

present...

**SEAN SHIBE | Guitar**  
**VAN KUIJK QUARTET**Nicolas Van Kuijk | Violin  
Sylvain Favre-Bulle | ViolinEmmanuel François | Viola  
Anthony Kondo | Cello**Friday, February 10, 2023 | 7:30pm**

Herbst Theatre

**MENDELSSOHN****String Quartet in F Minor, Opus 80***Allegro vivace assai**Allegro assai**Adagio**Finale: Allegro molto***VAN KUIJK QUARTET****BOCCHERINI****Guitar Quintet No.4 "Fandango"****ADÈS*****Habanera*****SEAN SHIBE****DE FALLA*****Homenaje: Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy for Guitar*****SEAN SHIBE****POULENC*****Sarabande*****SEAN SHIBE****CASTELNUOVO-  
TEDESCO****Guitar Quintet Opus 143****Sean Shibe** is represented by Harrison Parrott

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## ARTIST PROFILES

*Tonight is the San Francisco Performances debut of Sean Shibe and Van Kuijk Quartet.*



One of the most versatile guitarists performing today, **Sean Shibe's** innovative approach to his instrument has enhanced his reputation for having "one of the most discriminating ears in the business" (*Gramophone*). He was the first guitarist ever to be selected for BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme, to be awarded a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and, in 2018, to receive the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Young Artists. Accolades for his recordings include two Gramophone Awards and an Opus Klassik. He is also the 2022 recipient of the Leonard Bernstein Award.

Following very successful performances at various summer festivals, this season Shibe gives his New York City solo recital debut at the 92NY which is followed by a tour in the US with Quatuor Van Kuijk. He performs at Wigmore Hall four times and in solo recitals in Germany at the Konzerthaus Dortmund, Mozartfest Würzburg, and returns to the Schleswig-Holstein Music festival sharing the stage with tenor Karim Sulayman.

A great admirer of the masterful composers of the past, Shibe is equally committed to new music. Alongside his own transcriptions of Bach's lute suites and seventeenth century Scottish lute manuscripts, he continues to explore, experiment, and expand the repertoire for his instrument with recent works by Daniel Kidane, David Fennessy, Shiva Feshareki, David Lang, Julia Wolfe, and Freya Waley-Cohen. New commissions include works by Thomas Adès, Helen Grime, and



a new collaboration with Cassandra Miller and Dunedin Consort.

His most recent release is a second album for Pentatone titled *Lost & Found*, recorded on electric guitar and featuring repertoire by Hildegard von Bingen, Olivier Messiaen, Moondog, Julius Eastman, Bill Evans, Chick Corea, Meredith Monk, Shiva Feshareki, Oliver Leith, and Daniel Kidane. His Pentatone debut album *Camino* (2021) featured an introspective program of French and Iberian music. The album was named Recording of the Month by *BBC Music Magazine* as well the Recording of the Week by *The Guardian* and *Presto Classical*.

Born in Edinburgh in 1992 of English and Japanese heritage, Shibe studied under Allan Neave at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and Paolo Pegoraro in Italy.

**Quatuor Van Kuijk's** international accolades boast First, Best Beethoven, and Best Haydn Prizes at the 2015 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet competition; First Prize, and an Audience Award at the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition; as well as becoming laureates of the Aix-en-Provence Festival Academy. They were BBC New Generation Artists from 2015–17, as well as ECHO Rising Stars for the 2017–18 season.

Following such high success early in their career, the ensemble is an established international presence and has been invited to perform at the Wigmore Hall, London; Philharmonie de Paris, Auditorium du Louvre, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Salle Gaveau, Paris; Tonhalle, Zurich; Wiener Konzerthaus and Musikverein, Vienna; Het Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; Berliner Philharmonie; Kölner Philharmonie; Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg; Gulbenkian, Lisbon; Tivoli Concert Series, Denmark; Konserthuset Stockholm; and at festivals including the BBC

Proms, Edinburgh International, Cheltenham, Heidelberg, Lockenhaus, Davos, Verbier, Aix-en-Provence, Montpellier/Radio France, Evian, Auvers-sur-Oise, Stavanger and Trondheim (Norway), Concentus Moraviae (Czech Republic), Haydn/Esterházy (Hungary), and Eilat (Israel).

2022 marked Quatuor Van Kuijk's 10-year anniversary, with several special projects centring around Mendelssohn's string quartet cycle—which they will release for Alpha Classics across the current season. Further highlights of the current season include a number of international tours hosting debuts at venues including the Library of Congress, DC; Sydney Opera House; Melbourne Recital Centre; and UKARIA, Adelaide. They will also make their debut visit to Colombia and return to several prestigious European halls including London's Wigmore Hall, Berlin Konzerthaus, and Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ.

Recording exclusively for Alpha Classics, the ensemble's debut recording, *Mozart*, was released to outstanding critical acclaim—Choc de Classica, Diapason D'or Découverte. Following celebrated discs of Debussy and Ravel, and Schubert, they continued their ongoing exploration of Mozart with two further releases across 2020.

Quatuor Van Kuijk was resident at Pro Quartet, Paris, where they studied with members of the Alban Berg, Artemis, and Hagen quartets. Originally students of the Ysaÿe Quartet, they went on to work with Günter Pichler at the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofia in Madrid, supported generously by the International Institute of Chamber Music, Madrid. The Quartet is supported by Pirastro and SPEDIDAM and is grateful to Mécénat Musical Société Générale for their sponsorship.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### String Quartet in F Minor, Opus 80

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

(1809–1847)

Mendelssohn's life was short, and its ending was painful. Always a driven man, he was showing signs of exhaustion during the 1846–7 season, and in May came a catastrophe: his sister Fanny, only 41, suffered a stroke and died within hours. She and Mendelssohn had been exceptionally close, and Mendelssohn collapsed upon learning of her death. Worried family members took him to Switzerland, where they hoped he could regain his strength and composure.

At Interlaken, Mendelssohn painted, composed the *String Quartet in F Minor*, and tried to escape his sorrow. An English visitor described his last view of the composer that summer: "I thought even then, as I followed his figure, looking none the younger for the loose dark coat and the wide brimmed straw hat bound with black crape, which he wore, that he was too much depressed and worn, and walked too heavily." Back in Leipzig, Mendelssohn canceled his engagements, suffered severe headaches, and was confined to bed. He died on the evening of November 4 at age 38.

Given the circumstances of its creation, one might expect Mendelssohn's *Quartet in F Minor* to be somber music, and in fact it is—the pianist Ignaz Moscheles found it the product of "an agitated state of mind." Yet this quartet's driven quality is also the source of its distinction. One feels this from the first instant of the *Allegro vivace assai*: the double-stroked writing, even at a very quiet dynamic, pushes the music forward nervously, and out of this ominous rustle leaps the dotted figure that will be a part of so much of this movement.

The second movement is in ABA form: the driving outer sections keep the dotted rhythm of the opening movement, while the trio rocks along more gently. The *Adagio*, the only movement not in a minor key, is built on the first violin's lyric opening idea. The music rises to a somewhat frantic climax full of dotted rhythms before subsiding to close peacefully. In the finale the principal impression is of nervous energy, and at the close the music hurtles to a superheated close in which the F-minor tonality is affirmed with vengeance.

It is not a conclusion that brings much

relief, and it speaks directly from the agitated consciousness of its creator.

—Note by Eric Bromberger

### Guitar Quintet No. 4 "Fandango"

LUIGI BOCCHERINI

(1743–1805)

The Italian composer and cellist, Luigi Boccherini served as composer for the royal court of Spain during much of his life. Although he thought of himself as introducing the early Classical style of Haydn to the unsophisticated Spanish, he was influenced by the country's indigenous music. In 1798 a Spanish nobleman who was an amateur guitarist commissioned him to produce a series of quintets for guitar. As was customary at the time, Boccherini simply rearranged several of his earlier quintets, substituting a guitar for the second cello. The *Guitar Quintet No. 4* happily demonstrates the qualities for which Boccherini was admired. The opening *Pastorale* charms and soothes with its sweet melody played by muted strings, and with its gently swaying rhythm. Unlike the first movements of the Viennese Classical composers, with their focus on thematic development, Boccherini's focus is on melody, texture, and color. His virtuosic instrumental writing propels the lively *Allegro maestoso*, which features the cello climbing to its upper registers while the other instruments provide rich textural accompaniments. Then comes a slow, *Grave* introduction to the crowning *Fandango*, a dashing movement that reflects the impact of Boccherini's adopted country on his music. The fandango was a popular, sensuous two-person dance in eighteenth-century Spain, and Boccherini here captures all its rhythmic passion and verve.

### Habanera

THOMAS ADÈS

(B. 1971)

Thomas Adès wrote his opera *The Exterminating Angel* in 2016 based on Spanish director Luis Buñuel's classic 1962 movie, *El ángel exterminador*. It tells the surreal story of a group of friends who, relaxing after dinner, find themselves, for no apparent reason, completely unable to leave the room. It's an inexplicable, deeply unsettling story, perhaps about the emotional consequences of political violence following a civil war, that

only becomes increasingly tense and troubling as it progresses. Adès writes music that seems oddly familiar, partly because he draws inspiration from the whole history of Western music and vividly reimagines it in new contexts. *Habanera* is based on a hypnotically syncopated rhythm which originated in nineteenth century Cuba. Adès is one of our most successful contemporary composers and guitarists were delighted when he decided to arrange this section of his opera as a short solo guitar piece. *Habanera* is a dark and richly textured work.

### Homenaje: Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy for guitar

MANUEL DE FALLA

(1876–1946)

Manuel de Falla is one of the most important composers in Spanish history. After a period in Paris where he associated with and was influenced by Debussy and Ravel, he returned to Spain in 1914 and became fascinated by traditional Andalusian Flamenco and Cante jondo. After Debussy died the journal *La Revue Musicale* published music written in his honor by Falla, Bartók, Ravel, Rousseau, Satie, and Stravinsky. Falla's *Homenaje: Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, though short, is widely considered one of the masterpieces of the guitar repertoire. Like the Adès piece heard earlier tonight, it is based on the Cuban habanera rhythm. It ends with a poignant quotation of Debussy's *La soirée en Grenade* (Evening in Granada). It is Falla's only work written for guitar and was subsequently arranged by the composer for both the piano and the orchestra.

### Sarabande

FRANCIS POULENC

(1899–1963)

The French composer Francis Poulenc composed his *Sarabande* during a visit to New York in March 1960 and he dedicated it to the prodigiously gifted French guitarist, Ida Presti (1924–1967). An avowed self-borrower, Poulenc took the opening theme of this tiny work from his Improvisation No. 13 for piano, composed in 1958, and there's an allusion to the same melody in the last act of the opera *Dialogues de Carmélites*, completed in 1956. The version in the *Sarabande* is slightly reworked, not least through constantly changing time signatures.

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Conventional wisdom has it that a sara-bande is a slow dance in triple time, but Poulenc changes from bars in 3/4 to 5/4 and 4/4, creating a sense of rhythmic ambiguity. The score has the marking 'Molto calmo e melanconico' and the piece is wistful, fleeting, but also rather haunting.

## Guitar Quintet Opus 143

**MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO**  
(1895-1968)

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, an Italian composer and a Sephardic Jew forced to flee Italy's anti-Semitic laws in 1939, eventually settled in Los Angeles where he

wrote scores for many Hollywood movies and became the teacher of film composers Jerry Goldsmith and John Williams. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, whose classical compositions were championed by internationally acclaimed artists including Jascha Heifetz, Gregor Piatigorsky, Andres Segovia and Arturo Toscanini, was a gentle man, of aristocratic refinement, who wrote "I want to write good music without prejudice of any kind. I do not believe in theories. I have never believed in modernism, or in neoclassicism, or in any other ism." First inspired by the great Spanish guitarist Andres Segovia, Castelnuovo-Tedesco wrote over 100 works for the guitar, including variations, sonatas, incidental works, chamber music and concerti. The composer wrote of the quintet: "It is a melodious and

serene work, partly neo-classic and partly neo-romantic (like most of my works). I would say, it is written almost in a Schubertian vein—Schubert has always been one of my favorite composers. The first of the four movements, *Allegro vivo e schietto*, is in the regular sonata-allegro form. The second movement, *Andante mesto*, is of a lyrical character, with Spanish undertones (the second theme is marked 'Souvenir d'Espagne'). The third movement, *Allegro con spirito alla Marcia*, is a Scherzo with two Trios. The last movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, is in rondo form, very brilliant and contrapuntal—again the second theme is in a Spanish mood—what could be more appropriate for Andrés Segovia?"

—Program notes by Scott Cmiel