Creating Community Through Great Music 2022-2023

Chamber Music Amici

Presents

British at War

Wildish Community Theater, 630 Main St., Springfield

3:00 PM Sunday, June 4 • 7:30 PM Monday, June 5

Arthur Bliss Piano Quartet in A Minor, F. 18
Edward Elgar Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 84

Artwork. *Red Flower*, by Emily Proudfoot

Sunmi Chang violin **Eunhye Grace Choi** piano
Lillie Manis viola **Steven Pologe** cello **Sharon Schuman** violin

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We hope you stay for our post-concert reception.
This season we are partnering with **Sweet Life Patisserie**

Reception Sponsor Laurel Ross, in memory of Lynn Ross

Welcome!

After such a musically enriching year, we are very proud to present our season finale! I cannot thank you enough for being with us today. Our season's final concert features two special chamber music pieces written during World War I (1914-1919). Two iconic British composers wrote their chamber music for piano and strings in the height of the war, although they were affected quite differently by this devastating event. Arthur Bliss's Piano Quartet in A Minor is relatively compact in scale but full of youthful experimentation. Sir Elgar's Piano Quintet, on the other hand, his longest chamber work of great maturity, oftentimes conjuring up orchestral sonority. Both composers were perhaps exploring ways to elevate humanity through music from the bleak reality. Finally, it is my great pleasure to welcome my dear friend and outstanding violinist Sunmi Chang to join us for this concert, her first appearance with the Chamber Music Amici!

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Program

Piano Quartet in A Minor, F. 18 **Arthur Bliss**

I. Poco adagio e espressivo
II. Intermezzo: Tempo di Mazurka
III. Allegro furioso

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Sunmi Chang, violin
Lillie Manis, viola; Steven Pologe, cello

Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 84 **Edward Elgar**

I. Moderato - Allegro
II. Adagio
III. Andante - Allegro

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Sunmi Chang, violin
Sharon Schuman, violin; Lillie Manis, viola; Steven Pologe, cello

Program Notes

by Dr. Terry McQuilkin

When World War I broke out in the summer of 1914, nearly everyone in Europe assumed that the war would be short-lived. Young British men, full of nationalist pride, enlisted in great numbers. Arthur Bliss, who had just turned 23, visited the recruiting office less than a week after Britain's declaration of war, and was soon commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. Edward Elgar, by that time Britain's leading composer, was 57—far too old to enlist—but he responded by joining the special constabulary in Hampstead and serving as a staff inspector.

The war, of course, did not end quickly, and although during these war years Elgar composed ballet and theater music, a symphonic prelude and some patriotic works, the war had a ruinous effect on his emotional and physical health. It was only during the last year of war, after he moved away from London and the noise caused by its frequent bombardment, that he was able to summon sufficient creative spirit to be able to compose works such as his *Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 84*.

Bliss, on the other hand, experienced the war from the front lines, and in the summer of 1916, he was wounded in the Battle of the Somme. (His brother Kennard, an officer in the Royal Field Artillery, was killed in that same campaign.) But before that terrible battle, the young composer produced a handful of chamber works, including his delightful *Piano Quartet in A Minor, F. 18*. Ironically, he later withdrew these early works from his catalogue (save for his *Pastoral* for clarinet, probably in remembrance of Kennard, an accomplished clarinetist.)

Arthur Bliss: Piano Quartet in A Minor, F. 18

Arthur Bliss, the oldest son of an American father and an English mother, was born in London in 1891. The family was well to do, and Bliss had the benefit of a Cambridge University education. In 1913 he commenced studies at the Royal College of Music, remaining there until shortly before war broke out.

Fortunately, Bliss had some time to compose after being posted for duty. During this time he completed his Piano Quartet, and the work premiered in April 1915. In 1917, Bliss was transferred to Somerset, England, assigned as an instructor of cadet officers. Here he was able to arrange for another performance with pianist Lili Henkel—the work's dedicatee—and her quartet, and through the efforts of his father and composer/conductor Eugene Goossens, succeeded in getting the work published by Novello.

The Quartet opens with a short elegiac statement, played by viola alone, which leads to the body of the movement, marked *Allegretto con moto*, where a handful of themes reminiscent of folk song are presented and developed. The largely modal language of these themes evokes the spirit of Ralph Vaughan Williams, a composer whose work the young composer greatly admired. A recapitulation of the thematic material leads to a slow, nostalgic coda, and the violin ends the movement with the same contemplative line with which the work opened, this time with the other strings supporting in simple harmony.

There is not a hint of war angst in the brief Intermezzo, a diaphanous, refined mazurka in E-flat Major. The finale, a rondo marked *Allegro furioso,* is animated by a driving main theme in A minor in which duple-meter measures are frequently interposed into the predominantly triple-meter line. Following this, Bliss executes another metric ruse: After a slight *ritardando*, a broad secondary theme in F Major gives the impression that the ictus is now twice as slow, but snippets of the main theme interject, demonstrating that the music is in fact moving at the same *allegro* tempo as before. Following a short *andante* section in which the strings pass from one to another, a variant of the first movement's opening gesture, the two main themes are recapitulated in reverse order. The coda, marked Presto, propels the music to a decisive close.

Edward Elgar: Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 84

In the summer of 1918, Edward and Alice, Lady Elgar, were able to rent a country cottage in West Sussex called Brinkwells, where the composer's flagging inspiration returned, resulting in a trilogy of brilliant chamber works (a violin sonata, a string quartet and the Piano Quintet in A Minor), as well as the cello concerto. Elgar worked on all three chamber pieces during the late summer and fall, though he did not complete the Quintet until April 1919.

Writing to Ernest Newman, the composer noted: "It is strange music, I think, and I like it – but it's ghostly stuff." Elgar's inspiration for writing "ghostly" music was probably a clump of misshapen trees near Brinkwells. Local legend held that those trees (which had probably been struck by lightning) were the ghosts of Spanish monks who had engaged in "impious rites," although there is no evidence of a Spanish monastic community residing in the area at any time.

The first movement's opening certainly does have a spectral quality to it: The strings utter a stuttering, fragmented line constructed from rising and falling half-step figures, over which the piano, in octaves, plays a line remarkably similar to the Latin plainchant, *Salve regina*. This leads to an a passage in which the upper strings introduce a sorrowful gesture built on descending half

steps; the cello responds with an arching, melancholic figure. All of this is a prelude to the main part of the movement, beginning at measure 35, marked *Allegro* and in a 6/8 meter. A vigorous theme emerges, somewhat Brahmsian but more petulant, but it is soon interrupted by a reprise of the strings' mournful statement that was heard earlier. We then hear a transitional theme in the Phrygian mode that many writers have described as "Spanish" in character. This morphs into an insouciant, syncopated tune that seems to be mocking the ghosts invoked in the introduction. An urgent and unsettling mood dominates the development and most of the recapitulation, and the movement ends softly but hauntingly.

In the second movement, the strings play in four-part harmony what scholar Jerrold Northrop Moore calls a "hymn of remembrance." After a gentle cadence, a secondary theme akin to the cello's melancholic gesture from the opening movement imparts a nervous quality to the music. The development section begins with a fugal statement of the main melody, but the tonality soon becomes unstable and the rhetoric more anxious-sounding, as if to remind us that the terrors of war cannot be forgotten easily. However, relative calm does return and the movement ends quietly.

Following his penchant for cyclical treatment of melodic material, Elgar reintroduces most of the earlier movements' primary themes in the final movement. Notwithstanding the heroic character of the movement's stately main theme, marked "con dignita, cantabile," the finale exhibits much of the war-weary unease of the first movement. The strings open the movement dolefully, with the downward half-step gesture that they had uttered early in the first movement; the cello's melancholic response is heard, too. After the main theme is fleshed out, a dance-like secondary melody is introduced; these two themes are developed in alternation, and eventually more themes from the first movement reappear: the "Salve Regina" melody—presented in full harmony, the "Spanish" theme, and the insouciant syncopated tune.

Musicians

Amici

Eunhye Grace Choi is an active pianist and chamber musician and is currently Artistic Director of Chamber Music Amici. She has performed extensively throughout the United States, France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and South Korea, and has recorded for Naxos, Emeritus, and Origin Classical. A versatile keyboardist, she was harpsichord soloist for J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto cycle and collaborated with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in Vivaldi's Four Seasons at the Eastern Music Festival. She is frequently invited as a resident pianist at competitions and conventions, including the International Clarinet Association's ClarinetFest and the Meg Quigley

Vivaldi Competition and Bassoon Symposium. Grace served as collaborative piano faculty for six years at Eastern Music Festival, where she was the principal keyboardist of the Festival Orchestra under the baton of Gerard Schwarz. She served as music faculty and collaborative pianist at the University of Oregon (2017-2018) and Tennessee Tech University (2013-2017) in addition to summer faculty positions at the Chapel Hill Chamber Music Workshop and Interlochen Summer Arts Camp. Choi received collaborative piano degrees from Florida State University (MM) and University of Minnesota (DMA).

Lillie Manis is widely recognized for her work as a Suzuki educator and is currently completing her doctorate at Teachers College, Columbia University, where her research focuses on studio teachers' holistic strategies for cultivating expressive performance in young violinists. From 2009-2020, she was a faculty member at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, where she mentored graduate violin and viola pedagogy students and served as the Assistant Director of the Community Music Institute. Lillie is currently on the faculty at the Willamette Violin Academy in Eugene. In the first decade of her teaching career, both the members of her vibrant pre-college studio and her graduate student mentees have achieved noteworthy musical and professional success, including competition wins, full scholarships to major music schools and summer programs, and college teaching appointments. Active as a clinician, master class presenter, adjudicator, and conference presenter at both the regional and national levels, she enjoys performing chamber music alongside some of the Northwest's finest players, and recently joined the editorial committee of the American String Teacher.

Steven Pologe has performed throughout the United States, and in Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, and Canada. His CDs include quartets by William Grant Still and All That Jazz (both with the Oregon String Quartet), works by Jon Deak for solo cello and piano trio, and the piano trio of Lev Abeliovich. Steven is professor of Cello at the University of Oregon. He has performed frequently with the Oregon Bach Festival, Grand Teton Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Rome Festival Orchestra, and the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival. In 2006, Pologe and Emeritus Professor, Marjorie Woollacott (neuroscience), won a grant from the organization behind the coveted Grammy awards, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. The award supported his research and publications documenting the precise movements of string players. Prior to moving to Oregon, Pologe was principal cellist with the Honolulu Symphony and faculty member at the University of Hawaii. To keep up with all Steven's activities, find him here, on his website, www.stevenpologe-cello.com.

Sharon Schuman is co-founder of Chamber Music Amici and served as Artistic Director for the first six years. As a child, she studied violin with Carol Weston, a student of Leopold Auer. After a summer grant to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, she won a full scholarship in music to Stanford University, where she performed on a resident Strad. After she graduated with a degree in English, she earned a Ph.D. in that discipline at the University of Chicago. She has performed in a master class for Vladimir Spivakov and as concerto soloist with Oregon Mozart Players and the Salem Chamber Orchestra. She has also performed with the Oregon Bach Festival and Eugene Symphony, and she has served as concertmaster for Eugene Opera, Eugene Ballet, Eugene Concert Choir, and Oregon Mozart Players. She is now Assistant Concertmaster of the Eugene Opera Orchestra. After publishing Freedom and Dialogue in a Polarized World (2014), she edited A Voice for Justice: Writings of David Schuman (2021). Sharon is the 2021 recipient of the Eugene Arts and Letters Award.

Guest

Sunmi Chang

As the laureate of both the 2007 International Markneukirchen and Sion-Valais International Violin Competitions, Sunmi Chang has performed widely to much acclaim throughout North America and Europe as a soloist and chamber musician. In 2008, she was the soloist on Yale Philharmonia's tour to Seoul, Beijing, and Shanghai, performing the Beethoven Concerto.

She studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School in England and at the Hanns Eisler Musikhochschule in Berlin with Prof. Eberhard Feltz. While a student, she performed regularly in prestigious venues such as Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, and Royal Albert Hall. In 1998 & 1999, she toured with the YMS orchestra playing Bach's Double Concerto for 2 violins conducted by Lord Menuhin in UNESCO Headquarters and Guildford Cathedral.

She has worked and collaborated with renowned artists such as Lord Menuhin, Zakhar Bron, Kim Kashkashian, Donald Weilerstein, Rainer Kussmaul, Midori, and others in various festivals and masterclasses. An active chamber musician, Ms. Chang won first prize at the Plowman Chamber Music Competition. She was invited to take part in various chamber music festivals such as the Rising Stars Series at Caramoor, Music@Menlo, and Chamber Music Northwest. She completed her studies with Peter Oundjian and Ani Kavafian in 2009, earning the Artist Diploma and the Master of Music degree at Yale University, where she won the School's concerto competition in 2006. She performed as a tenured violinist with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra from 2009 to 2015. Currently, she works as the Artistic Director of Summit Chamber Music Series and serves on the faculty at West Virginia University.

Pre-Concert Speaker

Terry McQuilkin, DMA, received degrees in music composition from the University of Southern California and the University of Oregon. His catalogue of original compositions and arrangements include works for piano solo, chamber ensembles, wind band, orchestra and chorus, including commissions from Downingtown (Pennsylvania) Public Schools and the Delgani String Quartet. In 2006, the Oregon Music Teachers Association recognized him as the organization's Composer of the Year. Dr. McQuilkin taught music composition at the University of Oregon for 19 years. As a writer and music critic, he contributed hundreds of reviews and features for the music pages of the Los Angeles Times and the (Eugene) Register Guard.

Featured Artist

Emily Proudfoot

The rhyming and composition of the music became the inspiration for her imagery. "I picked out images and line types that captured that melody — the sweeping or staccato sound — and from there, I made drawings that were evocative of the pieces I was hearing on stage," Proudfoot said. "The melodies have a lot of movement, a watercolor fluidity to them."

"I paint to inspire more joy and kindness in the world," Proudfoot said. "I use bold colors and textured collage, embrace joyful themes, and insert humor in unexpected places for discovery and, ideally, laughter."

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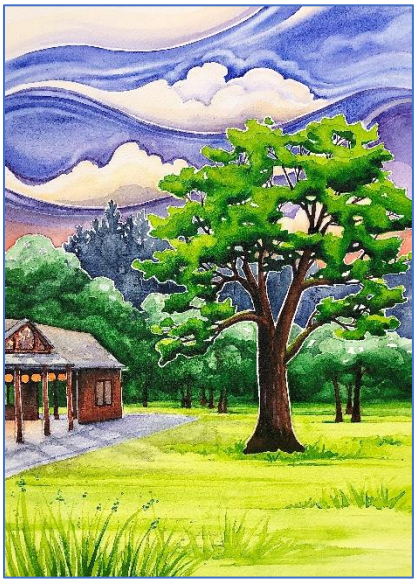

By Alisha Whitman

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