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Cypress String Quartet

Schubert: String Quintet D956 & Quartettsatz D703
with Gary Hoffman, cello

Release date: May 13, 2014
AVIE Records

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“razor sharp interpretations” – *The Independent*

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New York, NY – The **Cypress String Quartet** (Cecily Ward, violin; Tom Stone, violin; Ethan Filner, viola; and Jennifer Kloetzel, cello) is pleased to announce that **AVIE Records** will release the group’s recording of **Schubert’s String Quintet D956** with cellist **Gary Hoffman** paired with **Schubert’s Quartettsatz D703** on **May 13, 2014**. The album was recorded at Skywalker Sound by Mark Willsher and produced by Cecily Ward.

Schubert’s String Quintet in C Major is one of the most widely loved, and often recorded, chamber works. Completed weeks before the composer’s death, the haunting beauty and mature musical architecture of the work reveal a composer at the height of artistic prowess. The Cypress Quartet and Gary Hoffman approached the piece not as a string quartet plus cellist, but as an “instrument of five.” Rather than emphasizing sentimentality or overwrought Romanticism, the Cypress and Hoffman in this recording focus on pacing, clarity of form, and the harmonic progression of the piece as a whole, resulting in a cohesive yet whole, clear sound. That the Cypress has performed the Quintet in concert numerous times since its very first season together in 1996, and has a long-standing musical and personal friendship with Gary Hoffman, made the exploration of the Quintet that much more meaningful and fruitful for the musicians.

Cypress cellist Jennifer Kloetzel said, “Recording the quintet with Gary has been a lifelong musical goal for me. As soon as we sat down together, our musical sensibilities and ideas about structure and harmony were completely ‘in harmony.’ Gary has had a huge influence on me as a cellist – we make sound in a similar way, we both play on gut strings, and we both play Amati cellos, which is very unusual for a recording of this piece!”

Schubert’s *Quartettsatz* was written in 1820 after the composer took a three-year hiatus from quartet writing. Neither this work or the Quintet was performed in Schubert’s lifetime. The Quintet was first heard in 1850 and published in 1853, while the manuscript of the *Quartettsatz* eventually came into the hands of Brahms, who prepared its first edition and published it as late as 1870, three years after its premiere.

Known for its elegant performances, the Cypress String Quartet has been praised by *Gramophone* for its “artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion,” and its sound has been called “beautifully proportioned and powerful” by *The Washington Post*. The Cypress Quartet was formed in San Francisco in 1996, and during its initial rehearsals the group created a 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.

During the last two years, the Cypress String Quartet has added three new recordings to its ten-album discography. In November 2011 and March 2012 respectively, the Quartet released *The American Album* (featuring Barber’s Quartet Op. 11, Griffes’s *Two Sketches Based on Indian Themes*, and Dvořák’s String Quartet No. 12 “American”), and the complete three-CD set of Beethoven’s Late Quartets, which was named Best Classical CD of 2012 by the *Dallas Morning News*. In February 2013, the Cypress String Quartet added an all-Dvořák disc on the AVIE record label featuring *Cypresses*, B. 152 (the work from which the ensemble draws its name) and String Quartet in G, Op. 106. The CD has garnered significant attention and is being featured on Sirius XM and PRI Classical, and was chosen as a CD of the Week on WQXR in New York. Additionally, a full

hour was devoted to the new CSQ disc on ORF, the largest and most listened-to classical music radio station in Austria. In November 2013, the Cypress re-issued *The American Album* on AVIE, adding 2012 Pulitzer Prize winning composer Kevin Puts' *Lento Assai* which was commissioned by the Cypress in 2008 as part Call & Response.

The Cypress continues to maintain a busy national and international tour schedule, making appearances on concert series and in venues including Cal Performances, Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Stanford Lively Arts, Krannert Center, Ravinia Festival, and the 92nd Street Y's series at SubCulture, a new downtown music venue in New York. Their collaborators include artists such as Leon Fleisher, Jon Nakamatsu, Awadagin Pratt, Gary Hoffman, Atar Arad, James Dunham, and Zuill Bailey.

Through its signature Call & Response program the Cypress Quartet commissions and premieres new string quartets from both emerging and celebrated composers, asking them to write in response to established chamber repertoire. Call & Response creates a dynamic dialogue between the past and present, between performers and composers, and among audiences of all ages. The Cypress Quartet's annual Call & Response concert has earned a strong West Coast following and is preceded by community outreach throughout the Bay Area in public libraries, unorthodox spaces, and schools. In addition, the Cypress frequently tours Call & Response repertoire, bringing these new works to cities across the country.

To date, the Cypress Quartet has commissioned and premiered over 30 pieces, four of which were chosen for Chamber Music America's list of "101 Great American Ensemble Works." Commissioned composers include Benjamin Lees, Jennifer Higdon, Kevin Puts, George Tsontakis, and Elena Ruehr.

A vibrant member of the San Francisco arts community, the Cypress Quartet dedicates itself to reflecting and enriching the city's cultural landscape through collaborations with the de Young Museum, San Francisco Girls Chorus, and ODC-Dance. As part of its efforts to support and promote Bay Area arts and music, the CSQ self-curates a Salon Series held in intimate, exquisite spaces in Berkeley, San Francisco, and Palo Alto. Now in its third season, the CSQ Salon Series features the masterworks of the string quartet cannon as well as the CSQ commissions.

The Cypress Quartet members received degrees from many of the world's finest conservatories before coming together as a quartet. These include The Juilliard School, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music (London), The Cleveland Institute of Music, Indiana University, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. After a residency at the Banff Centre and a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Quartet Studies of the Aspen Music Festival, the Quartet coached intensively in London with the Amadeus Quartet. Cypress members count the Cleveland and Juilliard Quartets as some of their greatest influences. The members of the Cypress Quartet play exceptional instruments including violins by Antonio Stradivari (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, *Cypresses*, by Antonin Dvořák.

About Gary Hoffman: Gary Hoffman is one of the outstanding cellists of our time, combining instrumental mastery, great beauty of sound and a poetic sensibility. Hoffman gained international renown upon his victory as the first North American to win the Rostropovich International Competition in Paris in 1986. A frequent soloist with the world's most noted orchestras, he has appeared with the Chicago, London, Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco, Baltimore and National symphony orchestras as well as the English, Moscow and Los Angeles chamber orchestras, the Orchestre National de France, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Netherlands and Rotterdam Philharmonics, the Cleveland Orchestra for the Blossom Festival and Philadelphia Orchestra, among many others. Hoffman has collaborated regularly with such celebrated conductors as André Prévin, Charles Dutoit, Mstislav Rostropovich, Pinchas Zuckerman, Andrew Davis, Herbert Blomstedt, Kent Nagano, Jesús López-Cobos and James Levine. Gary Hoffman performs in major recital and chamber music series throughout the world, as well as at such prestigious festivals as Ravinia, Marlboro, Aspen, Bath, Evian, Helsinki, Verbier, Mostly Mozart, Schleswig-Holstein, Stresa, Festival International de Colmar, and Festival de Toulon. He is a frequent guest of string quartets including the Emerson, Tokyo, Borromeo, Brentano, and Ysaÿe ensembles. Hoffman performs throughout Europe with various orchestras in Córdoba, Helsingborg, Warsaw, Stavanger, Budapest, Holland, Luxembourg and at the Bodensee Festival, with orchestras such as the Orchestre National d'Île de France, Russian National Philharmonic and Het Gelders Orchestra; and around the world in the United States, Asia, South Africa, in halls such as the Théâtre du Châtelet, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Auditorium de Dijon, the Concertgebouw, and the Kennedy Center. He also plays and gives masterclasses at the Ravinia Festival, Bloomington, Kobé, Manchester Cello Festival, Kronberg Cello Akademie, Salzburger Mozarteum, Festival de Prades, and Santa Fe. As a member of the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, Hoffman plays regularly with that organisation. He has premiered the concertos of Laurent Petitgirard, Joel Hoffman, Renaud Gagneux, Gil Shohat, Graciane Finzi, Dominique Lemaître, and played the French premiere of Elliott Carter's Cello Concerto. Born in Vancouver, Canada, in 1956, Gary Hoffman was the youngest faculty appointee in the history of the Indiana University School of Music, where he remained for eight years. In 2011, he was appointed Maître en Résidence for cello at the prestigious La Chapelle de Musique Reine Elizabeth in Brussels. Residing in Paris, he is an active recording artist with the BMG (RCA), Sony, EMI and Le Chant du Monde labels. Gary Hoffman performs on a 1662 Nicolo Amati, the "ex-Leonard Rose."

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