



75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

OCTOBER 8, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

2:00 • West Building, West Garden Court

Sphinx Virtuosi

Violin I

Karla Donehew Perez, concertmaster
Stephanie Matthews
Alex Gonzalez
Hannah White

Violin II

Suliman Tekalli, principal
Rainel Joubert
Meredith Riley
Maria Sanderson

Viola

Paul Laraia, principal
Celia Hatton
Drew Alexander Forde
Salwa Bachar

Cello

Karlos Rodriguez, principal
Erica Snowden-Rodriguez
Sterling Elliott
Caleb Vaughn-Jones

Bass

Xavier Foley, principal
Patricia Silva Weitzel

Catalyst Quartet

Suliman Tekalli, violin
Karla Donehew-Perez, violin
Paul Laraia, viola
Karlos Rodriguez, cello

Latin Voyages: Viajes Latinos

Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992)
Libertango
Arr. Thomas Kalb

Javier Álvarez Fuentes (b. 1956)
Metro Chabacano

César Espejo (1892–1988)
Prélude Ibérique
Hannah White, violin

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)
Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5, Ária
Arr. Catalyst Quartet
Catalyst Quartet

Astor Piazzolla
La Muerte del Ángel
Arr. Catalyst Quartet
Catalyst Quartet

Oswaldo Golijov (b. 1960)
Last Round, for two string quartets
and double bass

Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983)
Finale Furioso from *Concerto per*
Corde, op. 33

The Musicians

Sphinx Virtuosi

The Sphinx Virtuosi, led by the Catalyst Quartet, is one of the nation's most dynamic professional chamber orchestras. Comprised of eighteen of the nation's top black and Latino classical soloists, these alumni of the internationally renowned Sphinx Competition come together each fall as cultural ambassadors to reach new audiences. The *New York Times* raved about this unique ensemble's debut at Carnegie Hall in December 2004. Allan Kozinn described the performance as "first-rate in every way," and "the ensemble produced a more beautiful, precise, and carefully shaped sound than some fully professional orchestras that come through Carnegie Hall in the course of the year."

The Sphinx Virtuosi have returned to Carnegie Hall annually since 2006, performing to sold-out halls and continuing to earn outstanding reviews from the *New York Times*. At once a bridge between minority communities and the classical music establishment, the Sphinx Virtuosi garners critical acclaim during its annual national tours to leading venues around the country. The ensemble works to advance diversity in classical music while engaging young and new audiences through performances of varied repertoire. Masterpieces by Bach, Tchaikovsky, Vivaldi, and Mozart are performed alongside the less often heard works by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, George Walker, Michael Abels, and Astor Piazzolla.

The four principals of the Sphinx Virtuosi are members of the Catalyst Quartet, which has independently garnered acclaim in performances around the world. Members of the Sphinx Virtuosi have performed as soloists with America's major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland, Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras. Members also hold professional orchestral positions and several have been named laureates of other prestigious international competitions, such as the Queen Elisabeth and the Yehudi Menuhin competitions. Roster members have completed and continue to pursue advanced study at the nation's top music schools, including Juilliard, Curtis, Eastman, Peabody, Harvard, and the University of Michigan.

The Sphinx Virtuosi's first recording was released in 2011 on the White Pine label and features music of Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Gabriela Lena Frank, and George Walker.

Catalyst Quartet

The Catalyst Quartet, prizewinners of the 2012 Gianni Bergamo Classical Music Award, is comprised of top laureates and alumni of the internationally acclaimed Sphinx Competition. Known for rhythmic energy, polyphonic clarity, and tight ensemble playing, the quartet has toured with sold-out performances at the Kennedy Center, the Harris Theater in Chicago, the New World Center in Miami, and Carnegie Hall. They have appeared on numerous radio and television broadcasts, including American Public Media's *Performance Today*, and have contributed to online and print media. The Catalyst Quartet has held concert residencies at numerous universities and music schools, and its members serve as principal faculty at the Sphinx Performance Academy. They have been guest artists at Festival del Sole, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Sitka Music Festival, Juneau Jazz and Classics, Juilliard String Quartet Seminar, Strings Music Festival, the Grand Canyon Music Festival, and the

Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme. Catalyst Quartet's debut album, *The Bach/Gould Project* (Azica Records), features its own arrangement of J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Glenn Gould's *String Quartet*. They are also featured on the album *STRUM*, performing the string works of Jessie Montgomery.

Hannah White

Hannah White, Laureate Fellow and recipient of the highest merit scholarship at Chicago's Academy of Music Institute, studies with Almita Vamos and Hye-Sun Lee. She is the recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship, Isaac Stern Award, Puth Foundation Scholarship, and Farwell Trust Award and has soloed with many orchestras, including the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony Orchestra, Buffalo Symphony Orchestra, and Dexter Community Orchestra.

White has won first place at numerous competitions, including Sphinx Competition Junior Division, St. Paul String Quartet Chamber Competition, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra Young Artists, Jules M. Laser Chamber Competition, Madison Youth Concerto Competition, Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra Senior Symphony Concerto Competition, Chinese Fine Arts Music Competition, Granquist Competition, Sejong Competition (twice), Walgreens National Concerto Competition, DePaul Competition, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra Bach Double Competition, and Music Teachers National Association at the national, regional, and state levels.

Program Notes

Latin Voyages: Viajes Latinos takes the listener on a journey — a quest from the tantalizing Argentine tango to the nocturnal imagery of Mexico — along with a tribute to the great Piazzolla. We invite you to explore the exciting palette of the string medium through the prism of renowned composers of Latin heritage as well as those heard less often. Celebrate through music the intricate mosaic of sounds and colors that pay homage to our vastly diverse heritage.

Astor Piazzolla, born in 1921 in Mar del Plata, Argentina, was an only child. In 1925, the family moved to New York City and remained there until 1936. At the age of eight, Piazzolla was given his first bandoneon, which his father had purchased at a pawnshop. After a year of studying the instrument with Andres D'Aquila, Piazzolla produced his first phonograph disk, *Marionette Spagnol*, in New York's Radio Recording Studio. Two years later, in 1933, he studied with Hungarian pianist Bela Wilda. Later, he became friends with Carlos Gardel, the legendary tango singer in the 1935 movie *El día que me quieras*.

Piazzolla recorded and published *Libertango* in 1974. The piece represents a pinnacle in his career, as it came to symbolize his departure from classical tango to nuevo tango. Originally performed on the bandoneon, this arrangement by German conductor, pianist, and bassoonist Thomas Kalb is set for a chamber string ensemble. We invite you to listen for the exquisite melodic lines and robust rhythms: the piece demands consummate musicianship from its performers while simultaneously being beautifully accessible to the audience.

Born in Mexico City in 1956, Javier Álvarez Fuentes is known for his ability to combine musical styles from around the world, unusual instrumentation, and new music technologies. The celebrated composer John Adams has said, "The music of Javier Álvarez reveals influences of popular cultures that go beyond the borders of our own time and place."

Álvarez studied composition and clarinet with Mario Lavista before moving to the United States in the early 1980s. Later, he studied at the Royal College of Music and the City University, both in London. In 1984, Álvarez wrote an electroacoustic work for tape and maracas titled *Temazcal*. Then, in 1988, sculptor Marcos Liminez commissioned *Metro Chabacano* for the Cuarteto Latinoamericano. (Chabacano means apricot in Mexican-Spanish.) The piece references a train station in Mexico City and is punctuated with brief solos from each instrument that showcase the rhythmical insistence of repetitive eighth notes. Sounds simplistic? Deceptively so... the work is rather rich in its complexity.

César Espejo was a gifted Spanish violinist and conductor, rather obscure in today's world of musical literature. He authored many works, mostly for the violin, including a scale book. Espejo identified as a Spaniard, despite residing most of his life in France. He dedicated his *Prélude Ibérique* to the violin virtuoso, Henryk Szeryng (1918 – 1988). The work offers a serious virtuosic challenge for the artist and an absolute treat for the audience. The work also pays homage to the composer's heritage while audibly connecting with some of the best Spanish composers, such as Joaquín Turina and Isaac Albéniz. The *Prélude* is likely inspired by *Malagueña*, a song by Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona. The song has since become a standard of sorts, completely outside of its original realm (performed by drum corps and marching bands). The inspiration behind programming this work came from a spectacular

album, *Capricho Latino*, by violin virtuoso and a longtime artistic advisor to Sphinx, Rachel Barton Pine.

Heitor Villa-Lobos was a well-known Brazilian composer whose music meets with prominence to this day. He composed over two thousand vocal, orchestral, chamber, and instrumental pieces and was heavily influenced by elements of European classical folklore and Brazilian folk music, hence the name *Bachianas Brasileiras* given to a series of works he created. The arrangement of this popular work by the Catalyst Quartet showcases the group's individual playing styles and also captures the dynamic quality of the piece, transporting listeners to the depths of Brazilian rainforests through the use of astonishing and moving classical traditions.

Written in the 1960s, *La Muerte del Ángel* (from a series of "angel" pieces) has been immortalized by artists of several generations in a variety of instrumental transcriptions. In this work, Piazzolla transcends the traditional genre of tango with his innovative, sultry style that clearly asserted a new musical language. One can hear a kind of a jazz swing, some wonderful sophistication in the harmonies and beautiful chromatic lines, all of which constitute the composer's move in a new direction.

Oswaldo Golijov grew up listening to the music of Astor Piazzolla, which moved him deeply. As a young person, Golijov studied piano and composition, including in Israel and the United States, under such greats as George Crumb, Oliver Knussen, and Lucas Foss. His incredible masterpiece, *Last Round*, is inspired by the great Astor Piazzolla, as well as the St. Lawrence String Quartet. Tragically, it was Piazzolla's terminal illness that precipitated the birth of the work's slow movement. With the encouragement of the St. Lawrence String Quartet, Golijov finished the work in 1996, scoring it specifically for its current instrumental configuration and preceding the slow movement with a fiery, fast movement. Golijov wrote the following excerpt in the liner notes to the St. Lawrence String Quartet's recording of the piece:

The title is borrowed from a short story on boxing by Julio Cortázar; the idea was to give Piazzolla's spirit an imaginary challenge to fight one more time (he used to get into fistfights throughout his life). The piece is conceived as an idealized bandoneon. The first movement represents a violent compression of the instrument and the second a final, seemingly endless opening sigh (it is actually a fantasy over the refrain of the song "My Beloved Buenos Aires," composed by the legendary Carlos Gardel in the 1930s). But *Last Round* is also a sublimated tango dance. Two quartets confront each other separated by the focal bass, with violins and violas standing up as in the traditional tango orchestras.

Alberto Ginastera composed his *String Quartet no. 2* in 1958. His *Concerto per Corde*, op. 33, came seven years after, as an adaptation of the quartet for full string orchestra. The concluding movement, *Finale Furioso*, is colorful, rhythmic, and almost breathless. This movement showcases folk idioms, changing meters, and hidden melodic ideas from preceding movements, all expressed through excellent writing for the string medium — much like Bartók — an inspiration behind much of Ginastera's work.

Program notes by Afa S. Dworkin with contributions by Adriana Acosta

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fifth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Curtis on Tour
Hugo Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch*
October 16, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

LeStrange Viols
The Duarte Family: A Musical Household in the Age of Rembrandt
Presented in honor of *Drawings for Paintings in the Age of Rembrandt*
October 23, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Anderson & Roe Piano Duo
Danse Macabre
October 30, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Four Goldberg Variations
Spend an afternoon immersed in Bach's iconic keyboard variations on a G-major theme. The monumental work has inspired numerous transcriptions, each one bringing new aspects of its genius to light. Come for your favorite, or stay to hear them all.

November 6
Ignacio Prego, harpsichord
12:00, West Building Lecture Hall

Aspen String Trio
1:30, West Building, West Garden Court

Atlantic Reed Consort
3:00, West Building Lecture Hall

Dan Tepfer, jazz pianist
4:30, West Building, West Garden Court

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

www.nga.gov
www.instagram.com/ngadc
www.twitter.com/ngadc
www.facebook.com/nationalgalleryofart

The department of music produced these program notes. Copyright © 2016 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Cover Alfredo Ximenez, *The Dancers* (detail), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Reba and Dave Williams Collection, Gift of Reba and Dave Williams

Back cover *West Building, Constitution Avenue entrance, viewed from Sixth Street NW*, 1941, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives