

Sunrise Meditations

FRIDAY | JULY 8 | 5:15 AM
CHINESE TEA HOUSE



Pastries generously donated by **The French Confection**.

Gabriela Díaz, violin | **Ariel Horowitz**, violin
Jordan Bak, viola | **Jaqueline Choi**, cello

BIBER Passacaglia for Violin Solo in G minor
(Approximate duration 10 minutes)

BEETHOVEN Duet with two obligato Eyeglasses, WoO 32

I. Allegro

II. Minuet

(Approximate duration 13 minutes)

PÄRT *Psalom*

(Approximate duration 5 minutes)

HOLST Phantasy Quartet on British Folksongs, Op. 36

(Approximate duration 10 minutes)

GOLIJOV *Tenebrae* String Quartet

(Approximate duration 15 minutes)

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber (1644-1704): Passacaglia for Violin Solo in G minor

Biber was acknowledged in his time to be the only German violinist comparable to the brilliant players of France and Italy. Although he wrote several operas and many works of other kinds, the originality of his violin music can be credited with keeping his name alive through the centuries. Some of his works are a kind of programmatic music, like those he intended to describe joyful, sorrowful, and glorious religious mysteries.

The *Passacaglia in G minor*, probably composed in 1676, belongs to a group of pieces composed either for the Archbishop of Salzburg, Maximilian Gandolph, Count Khüenburg (Biber's employer) or the Salzburg Confraternity of the Rosary. The *Passacaglia* is based on a descending tetrachord consisting of the notes G, F, E flat, D. In the original publication, above the piece is an illustration of what is called the Guardian Angel appearing to a small child. The *Passacaglia's* first four notes, which become its bass pattern, may refer to the traditional hymn to the Guardian Angel, "*Einen Engel Gott mir geben*" ("God, Give Me an Angel"), which has a similar tune and was published in 1666.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Duo for Viola and Cello, in E-Flat, with Two Obligato Eyeglasses, Wo O32

The great weight of most of Beethoven's music makes us occasionally forget the fact that

he had a lighter side. His symphonies, sonatas, string quartets, and his concertos for piano and for violin all have pages of “mirth and jollity,” but they are generally overshadowed by the overall seriousness of purpose of these works. A few pieces here and there in his catalog are just fun. This *Duo* is one of them.

Music scholars have decided that Beethoven composed the *Duo* in 1796 or 1797, in the period of his first ten published works, ostensibly for a pair of myopic musicians, but it was not published until 1912. The violist was probably Beethoven himself, who wore glasses as a young man; the cellist was likely his friend Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanowecz, one of the first people Beethoven met when he arrived in Vienna, who was secretary in the Hungarian Chancellery. The two became lifelong friends, and Beethoven dedicated his String Quartet, Op. 95, to him many years later. For this work, Beethoven did not include any names in his manuscript, but in a 1798 letter to Zmeskall, the composer wrote, “Dear Baron Slop-Cart Driver, I am very much obliged to you for the weakness of your eyes. Here is something for you from the old hockshop.” That is the spirit in which Beethoven wrote this amusing piece.

Arvo Pärt (b.1935): Psalom

The creative output of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt has significantly affected the way we now approach the nature of music. Pärt, who spent his youth in Tallinn, Estonia, emigrated after a struggle against the Soviets, intending to settle in Israel, but instead, landed in Vienna in 1980, where with the help of his publisher, he became a citizen of Austria. In 1981, after receiving a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange, he moved to Germany, which subsequently became his home until 2010, when he returned to live in his native Estonia.

Pärt composed the instrumental miniature *Psalom* as two-part music without any specific instrumentation and finished it on his 50th birthday in 1985. He revisited the sketches in 1991, when he received a commission from Universal Edition for a piece for string quartet for the 90th birthday of its long-time leader, Alfred Schlee. Pärt had not composed a string quartet since 1959, when he was a student. *Psalom* is dedicated to Schlee and was premiered by the Arditti Quartet on November 1991 at the Konzerthaus Vienna at Schlee’s 90th birthday concert as part of the Wien Modern festival.

Another version of the work, composed in 1995 for string orchestra, was premiered in April 1995 by Kammerorchester Unter den Linden conducted by Andreas Peer Kähler at a concert of Pärt’s works in Berlin. A version for eight cellos, on commission by Cello Octet Amsterdam, was created in 2010; it premiered the same year at the Vale of Glamorgan Music Festival in Wales.

Gustav Holst (1874-1934): Phantasy Quartet on British Folksongs, Op. 36

Gustav Holst, one of the finest English composers of the 20th century, allowed nature, history, and even astrology to inspire his music. Holst’s chief characteristic in life and in his music was directness of expression. He composed much music, and *The Planets*, his symphonic guide to the solar system, is his most famous work.

Holst never collected folk songs himself, but he was very familiar with them through his friendship with Vaughan-Williams and other collectors. He used several of them in his works and made several arrangements of folksongs collected by others. Holst’s *Phantasy on (Four) English Folk Songs* is a beautiful and nostalgic knitting-together of four English folksongs composed in 1916, during World War I. By utilizing folk songs, *Phantasy* binds itself to the form most characteristic of the English Musical Renaissance of the early 20th

century. This genre was re-invigorated by Walter Wilson Cobbett (1847-1937), who based his own work on the one-movement 17th century Elizabethan viol 'Fantasia' model that Henry Purcell perfected. The popularity of Cobbett's British *Phantasy* (or *Phantasie*, or *Fantasia*) chamber music inaugurated a competition in 1906. Composers took up the challenge and created many compact single-movement pieces, hoping to win the prestigious prizes and the financial rewards of the competition. *Phantasy* was premiered in November 1917 by members of the John Saunders Quartet in Steinway Hall, but in 1919, Holst withdrew the work from his list of compositions, claiming it was his 'guilty secret'. The four folksongs have much charm as well as playfulness and warmth. Holst's choices included four of Gardiner's Hampshire songs: 'Eggs in her Basket', 'The Female Farmer', 'The Outlandish Knight', and 'Claudy Banks'.

Oswaldo Golijov (b. 1960): *Tenebrae* String Quartet

The New York Times described Oswaldo Golijov as "a musical alchemist (who) conjures up new worlds" as he weaves gestures and sounds of his background into his works of music. Golijov grew up in an Eastern European Jewish household in La Plata, the Argentinean provincial capital, surrounded by classical chamber, Jewish liturgical, and klezmer music. He studied with Gerardo Gandini, a student of Alberto Ginastera (1916-1981) who established the Argentinean nationalist classical music idiom. Golijov also absorbed other Argentinean music, including the tangos of Astor Piazzolla. In Israel, he studied with Mark Kopytman, an experimenter in graphic notation and chance elements. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied with George Crumb. As a Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center, he studied with Lukas Foss, and there received the Fromm Commission for *Yiddushbbuk*, which the St. Lawrence String Quartet premiered during Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music in July 1992. Dawn Upshaw's voice inspired him, and he composed several works for her, including the *Three Songs for Soprano and Orchestra*, the opera *Ainadamar*, the cycle *Ayre*, and a number of arrangements of popular songs.

Golijov eagerly explores his many cultural heritages and has said that he "modulates cultures like other composers modulate keys." He composed *Tenebrae* in 2002 for string quartet, clarinet, and soprano using klezmer elements joined with classical form to create a timeless, yet contemporary work. The work was commissioned by Charles Wadsworth for the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina as a short piece for Spoleto's popular afternoon chamber music series. It was premiered by soprano Courtney Budd, clarinetist Todd Palmer, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet.

Tenebrae takes its origins from a service from the Roman Catholic liturgy for Holy Week that incorporates excerpts from the Old Testament's *Lamentations of Jeremiah* as chanted or sung 'lessons.' Each verse of *Lamentations* begins with a Hebrew letter. Composers from the Renaissance through the 18th century set these verses to extended melismas. Each of the lessons ends with the words "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God."

In the mostly spare but sometimes elementally personal one-movement work, the strings have many quivering trills and the cello one strikingly intimate, timeless lyrical passage; the soprano's part, in which she weaves melismas around the Hebrew letters she sings, has an angelic quality; the clarinet echoes her line and adds the flavor of klezmer music to the group's sound. ©Susan Halpern, 2022.

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