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10-24-2006

## Concert: Prague Chamber Orchestra

Prague Chamber Orchestra

Menahem Pressler

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# ITHACA COLLEGE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

## **ITHACA COLLEGE CONCERTS 2006-7**

## PRAGUE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Antonin Hradil, artistic leader and concertmaster Menahem Pressler, piano

> Ford Hall Tuesday, October 24, 2006 8:15 p.m.



#### Simple Symphony, Op. 4

Boisterous Bourée Playful Pizzicato Sentimental Sarabande Frolicsome Finale

Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat major, K.595 Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Allegro Larghetto Allegro

Menahem Pressler, piano

#### **INTERMISSION**

Adagio for Strings (1936)

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Symphony No. 41 in C major, K. 551 ("Jupiter") Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Allegro vivace Andante cantabile Menuetto Molto allegro

#### PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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#### **Program Notes**

Simple Symphony, Op. 4

#### Benjamin Britten Born November 22, 1913 in Lowestoft Died December 4, 1976 in Aldeburgh

Britten, the son of musical parents, began his music studies at home and composed his first works at the age of five. At eleven, he attracted the attention of the composer Frank Bridge, with whom he studied for six years. By the time he was fourteen Britten had already composed ten piano sonatas, six string quartets, three suites for piano, an oratorio, and numerous songs. Eventually, he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, where it was not long before he had earned a distinguished record in both piano and composition.

The self-consciously alliterative title of the *Simple Symphony*, *Op.* 4 may erroneously suggest it is a trivial piece; on the contrary, there is a complexity in the execution of it, which belies the declared simplicity. This work, the earliest of Britten's works for string ensemble, was published in 1934 after the composer's twenty-first birthday, but was for the most part written earlier. Britten wrote a note in the score indicating that the Symphony is based entirely on material for works that the composer wrote between the ages of nine and twelve. Although the development of these themes is in many places quite new, there are large stretches of the work which are taken bodily from the early pieces - save for the scoring for strings." The first and third movements particularly employ technical devices that Britten was to retain well into his compositional maturity.

The alliterative movement titles give an indication of the good humor of the *Simple Symphony*. The piece opens with a *Boisterous Bourée* that is marked *Allegro Ritmico*. It is contrapuntal with two alternating themes; one playful, the other lyrical. There is a sparseness to the counterpoint that would come to characterize Britten's later works.

*Playful Pizzicato*, the second movement, is based on a scherzo for piano composed in 1924. The tempo is indicated as being *Presto possibile* ("as fast as possible"), and this movement is often performed as a separate piece in its own right. It is a brilliantly effective movement that demands much from the players.

The slower Sentimental Sarabande marked Poco lento e pesante features another compositional technique that would long be associated with Britten, that of postponing the expected harmonic changes. The brisk Frolicsome Finale bears a tempo marking of Prestissimo con fuoco. It begins with the introduction of a powerful unison motif, which is based on a theme that was first used in a 1925 song, and then incorporated into Piano Sonata No. 9 (1926) before inclusion in the Simple Symphony.

The Simple Symphony, Op. 4 received its premiere on March 6, 1934, with the composer conducting the mainly amateur Norwich String Orchestra. © 1997 Columbia Artists Management Inc. Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat major, K.595

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Born in Salzburg, January 27, 1756 Died in Vienna, December 5, 1791

As a tribute to Mozart's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, many works both popular and obscure are being performed. The *Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat major, K. 595* is the last of his works in this genre. The work may have been begun as early as 1788, but was not completed until January 5, 1791. Mozart was the soloist on this work performed on his last ever public concert on March 4, 1791. Many who are familiar with this concerto believe that it is his greatest work in the genre. There has also been great speculation that Mozart felt his death imminent and that he projected these feelings into the concerto. In fact, the eminent musicologist Alfred Einstein observed, "it was not in the *Requiem* that Mozart said his last word…but in this work, which belongs to a species in which he also said his greatest."

It is in this concerto that he used unifying elements throughout the work. For example, the theme from the *Larghetto* reappears as the second theme of the finale. The work is primarily written in major keys throughout, although hints at the traditional minor movements are placed throughout such as the minor second theme in the first movement and the minor section in the second movement.

Throughout the concerto, the colors are more muted than some of the bolder works of the mid 1780s, but the work is definitely forward looking to the Romantic era. The opening movement is significant in its consistency throughout the movement, with a great similarity between the themes rath than the customary contrast. The beautiful *Larghetto* is remarkable in its simplicity, while the finale is in Mozart's customary 6/8 rondo style featuring a very cheerful rondo theme.

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Adagio for Strings (1936)

Samuel Barber Born March 9, 1910, in West Chester, Pennsylvania Died January 23, 1981, in New York City

Samuel Barber is one of America's most distinguished composers of all times. As the *New Grove Dictionary of American Musician's* states, "few American composers of concert music and opera have seen such a high proportion of their works enter and remain in the repertoire;" this is due to the fact that his music was always fresh and accessible, with a decided bent towards Romantic lyricism, and eschewing the academicisms and *avant-garde* practices of his contemporaries. In testament to the popularity of his music, Barber's opera *Vanessa* – which won him the 1958 Pulitzer Prize for music – is among the few American operas ever performed by the Metropolitan Opera Company.

The Adagio for Strings is an arrangement of the second movement of Barber's String Quartet, Op. 11; both the Quartet and the orchestral transcription of

the Adagio were composed in 1936. While the Quartet is now rarely played in its original form, the Adagio for Strings remains the composer's most popular and frequently performed piece. Three years later, the great conductor Arturo Toscanini requested some orchestral pieces from Barber, to be performed by the NBC Symphony. For the occasion, the composer submitted the First Essay, Op. 12 and the Adagio, both of which were premiered by the NBC Symphony on November 5, 1938. Incidentally, in 1967 the composer made a third arrangement of this movement; this time the Adagio took the form of an Agnus Dei for eight-part mixed chorus with organ or piano accompaniment.

The score of the Adagio for Strings bears the dedication "To my aunt and uncle, Louise and Sidney Homer." Louise, a famous contralto at the turn of the century, and Sidney, a composer of songs, were both extremely supportive of their young nephew's early compositional endeavors. The work bears a tempo marking of Molto adagio espressivo cantando. The strength of the piece is in its simplicity and melodic tension, which reaches great expressive heights. Both qualities are evident in the opening measures, in the slowly climbing opening phrase presented in the first violins. After the complete melody has been stated in three long phrases by the first violins, it is taken up in turn by the violas and cellos. The opening phrase is used to build to a strong emotional climax on long sustained fortissimo chords. An abrupt pause leads to the soft conclusion, which again recalls the opening phrase of the piece and dies away into silence.

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#### Symphony No. 41 in C major, K. 551 ("Jupiter")

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Born in Salzburg, January 27, 1756 Died in Vienna, December 5, 1791

Up until 1786, Mozart had composed at least one symphony almost every year since he was eight years old. Only once in the last four years of his life did Mozart turn back to the symphony; the great trilogy of his last symphonies was written in June, July and August of 1788. There is no record of any of these symphonies being performed during his lifetime, and indeed the date of their first performance is unknown. It is not even known if Mozart had a specific reason for writing these symphonies; it has been theorized that they may have been intended for projected concerts that never took place. On the other hand, it may well be that the composer wrote them for himself, finding solace in the full expenditure of his creative energies in the form he loved the best, during a time darkened by ill health and the crushing weight of debt.

As in all of Mozart's mature symphonies - except the "Haffner," which grew out of a serenade – all the movements of the "Jupiter" Symphony, other than the minuet, are in sonata form. In every movement the thematic treatment is masterful and a development section takes place; even the minuet can be said to have one. The whole work is actually built upon the little motif of its opening two measures. By the standards of its time, the "Jupiter" Symphony is a huge work, grand in the dimensions of its expressivity. The music bears comparison with the greatest of Roman gods and with the greatest of the planets known to mankind. The first movement, *Allegro vivace*, opens with a vigorous principal theme that incorporates various elements: a smashing first measure for the orchestral *tutti*, a quiet answer from the strings, a martial motif in the wind instruments underscored by powerful string chords, and a final statement from the full orchestra. The second subject is of a more delicate and quieter nature. A third theme – in the form of a *codetta* – is introduced, and it is this subject that becomes the "catchier," more singable of the three; it is an almost exact quotation from the aria *Un bacio di mano* which Mozart composed three months earlier for the basso-buffo Francesco Albertarelli, his first Viennese Don Giovanni.

The second movement, Andante cantabile, is marked by a note of serenity, and offers not just lyrical contrast but a new set of dramatic tensions and releases as well. Its themes, treated in sonata form as in the first movement, are beautifully songful. The orchestral texture is one of unprecedented rhythmic and dynamic complexity. The mood is overtly personal and saturated with pathos. The coda, a wonder in its beauty, was an afterthought appended to the manuscript by the composer on an extra leaf.

The third movement, the customary *Menuetto* (marked *Allegretto*), brings temporary relief from the tensions of the preceding movements. It is stately in character, yet, although in the proper meter and speed, this movement is not as particularly minuet-like as would be expected; the music here constantly blossoms into rich passages that the composer ingeniously does not lead us to expect.

Mozart's genius reaches its peak, however, in the last movement. Some authorities attribute the derivation of the subtitle "Jupiter" (not so named by Mozart, but so christened at a later date) to the almost superhuman qualities of the Symphony's Finale. The intensity of the first two movements rises to unprecedented heights in the *Allegro molto* as Mozart intricately combines the Classical structure of the opening movement with the fugal procedures of Bach, whose music he had discovered a few years earlier. Fugal and sonata elements and breath-taking moments of polyphonic fantasy are perfectly fused together, suddenly giving place to the most matter-of-fact sonata-style cadence figures just as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Passion and imagination are, after all, not especially rare traits in Mozart's music; it was his gift for blending the two with the most flawless artistry that made Mozart the genius that he was.

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#### **Prague Chamber Orchestra**

"Each musician is a maestro," heralded an American critic during the first North American tour of the Prague Chamber Orchestra Without Conductor (the translation of its full Czech title). An ensemble of 36 musicians, the Orchestra plays without a conductor, sustained instead by the superb nusicianship of each player. In both rehearsal and performance, each individual contributes as an interpreter, as in a more intimate chamber music ensemble, and the result is an ensemble that is renowned for its exquisite precision, intonation and balance. The Orchestra's repertoire ranges from the Baroque to the twentieth century and often includes compositions of today's leading and active composers.

The Prague Chamber Orchestra holds a unique and leading place among the orchestras of the Czech Republic. In 1951, first desk players of the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra in Prague came together to found a smaller orchestra, suitable for performing works of Bohemian composers of the classical period. This occasion was celebrated in the first recording of the Orchestra on October 22, 1951 with the Orchestral Quartet of Karl Stamic.

The Orchestra's quality received immediate recognition at home on June 14, 1952 when they appeared at the Prague Spring Festival. The advent of the Orchestra came at a time when there was a move away from large symphony orchestras playing Baroque and early Classical period music, so its pioneering excellence in this field was well received. Due to the growth of its activities, it became increasingly difficult for the members to also ontinue their work with Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra. By 1965, the Prague Chamber Orchestra became a state funded independent body. After the collapse of the Communist system in 1989, it was necessary to look for a new status for the Orchestra and set up their own concert agency, the PKO Agency Ltd. Its Executive Director is Ji í Krob while Petra Tislová acts as Managing Director.

The Prague Chamber Orchestra is made up of 12 violins, 4 violas, 4 cellos, and 2 double basses; a double wind sextet of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, French horns and trumpets; and timpani. The repertoire of the Orchestra is based first and foremost on the major Classical works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. It reaches back to the High Baroque period with the music of Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi, as well as forward into the early Romantic period with works by Schubert and Mendelssohn.

The Orchestra's repertoire also includes music of the twentieth century, such as the neoclassical works of Britten, Honegger, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky. In addition, the ensemble performs works of Czech composers including the Benda family, Dusek, Jirovec, Kozeluh, Rejcha, Michna, Myslivecek, the tamic family, Vanhal, Vorísck, the Vranický brothers, and Zelenka. Compositions by Dvorák, Janácek, and Martinu are naturally included from the later period, as are those of later Czech composers, many of whom have written works especially for the Prague Chamber Orchestra. The Prague Chamber Orchestra has thrilled audiences around the world with regular tours of the United States, Canada, Europe, Russia, Latin America and Asia; it appears in such cultural centers as Leningrad, Moscow, Vienna, London, Rome, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington D.C. Chicago, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo. Eighty percent of the Orchestra's work takes place abroad.

In Prague, the ensemble gives its prestigious for-subscribers-only series in the Dvorák Hall at Rudolfinum. Their sterling reputation has attracted surenowned artists as Arturo Benedetti-Michaelangeli, Paul Badura-Skoc Salvatore Accardo, Jessye Norman, Barbara Hendricks, Heinrich Schiff, Barry Tuckwell, Hans Jörg Schellenberger, Rudolf Buchbinder, Emil Gilels, Henryk Szeryng, Maxim Vengerov, Josef Suk, Uto Ughi, Boris Pergamenschikow, Stefan Vladar, the Beaux Arts Trio, and The Eroica Trio.

The ensemble has recorded for Supraphon, Denon, BMG, harmonia mundi, EMI, and Telarc, among others. Awards include the Supraphon's Golden Disc, Wiener Flötenuhr, and the Grand Prix du Disque Akademie Charles Cros. Their radio and television tapes made in Prague and other European cities number over 500. The Orchestra occasionally chooses to work with conductors and recognizes the benefits such collaborations can bring. Excellent examples are the very successful collaborations with Vaclav Neumann and Gerd Albrecht as well as the recordings of Mozart Symphonies under Sir Charles Mackerras.

The New York Times characterized the Orchestra as a "marvelous precision instrument." The Washington Post described the ensemble's musical sound as "light, clear, perfectly articulated and fresh as a spring gust of wind." Rome's II Giornale d'Italia wrote: "They demonstrated the highest form artistic discipline, not blind and passive discipline to a conductor but enlightened and conscious one."

The Prague Chamber Orchestra makes its eagerly awaited fifteenth North American Tour in the 2006-07 season.

#### Antonin Hradil

Antonin Hradil, Concert Master of the Prague Chamber Orchestra, was born in 1957 in Bruntal, Czech Republic, where he studied at the State Conservatory of Music and the JAMU (Janacek Artistic Academy) in Brno. For many years he was a violinist in the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra. After moving to Olomouc, he became the principal violinist in the Orchestra of the Morava Theatre. Since 1990, Antonin Hradil has served as principal violinist of the Morava Philharmonic Orchestra in Olomouc. In addition to his regular activities as a soloist, Mr. Hradil is also the artistic director of the Olomouc Chamber Orchestra.

For two years, Antonin Hardil regularly collaborated as a guest artist with the Prague Chamber Orchestra. In February 2003, he was elected as artistic leader and concertmaster of this ensemble.

#### **Menahem** Pressler

Menahem Pressler is one of the world's most distinguished and honored musicians, with a career that spans nearly six decades. Born in Magdeburg, Germany, Pressler received most of his musical training in Israel and began his international musical odyssey when he was awarded first prize at the Debussy International Piano Competition in San Francisco in 1946, followed by his North American concerto debut with the Philadelphia Drchestra under the baton of Eugene Ormandy. Since then, Mr. Pressler has appeared with many of the world<sup>1</sup>s leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the National Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, the San Francisco Symphony, the Dallas Symphony, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchestre National de Belgique, and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under the baton of Kurt Masur.

In 1955, Mr. Pressler co-founded the Beaux Arts Trio, which has become one of the most enduring and widely acclaimed chamber music ensembles in musical history. The Beaux Arts has made more than 50 recordings on the Philips label, and has performed around the globe, winning numerous international honors. In the 2004-2005 Season, the Trio celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which included three coast-to-coast tours of North America, including Honolulu and California, Canada and the entire east coast of the United States.

Mr. Pressler also appears frequently in recital, including concerts in recent years at Carnegie Hall in New York, Jordan Hall in Boston, the Ravinia Festival in Chicago, and in Toronto, St. Louis and Los Angeles. In the 2003-1004 season, he celebrated his 80th birthday with a recital at the Library of Congress in Washington and was featured in a series of concerts entitled "The Art of Menahem Pressler" at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He is a frequent guest artist with chamber ensembles, including the American, Emerson, Guarneri, Juilliard, and Tokyo String Quartets.

In April 2005, Mr. Pressler was awarded France's highest cultural honor, the prestigious rank of Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture. In May 2002, Mr. Pressler was awarded the Gold Medal of Merit from the National Society of Arts and Letters, recognizing him for "a long and distinguished career not only as an internationally recognized concert artist but also a teacher and mentor of young artists." Previous winners have included Mikhail Baryshnikov, Louise Nevelson, Jose Ferrer, Mstislav Rostropovich and Marilyn Horne. He was elected to the National Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000, and in 1998 he received one of only five Lifetime Achievement Awards granted in the last fifty years by Gramophone magazine, placing him in the distinguished company of Joan Sutherland, Sir Georg Solti, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Yehudi Menuhin. In 1994, he was honored with Chamber Music America's Distinguished Service Award.

Mr. Pressler holds the position of Distinguished Professor of Music at Indiana University, where he has been a faculty member since 1955, and he gives frequent master classes at institutions around the world. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Nebraska, the University of Kansas, and the North Carolina School of the Arts.

## **Critical** Acclaim

"A superlative ensemble. Their playing was a marvel of virtuosity. The New York Times

"A bright phenomenon. They are all maestros with resoundingly successful joyous results. The New York Post

"A remarkably well-disciplined, excellent body of musicians...a high enjoyable concert The Washington Post

"Extraordinary artistic discipline. Perfectly beautiful, expressive, compelling playing that leaves it glow and mark." San Francisco Chronicle.

"Extraorddinary. Lovely, fine precision, dynamic finesse and sensitive intrnal balances." The Los Angeles Times

"Prague Chamber Orchestra, a marvelous combinatin of Old World sound and discipline with wide-ranging musical tastes...Unalloyed pleasure." Chicago Sun Times

"The playing throughout was immaculate and spirited...crisp and beautifully etched. The Stravinsky *Basle* concerto, or example, was as distinctly lyrical and warm as the Bach had been crystalline and cool."

#### The Dallas Morning News

"What [the Prague Orchestra] hasn't changed in its devotion to ensemble playing built around the camber ideal of each player listening to his colleagues...The playing throughout was crisp, with accented downbeats and a steady pulse. Can 32 musicians really perform a Mozart symphony in a precise, animated manner without a conductor? those 32 could." The Toronto Star

"The musicians responded beautifully with elegant, balanced sound that ranged from extraordinary pianissimo to full, controlled fortissimo. Their playing was precise yet dynamically expressive, wit stunning contrasts. Rapid passages were crisply and energetically performed. The Las Vegas Sun

"The Prague Chamber Orchestra clearly demonstrated the benefits of maintaining their tradition in Friday's performance at UC Berkley's Zellerbach Hall. Their offering, an all-Beethoven program, was quite simply among some of the finest orchestral playing to Grace a Bay Area stage." San Francisco Classical Voice

## PRAGUE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA Antonin Hradil, Artistic Leader and Concertmaster

First Violins Antonín Hradil, Concertmaster Pavel Šafarík Pavid Šroubek Miroslav Kosina Boris Chomča

Second Violins Libor Kanka Xenie Dohnalová Zdeněk Pechoušek Karel Vidimský Milan Lajčik

Violas Zdeněk Zindel Marek Jiříček Jan Stippl Petr Verner

Violincelli Pavel Běloušek vo Laniar Jaroslav Ondráček

Double Basses Tomáš Vybíral Lukáš Verner

Flutes Petra Dolejší

Oboes Vratislav Vlna Zdeněk Rys

Bassoons Radek Dostál Lukáš Kořínek

**Aorns** František Langweil Blanka Vojtíšková **Trumpets** Svatopluk Zaal Marek Vajo

Timpani Jírí Krob

Manager Petra Tišlová

Technician Petr Smolík

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## **Concert** Calendar

Octo	ber	
25 26	8:15 8:15	Electroacoustic Music Premieres I Faculty Recital: Randie Blooding, baritone
Nove	mber	and the second
1	7:00	Faculty Recital: voice faculty
2	7:00	Faculty Recital: Elizabeth Shuhan, flute; Alexander Shuhan, French horn; Jennifer Hayghe, piano
5	4:00	Faculty Recital: Deborah Montgomery-Cove, soprano; Charis Damaris, piano
6	7:00	Faculty Chamber Recital: Ithaca Brass
7	7:00	Faculty Recital: Richard Faria, clarinet; Heidi Hoffman, cello; Linda Larsen, soprano; Jairo Gernoymo, piano
8	7:00	Faculty Recital: Rebecca Ansel, violin; Nicholas Walker, string bass; Gabriel Shuford, harpsichord
	9:00	Trombone Troupe; Erik Kibelsbeck, conductor
9	8:15	Faculty Chamber Recital: Ithaca Wind Quintet
11	7:00	Choral Composition Festival Closing Concert
12	4:00	Faculty Recital: Angus Godwin, baritone; assisted by Elizabeth Southard Mau, soprano; Pablo Cohen, guitar; Nicholas Walker, string bass; Diane Birr, piano and harpsichord; Charis Dimaras, piano; Ariadne String Quartet
13	8:15	Composition Premieres II
14	4:00	Master Classes: United States Military Academy Band
15	8:15	United States Military Academy Concert Band and Ithaca College Concert Band Lt. Col. Timothy J. Holtan and Mark Fonder, conductors
16	7:00	Faculty Recital: Jairo Geronymo and Diane Birr, piano; assisted by the Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festiv The Shirley and Chas Hockett Chamber Music Concert Seri.
27	4:00	Master Class: Canadian Brass
	8:15	Canadian Brass: Josef Burgstaller and Jeroen Berwaerts, trumpets; Bernhard Schully, horn; Eugene Watts, trombone; Charles Daellenbach, tuba
28	4:00	Master Class: David Ross, bassoon
	8:15	Guest Recital: David Ross, bassoon; Fred Klemperer '70, violin; Heather Fais-Zampino, viola; Walden Brass, violoncello
29	7:00	Flute Ensemble; Amy Theimann, graduate conductor
30	8:15	Opera Workshop; Mark Kaczmarczyk, director
Decen	nber	
1	7:00	Woodwind Chamber Ensembles
	8:15	Piano Ensemble; Jennifer Hayghe, coach
4	8:15	Guest Recital; Eileen Russell, trombone
5	8:15	Chamber Orchestra and Symphony Orchestra; Jeffrey Meyer, conductor
6	8:15	Wind Ensemble; Steven Peterson, director John Whitwell, guest conductor; Susan Waterbury, violin
7	7:00	Piano Chamber Ensembles; Charis Dimaras, coordinator
		Ithaca College Concerts 2006-7

### Ithaca College Concerts 2006-7 (admission charge)

October 24	Prague Chamber Orchestra
February 2	Turtle Island Quartet & Assad Brothers
March 20	Imani winds