. Postlude: Allegro marziale

Samuel Barber String Quartet, op. 11 (1936)

Samuel Barber was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania on March 9, 1910 and died in New York City on January 23, 1981. One of the most prominent American composers of the mid-20th century, Barber wrote music for virtually every genre, including opera, ballet, keyboard, chamber and orchestral music. Among his accomplishments are two Pulitzer Prizes and election to the American e American Academy of Arts and Letters.

From 1924-32 Barber studied composition, voice, and piano at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He received the American Rome Prize in 1935 and spent the next two years in Europe, during which time he composed his First Symphony (1936) and First Essay for Orchestra (1937), in addition to his first and only string quartet.

The String Quartet is in two movements, the second of which contains the famous "Adagio." Revised heavily after its premiere in Rome on December 1936, the String Quartet's final version was premiered at the Library of Congress in January 1943, performed by the Budapest Quartet.

Walter Piston Quintet for Flute and String Quartet (1942)

Walter Piston was born in Rockland, Maine on January 20, 1894 and died in Belmont, Massachusetts on November 12, 1976. A prolific composer whose output includes works for orchestra, chamber ensemble and several concertos for various instruments, Piston also taught many of the important composers of the 20th century. His achievements include two Pulitzer Prizes, a Naumburg and three New York Critics' Circle awards.

Piston studied at Harvard and in Paris with Paul Dukas and Nadia Boulanger (1924-26). Upon his return to the United States, Piston joined the music department at Harvard, a position he held until his retirement in 1960. The Quintet for Flute and String Quartet, commissioned by the League of Composers, was premiered on December 9, 1942 by the Budapest Quartet and Ruth Freeman.

In a 1946 article for *Musical Quarterly*, Elliott Carter, his former student, summarized and evaluated Piston's work from 1925-1946. In the conclusion, Carter wrote:

"To have helped to establish a deep understanding of the value of craftsmanship and taste here [in the United States] and to have given such persuasiveness exemplification of these in his works is highly important for our future. For, not having as ingrained a respect and love for high artistic ideals as Europeans have had, we often slipped into the trivial, chaotic, and transitory. Piston's work helps us to keep our mind on the durable and most satisfying aspects of the art of music, and by making them live gives us hope that the qualities of integrity and reason are still with us."

Arthur Foote Nocturne and Scherzo for Flute and String Quartet (1918)

Arthur Foote was born in Salem, Massachusetts on March 5, 1853 and died in Boston on April 8, 1937. In 1867 he began studies at the newly founded New England Conservatory and then at Harvard, where he studied composition with John Knowles Paine. After receiving his degree from Harvard (Foote received the very first Master of Arts degree in Music awarded by an American university) he opened a studio for teaching piano, which would be his vocation for the next fifty years. *(Continued)*

During the 1880s Foote's music began gaining wider recognition, including regular performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In addition to his work as a composer and teacher he served as the organist and choirmaster at Boston's First Unitarian Church (1878-1910). Foote held a post on the faculty of New England Conservatory (1921-1937) teaching piano and piano pedagogy, and also wrote several texts on the subjects of harmony and piano technique.

Foote wrote Nocturne and Scherzo for Flute and String Quartet for the Chamber Music Society of San Francisco, who gave the premiere in 1919. In Boston, the work was first performed by the Principal Flutist of the Boston Symphony, Georges Laurent, at a Flute Players Club recital in 1920.

George Gershwin Lullaby for String Quartet (1919)

George Gershwin was born in Brooklyn, NY on September 26, 1898 and died in Hollywood, CA on July 11, 1937. One of the most popular American composers of all time, he primarily wrote popular songs and for musical theater, in addition to several important orchestral and piano compositions.

Throughout Gershwin's career he continued to broaden his musical knowledge and compositional technique with a diverse group of mentors including American composers Henry Cowell and Wallingford Riegger, as well as Nadia Boulanger and Maurice Ravel in Paris. Gershwin's synthesis of jazz with classical traditions in his concert music was considered revelatory. George's brother Ira wrote of the Lullaby in 1968:

"Sometime in 1919 or 1920 my brother George tried his hand at a short piece of for string quartet and called it 'Lullaby...' As a quartet it was played in the next several months at a number of private musicales of his many musician friends before- sometimes after- they'd get down to the more serious business of classical quartets and quintets. I attended three of these intimate sessions and could see and hear that 'lullaby' was invariably welcomed...It may not be the Gershwin of Rhapsody in Blue, Concerto in F, and his other concert works, but I find it charming and kind."

Charles Ives String Quartet No. 1 “A Revival Service” (1896)

Charles Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut on October 20, 1874 and died in New York City on May 19, 1954. With Yankee ingenuity Ives was a successful businessman by day (forming his own insurance company) and composer of orchestral, chamber, vocal and piano works by night. Virtually unknown as a composer for most of his life, Ives began to receive recognition for his work in the late 1930s. His Third Symphony won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947, and at his death in 1954 Ives was on the way to being regarded as one of the most original and pioneering American composers of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Ives' initial musical influence was his father, an accomplished bandmaster during the Civil War. He attended Yale University (1894-8), studying composition with Horatio Parker, and was also the organist at New Haven's Centre Church during this period.

The String Quartet comprises material he prepared for Horatio Parker's composition class, as well as music he originally composed for church use. The first complete performance of the work took place on April 24, 1957 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, performed by the Kohon String Quartet.

Musicians of American Century Music

Gabriela Díaz, Violin

Omar Chen Guey, Violin

Frank Shaw, Viola

Alexei Gonzales, Cello

Jessi Rosinski, Flute

Scott Parkman

ACM Artistic and Executive Director, Scott Parkman is a conductor of remarkable versatility and exemplary musicianship, widely recognized for the richness and depth of his performances. Mr. Parkman has performed most recently with the Heidelberg Philharmonic, New Zealand Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, and the Hong Kong New Art Camerata. Motivation for establishing ACM grew from Mr. Parkman's desire to examine and perform the hundreds of works by 20th century American classical composers -music that is underrepresented on today's concert programs.



About American Century Music

American Century Music (ACM) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to performing the orchestral, chamber and solo repertoire of 20th century American composers. ACM aims to bring greater exposure to this body of work and further cultural dialogue about the place of American composers and their work within the American Century and beyond.

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