



Photo by Basil Childers. Available in high resolution at www.christinajensenpr.com in the Cypress's gallery.

Cypress String Quartet presents its

Signature Series New York City debut concerts

Tenri Cultural Institute
43A West 13th Street, NYC

Tickets: \$40 per concert or \$100 for all three at the door or www.brownpapertickets.com/event/123679

Information: 415.585.9045 or
www.cypressquartet.com

“artistry of uncommon insight & cohesion”
– *Gramophone*

Watch the Cypress Quartet: www.youtube.com/user/cypressquartet

Thursday, November 11, 2010 at 8:30pm

Ervin Schulhoff's *Five Pieces* for String Quartet

Jennifer Higdon's *Impressions* (NY premiere)

Claude Debussy's String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

Saturday, November 13, 2010 at 8pm

Igor Stravinsky's Concertino

Elena Ruehr's String Quartet No. 3 (NY premiere)

Charles Griffes' *Two Sketches Based on Native American Themes*

Antonin Dvořák's String Quartet Op. 96, "American"

Sunday, November 14, 2010 at 8pm

Ludwig van Beethoven's String Quartet in F Major, Op. 135

George Tsontakis' String Quartet No. 5 (NY premiere)

Ludwig van Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 130 with the *Große Fuge*

NEW YORK, NY—The San Francisco-based Cypress String Quartet (Cecily Ward, violin; Tom Stone, violin; Ethan Filner, viola; and Jennifer Kloetzel, cello) will perform for the first time in New York in three intimate concerts on November 11 (8:30pm), November 13 (8pm), and November 14 (8pm), all at the Tenri Cultural Institute (43A West 13th Street, NYC). Founded in 1996 and known across the country for its elegant performances, the Cypress's sound has been hailed as “beautifully proportioned and powerful” by *The Washington Post*. The Quartet brings music that exemplifies its artistic mission to New York – pieces from the core repertoire for string quartet (by Beethoven, Dvořák, and Debussy), music overlooked by history (by Griffes, Stravinsky, and Schulhoff) and the New York premieres of new pieces commissioned and championed by the ensemble (by Pulitzer Prize-winner Jennifer Higdon, George Tsontakis, and Elena Ruehr). Because each concert has an audience capacity of 80, advance ticket purchases are encouraged.

On **Thursday, November 11 at 8:30pm**, the Cypress's first concert includes Erwin Schulhoff's *Five Pieces* for String Quartet, the New York premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Impressions*, and Debussy's String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10. Schulhoff's rarely-performed *Five Pieces*, written by the Czech composer in 1923, borrow their structure from the Baroque dance suite but are influenced by concepts as diverse as Argentine tango and Dadaism. Jennifer Higdon's *Impressions* was written for the Cypress in 2003, as part of the Quartet's Call & Response series, an annual Cypress project in which a new piece of music is commissioned in “response” to two masterworks of the string quartet repertoire. *Impressions* was written as a response to the Impressionistic quartets of Debussy and Ravel. Fittingly, Debussy's sole string quartet, from 1893,

completes the program. Watch the Cypress perform the first movement of Debussy's string quartet on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVLTQh0BAG4.

The Cypress Quartet's second concert, on **Saturday, November 13 at 8pm**, includes Stravinsky's Concertino, the New York premiere of Elena Ruehr's String Quartet No. 3, Charles Griffes' *Two Sketches Based on Native American Themes*, and Dvořák's String Quartet Op. 96, the "American." Stravinsky's Concertino, a short, six-minute work known for its virtuosic first violin part, was written in 1920 while the composer was living in France. Though Stravinsky is one of the most important composers of the 20th century, this work remains an often-overlooked gem. Boston-based composer Elena Ruehr wrote her String Quartet No. 3 in 2001, when she was studying a variety of types of music including African drumming, the music of Hildegard von Bingen, and pan flutes from South America. Each influence wove its way into this remarkable work, which has been championed by the Cypress and recorded by them on an all-Ruehr album released last year, called *How She Danced* (review copies available). American composer Charles Griffes was considered one of the most gifted composers of his generation. His *Two Sketches Based on Native American Themes* was written in 1919, the year before his death, and is based on "Farewell Song of the Chippewa Indians" and Griffes' impression of a Native American dance. Dvořák's iconic "American" string quartet from 1893 concludes the program. The piece was written while Dvořák and his family were on vacation in the Czech community of Spillville, Iowa. He described the piece as a "musical postcard" to his native land, which included "impressions and greetings from the New World."

The Cypress Quartet's third concert on **Sunday, November 14 at 8pm**, features the New York premiere of George Tsontakis' String Quartet No. 5, as well as Beethoven's String Quartets Op. 135 and Op. 130 with the *Große Fuge*. Like Higdon's *Impressions*, George Tsontakis' 2006 piece was also commissioned by the Cypress as part of their Call & Response program, in response to Beethoven's Late Quartets. It is written in memory of composer George Rochberg, who died in 2005. Appropriately, Tsontakis' quartet is framed on this concert by two of its inspirations – Beethoven's Op. 135 and Op. 130. The Cypress has recorded all of the quartets from Beethoven's Late Period for release as a three-volume set. Op. 135 appears on Volume 1, released in 2009. Op. 130 and the *Große Fuge* appear on Volume 2, released this past August. *Gramophone* praised Volume 1 as "revealing artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion" and *The Denver Post* chose it as one of the best discs of 2009. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* recently praised Volume 2, writing, "In the forest of Beethoven recordings, the Cypress String Quartet's are some of the mightiest trees." (Review copies of Volumes 1 and 2 are available upon request. Volume 3 will be released in August 2011.)

About the Cypress Quartet: The Cypress formed in 1996 in San Francisco and during its first rehearsals together created a now-signature sound through intense readings of J.S. Bach's Chorales. Built up from the bottom register of the quartet and layered like a pyramid, the resulting sound is clear and transparent, allowing the texture of the music to be discerned immediately.

The Cypress String Quartet's unusual approach to their career is informed by their fierce dedication to the ensemble. Violinists Cecily Ward and Tom Stone were studying in San Francisco when the quartet came together. Jennifer Kloetzel and Ethan Filner relocated to San Francisco to form the group, and the foursome made a commitment to each other to only perform as a quartet (meaning that they would not take on teaching or freelance jobs as orchestral members or with other chamber ensembles). They realized early on that they needed to create their own performance opportunities and organized as a non-profit – the Cypress Performing Arts Association. Eventually, they hired a small administrative staff.

This independent spirit is evident in their music as well. Cecily Ward explains, "We found our common ground in the music. Because we had not all gone to school together and had no common past or anyone shepherding us along, we were forced to find out who we are as an ensemble on our own – both in how we made a career and in how we create our sound."

Now, on top of a busy schedule of over 90 concerts each year at venues across the US and internationally, including major concert halls and series such as the Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Stanford Lively Arts, Krannert Center and Ravinia Festival, the Cypress String Quartet is a vibrant member of the San Francisco arts community and is dedicated to reflecting and enriching the city's cultural landscape. This season, the quartet returns for the fourth year to the Montalvo Arts Center for its signature Salon Series, which seeks to demystify classical music by exploring one work per concert through performance and discussion. Through its Call & Response commissioning and outreach program, the Cypress String Quartet has created a dialogue between the old masters and living composers, performing known and loved repertoire in a fresh context and introducing ground-breaking new works to the chamber music genre. Over just a decade,

the Cypress String Quartet has commissioned and premiered more than 30 new works, four of which are now included on Chamber Music America's list of "101 Great American Ensemble Works."

The Cypress Quartet members trained individually at institutions including The Juilliard School, Interlochen Arts Academy, Cleveland Institute of Music, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music. They play exceptional instruments, including violins by Antonio Stradivarius (1681) and Carlos Bergonzi (1733), a viola by Vittorio Bellarosa (1947), and a cello by Hieronymus Amati II (1701). The Cypress Quartet takes its name from the set of twelve love songs for string quartet, *The Cypresses*, by Antonin Dvořák.

For more information and the Cypress Quartet's most up to date concert schedule, visit www.cypressquartet.com.

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