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SATURDAY OCTOBER 17, 2020 AT 7:30PM
ARTSRIOT, BURLINGTON

CURATED AND HOSTED BY MATT LAROCCA

PINK-BREASTED ROBIN

ELENA KATS CHERNIN

Australian composer Elena Kats Chernin composed this piece on a walk in Russell Falls, Tasmania. She was fortunate enough to get a glimpse of the small pink-breasted robin, a tiny, rare, and very pretty bird. It had such a charming aura about it, and there was something very theatrical in the way it just took off in a flash. The encounter inspired this short quartet.

STRING QUARTET OP. 59 NO. 3, MOVEMENT I

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Written after the completion of his "Eroica" symphony, this work is part of a three-quartet set commissioned by Count Razumovsky, the Russian ambassador to Vienna. The first movement's pensive introduction yields to an allegro marked by churning energy and a brilliant close.

STRING QUARTET IN E MINOR

ETHEL SMYTH

Dame Ethyl Smith was an English composer born in 1858. She was very involved with the women's suffrage movement, and her musical works ranged from conventional to experimental. This quartet, composed over the course of a decade, showcases her love for rhythmic energy, melodic motives, and unexpected harmonic twists.

SARABANDE IN D MINOR

J.S. BACH

Bach's Partita in d minor for unaccompanied violin, from which this dance movement is drawn, is one of the pinnacles of the solo violin literature. The triple-meter sarabande evolved from a Spanish dance called the zarabanda, which a Jesuit priest condemned as "so loose...in its motions that it is enough to excite bad emotions in even very decent people."

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? (WHO ARE YOU?)

JORDYN DAVIS

In 2018, American bassist and composer Jordyn Davis was commissioned by the Detroit Composer's Project to compose a piece for violin and viola. Davis used inspiration from her hometown of Detroit to create What Have You Done? (Who Are You?), an introspective musical reflection on the ever-evolving journey to define one's own identity, which was performed twice by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

AN ELEGY (A CRY FROM THE GRAVE)

CARLOS SIMON

This piece is dedicated to several people who have been wrongfully murdered by an oppressive power; namely, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and Alton Sterling. While the predominant essence of the work is sorrowful and contemplative, there are moments of extreme hope in the music as well. Simon, a native of Georgia, was awarded the 2021 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization in recognition of extraordinary Black and Latinx musicians.

STRING QUARTET NO. 7, MOVEMENT III

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Shostakovich dedicated this brief work, written in 1960, to his first wife Nina, who died in 1954 of colon cancer. The work is more than personal elegy, however, and in the music we can feel a universal passion and grief.

THIS MUST BE THE PLACE (NAIVE MELODY)

TALKING HEADS, ARR. LAROCCA

The legendary American rock band Talking Heads, active from 1975 to 1991 and inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2002, premiered this song in 1983. David Byrne, who wrote the lyrics, described it as "a love song made up almost completely of non-sequiturs, phrases that may have a strong emotional resonance but don't have any narrative qualities."



MATT LAROCCA, CREATIVE PROJECTS CHAIR

Matt LaRocca is a composer, performer, and educator who you are just as likely to see playing with a band in a dive bar as conducting an orchestra. He is on the composition and theory faculty at the University of Vermont, and is the Artistic Director of the Champlain Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also the Executive Director of Music-COMP, an organization that teaches composition to students throughout the country by pairing them with professional composers as mentors. Committed to new music and innovation, LaRocca loves bringing classical music to new audiences and new spaces through his work as the curator of the VSO's Jukebox and Higher Ground concert series.

As a musician growing up in the 80s and 90s, Matt feels equally at home in the rock and classical worlds. His classical work has been commissioned by the New Jersey Youth Symphony and the Great Falls Symphony Orchestra as well as the VSO. From 2007-2008 he was the Faculty Composer in Residence for the Montana State University Symphony. LaRocca also frequently works as an arranger for rock bands, and his arrangements can be heard on Guster's OMAGAH! album recorded with the Omaha Symphony. Artistic residencies include an expedition in the high arctic through the Arctic Circle Organization and composition/improvisation teaching residencies at schools throughout New England and California. He frequently performs as a violist and guitarist in classical, rock, and improvisation ensembles.

LaRocca holds degrees in chemistry and music from Middlebury College, and a doctorate in music composition from Boston University. He lives in Duxbury with his wife Heather and their children Jasper, Sawyer, and Mary.

Recorded live at ArtsRiot in Burlington, Vermont

Alan Newman, Current Caretaker

Production by Rob Liu and Jamie Stillman

Audio/Visual by Justin Bunnell RetroMotion

JUKEBOX QUARTET:

Letitia Quante and Brooke Quiggins, violin

Stefanie Taylor, viola

John Dunlop, cello

VSO STAFF:

Elise Brunelle, Executive Director

Eleanor Long, Orchestra Manager

Sasha Vaut, Director of Philanthropy

Grace Spain, Box Office Manager

Matt LaRocca, Creative Projects Chair

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