

# RECITAL SERIES ONE

ATLANTIC STRING QUARTET



October 25, 2020 | 7:30PM  
Online from the  
Anglican Cathedral of  
St. John the Baptist

**NSO**

NEWFOUNDLAND  
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Marc David, conductor

Presented by

**ideafactory**



### Message from the Premier

Welcome to the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra’s fall season. A cultural institution in our province, this orchestra promises to deliver a memorable and outstanding experience that you will not soon forget. Like so many organizations across the province, and around the globe, the NSO is reimagining this season’s repertoire. Through the NSO website, residents across Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond will be able to watch this year’s brand new NSO concerts, for the first time ever, in the comfort of their own homes. As you continue to be one of our province’s most important educational, musical and cultural resources, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is proud to be a supporter. I commend your tireless efforts to make this season a success. Best of luck on a spectacular fall program.



Hon. Andrew Furey, Premier



### Message from the Mayor

As Mayor of our Capital City, it is my distinct pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all music lovers and Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra followers. I congratulate the NSO on another great season in 2019-2020. The City of St. John’s is a proud supporter of the arts and the talented artists who contribute to the life and vibrancy of our city. The Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra is the only orchestra and the largest arts organization in Newfoundland and Labrador. They perform more than 25 times each year and offer educational and concert experiences to more than 15,000 Newfoundlanders & Labradorians of all ages. Their concert programs will undoubtedly soothe, invigorate and warm your heart! This season promises to entertain us in the new norm, with digital concerts, presented via the brand new NSO Digital Concert Hall, and featuring all new music recorded with concert-quality sound and audio. St. John’s is extremely fortunate to have very talented musicians as the heartbeat of our musical community and who are there to share their talent and love of music. The NSO board, staff, volunteers and sponsors work diligently each and every year to bring these shows to our community. Allow me to express my appreciation for your hard work and dedication and thank you for the significant contributions you make to the truly unique culture of our City.

ST. JOHN’S

Danny Breen, Mayor



### Message from the Lieutenant Governor

As Patron of the Newfoundland and Labrador Symphony Orchestra (NSO), I welcome you to the 2020-2021 season called “*Reimagining*”. The NSO is known for high caliber productions that showcase some of the best and brightest talents. This year will be no different despite COVID-19 which has meant the presentations will look a little different. Creative thinking, and *reimagination*, have ensured the performances this upcoming season can be enjoyed anywhere as digital concerts, which recreate the in-person experience through the innovative NSO Digital Concert Hall. Congratulations to those behind the scenes and all performers who will make the 2020-2021 season a success. Thank you for continuing to lift our spirits with the arts while we stay safe.



Judy M. Foote P.C., O.N.L.  
Lieutenant Governor

# Atlantic String Quartet

Heather Kao, violin  
Nancy Case-Oates, violin  
Kate Read, viola  
Vernon Regehr, cello

## Programme

**String Quartet in C major, op. 1, no. 1** - C. de Saint-Georges (7 minutes)

I. Allegro assai

II. Rondeau gratoso

**Lyric for Strings** - G. Walker (6 minutes)

**Serenade for Two Violins and Viola, op.12** - Z. Kodaly (22 minutes)

I. Allegramente - Sostenuto ma non troppo

II. Lento ma non troppo

III. Vivo

*Intermission (5-7 minutes)*

**String Quartet no. 2 in A minor, op. 51** - J. Brahms (35 minutes)

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Andante moderato

III. Quasi Minuetto, moderato

IV. Finale. Allegro non assai



Get ready to unwind with a pre show cocktail! This week's feature is:

## THE APEROL SPRITZ

### Makes 1 drink:

2 oz. aperol

2 oz. prosecco

Shot of soda

Orange wedge garnish

Place ice in a cocktail glass.

Pour ingredients over ice.

Stir and garnish.

Special thanks to our rehearsal and accommodations partner:



# ATLANTIC STRING QUARTET

**About the Atlantic String Quartet:** Formed in 1985, the Atlantic String Quartet (ASQ) is a versatile and professional chamber ensemble comprised of the principal string players of the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra (NSO): Heather Kao, first violin; Nancy Case-Oates, second violin; Kate Read, viola; and Theo Weber, cello. In addition to their work with the full orchestra and NSO Sinfonia, the quartet produces its own Recital Series each season, presenting a broad selection of works from the rich quartet and small ensemble repertoires. The ASQ is an integral part of the creative life of its community and is known for its versatility and ability to work with music and musicians from all styles and genres. Having shared the stage with such international classical musicians as Anton Kuerti, André Laplante, and Martin Beaver, and local artists such as jazz artist Duane Andrews and renowned songwriter Ron Hynes, the members of the quartet also teach privately, and coach and conduct other ensembles. In 2014, the ASQ was offered a placement at the prestigious St. Lawrence String Quartet Music Seminar in Stanford, CA. In 2020 the quartet released its first self-titled debut album featuring works by Arthur Bliss and Maurice Ravel.

## PROGRAM NOTES

**Zoltán Kodály** (1882-1967) was an influential Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist and music educator. He and fellow composer Béla Bartok spent years collecting thousands of folk songs and dances which were published between 1906 and 1921. Kodály wrote choral music, operas, instrumental and chamber music. He is also famous for his system of music education for children, the Kodály Method. The ethos of Hungarian folk music permeates most of his music, including his **Serenade for Two violins and Viola, Opus 12**.

A powerful melody in violins and viola begins the *Allegramente* movement. The melody shifts from instrument to instrument, whether solo, duet or trio, linked by a recurring rhythmic motif. The viola introduces a soulful passage which is accompanied by, or in dialogue with the violins. Instrumental colour is varied by means of pizzicato, tremolos, and unisons, while rubati, unexpected pauses, and frequent tempo changes enhance the rhythmic effects. The introspective *Lento ma non troppo* movement features a contemplative viola solo accompanied by an extended tremolando in the second violin, while the first violin interrupts with high pitched motifs. Violin I and Viola continue in intense dialogue leading to a long solo in first violin. Melodic fragments and sustained chords end this exquisite movement. The vigorous *Vivo* is full of Hungarian melodies and folk-dance rhythms, while frequent tempo changes and rubati add to the excitement. Pizzicati strings flavour the middle section which slows down for another expressive melody in Violin I. Towards the end, hesitant melodic fragments give way to fierce energy to conclude this remarkable movement. Kodály's colleague Bartok stated, "This composition is a genuine modern product of Hungarian culture. It is extraordinarily rich in melodies with exotic characters influenced by the strong rubato of old peasant music." And he would know!

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(Program notes, cont'd.)

**Joseph Bologne** (b. 1739 or 1745, d. 1799) was the illegitimate son of a married French plantation owner and a teenage slave originally from Africa. Bologne was later dubbed **Chevalier de Saint-George** by Louis XV. His compositional output included string quartets, sonatas for fortepiano and violin, violin concertos, symphonies concertantes as well as operas and songs. In the meantime, he led an active career as a virtuoso violinist, conductor of prestigious orchestras and champion fencer! Though he had a privileged upbringing, as a person of mixed race he was denied many of the rights of white citizens. His quest for equality for all motivated him to volunteer for the French revolutionary wars in the 1790s. Joseph Bologne's Opus 1 string quartets (1771) feature elegant melodies with light chordal accompaniment and the clear formal scheme of the relatively new Classical style. In general, these works of freshness and charm reflect "cultured music-making, pleasant but ephemeral" ([www.gramophone.com](http://www.gramophone.com)), which made them popular in the salons of Paris. Bologne's **String Quartet in C major, Opus 1, No. 1** consists of two movements. The *Allegro Assai* begins with a graceful theme in first violin accompanied by light repeated chords in the other strings. There are duets in both violins and diversions to the moody minor modes, along with increasing interaction among the four strings. The *Rondeau* features alternating melodies along with some challenging passages and pizzicato accompaniment. Overall, this string quartet is light and sweet, like a refreshing sorbet!

Gifted pianist and prolific composer **George T. Walker** (1922-2018) is less well known than he should be. Son of a Jamaican immigrant who became a medical doctor, his life is an impressive series of "firsts," among them: first Black graduate of the Curtis Institute in 1945, first Black recipient of a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music (1955) with an Honorary Doctorate over 50 years later, and first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize (1996). His compositional output consists of numerous works for solo instruments, small and large ensembles, as well as vocal works in all genres. In fact, in 2010, Walker drew attention to the little-known Joseph Bologne in his orchestral piece *Foils for Orchestra (Homage à Saint-Georges)*. Clever title!

George Walker's most famous work is **Lyric for Strings** (1946). Originally titled *Lament*, it was dedicated to his grandmother who had died the previous year. Walker liked to "compose vertically rather than horizontally" as seen in *Lyric for Strings*. This evocative work begins with mournful falling motives over sustained tones, followed by contrapuntal lines over a sustained pedal. Intertwined melodies lead to an impassioned climax punctuated by deep jolting interjections. This richly textured piece closes with peaceful sonorities. Walker wrote, "I never played a string instrument, but somehow strings have always fascinated me." Yet, in this short work, he magnificently showcases the vast range of sonorities possible in these instruments.

**Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897) was immensely intimidated by his predecessor Beethoven, "the giant whose steps I always hear behind me." This might explain why Brahms toiled for over fifteen years to produce his first symphony in 1876. Likewise, he struggled with more than 20 string quartets which he reputedly claimed to have used for wall-paper! A series of other large scale works, piano quartets, string sextets, a piano quintet and a horn trio followed before he finally had the confidence to produce his first published Opus 51 String Quartets in 1874.

(Program notes, cont'd.)

Brahms was fascinated by Classical geniuses Mozart, Haydn and his idol Beethoven, as well as by his contemporaries. He also revered Baroque composers Handel and J.S. Bach. As a result, the **String Quartet in A minor, Op. 51, No. 2** displays the sweep of Romanticism with Classical forms and Baroque contrapuntal procedures.

The *Allegro non troppo* is structured largely around the FAE motive (*Frei aber einsam* - free but lonely), the musical motto of Brahms' friend and virtuoso violinist Joseph Joachim. Pitches FAE are the second, third and fourth notes of the opening four note motif heard in first violin over a triplet accompaniment in viola and sustained notes in cello. Rich sonorities are achieved by intervals of parallel 3rds and 6ths, countermelodies in all voices and widely spaced intervals between the outer instruments. The second theme with violins in 3rds over viola triplets provides a mellow contrast. The short development section features constant variations and contrapuntal imitations of the FAE motive which saturates the movement. The recapitulation is faithful to classical convention.

The second movement, *Andante moderato*, begins in A major with a song-like melody in first violin, accompanied by 8th notes in parallel octaves in viola and cello. This section is characterized by warm sonorities, accompanying melodies and wide-ranging cello lines, as the first violin melody reaches new heights of expression. The minor key middle section erupts in loud tremolos, marcato rhythms, and ominous 32nd note motives, while the first violin and cello perform in canon. An expressive descending scale in first violin leads back to the *Andante* melody now in the unexpected key of F major. The cello takes over at the return to the key of A major. This exquisite movement ends with triplet motives gently descending the gamut from first violin to cello.

Marked *Quasi menuetto*, the third movement is a nod to the 18th century minuet. An innocuous rhythmic figure in cello introduces a somber melody in first violin and viola in parallel octaves, along with the second violin in 3rds below. The rhythmic figure takes on added significance as it turns into a persistent melodic triplet motive. A pizzicato variation of the melody is accompanied by strong rhythmic accents. The *Allegretto vivace* middle section begins with pizzicato violin over a countermelody in viola and cello. This is full of ingenious instrumental imitation, fragmentation, and thematic inversion. Furthermore, the skittish *Allegretto* theme alternates unexpectedly with the contrasting menuetto melody. The return of the *Quasi menuetto* section brings the movement to a quiet close.

The *Allegro non assai* finale is a masterpiece of discombobulating rhythmic ambiguity. The intense Magyar flavored main theme in triple meter sounds like duple meter even though the chordal accompaniment is in triple time. Percussive strong accents on "weak" beats, juxtaposing duple against triple meters, hemiolas and cross rhythms add to the deliberate confusion. True to form, Brahms intensifies rhythmic and melodic complexity in a section of fortissimo canon in all voices. Such frenetic activity is offset by short, varied lyrical episodes. Chromatic transformations of the Magyar theme precede a reflective section with suspenseful pauses. The theme suddenly doubles in speed culminating in an explosive conclusion. The giant would surely have approved!

Mary O'Keeffe, musicologist/harpichordist



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