

MARLBORO MUSIC

MITSUKO UCHIDA & JONATHAN BISS, ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

PREVIEW NOTES

WEEK TWO • PERSONS AUDITORIUM

Saturday, July 25 at 8 pm

Clarinet Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 11 (1797)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany • Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

Composed in 1797 for the Viennese clarinetist Joseph Beer—though its intended dedicatee reportedly found it too tame to bother performing—this trio still carries the nickname “Gassenhauer,” or street tune, thanks to its finale. There, Beethoven builds a set of variations on a comic melody from Joseph Weigl’s opera *L’amor marinaro*, a tune so popular it was hummed and whistled throughout Vienna’s streets. The lighthearted spirit carries through the whole work: after a boisterous unison opening and a tender, songful Adagio, the finale sends the trio off with wit, charm, and unmistakable good humor.

Participants: *Arthur Stockel, clarinet; Nagyeom Jang, cello; Ignat Solzhenitsyn, piano*

Chambers (2010)

Marcos Balter

Born April 1, 1974, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Duration: approx. 12 minutes

Marcos Balter is Marlboro’s 2026 Composer in Residence. Commissioned by the Spektral Quartet, *Chambers* distills three facets of Balter’s musical language into a single work. In the composer’s own words:

“Chambers is a three-part snapshot of my compositional personality. The first movement focuses on attentive listening, immersing oneself into seemingly static textures that in return gradually unveil their many complexities and hidden hyperactivity, primarily through timbre. The second movement is centered at the role of spatial and temporal organization of musical ideas as well as at the physical and contextual questioning of music repetition. The third movement both summarizes the two previous movements and serves as a vehicle to express my interest on acoustic illusions—specifically, on how to make a chamber ensemble sound much larger and more complex than it actually is.”

Participants: *Masha Lakisova, violin; Laurel Gagnon, violin; Brian Isaacs, viola; Jay Campbell, cello*

***Codex Seraphinianus* (2014)**

Marcos Balter

Duration: approx. 22 minutes

Codex Seraphinianus takes its inspiration from one of the most mysterious books in modern history: an illustrated, surrealist encyclopedia of an imaginary world, published in 1981 by Italian artist Luigi Serafini and written entirely in an invented script that has never been decoded. Fascinated by the book's strange beauty, Balter translated its visual catalog into an equally surreal sonic landscape, celebrating curiosity and interpretive ambiguity over literal meaning. Its eleven brief movements trace the book's own chapter headings, from flora and fauna to invented languages and architecture.

Participants: Hannah Tassler, flute; Arthur Stockel, clarinet; Duncan Henry, bassoon; Beth Guterman Chu, viola

***String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10* (1893)**

Claude Debussy

Born August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France • Died March 25, 1918, Paris, France

Duration: approx. 25 minutes

Completed in 1893, when Debussy was thirty-one, this quartet remains his only contribution to the genre, and it marks the first appearance of the distinctive musical voice that would soon produce *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Dedicated to the Ysaÿe Quartet, who gave the premiere, the work borrows Franz Liszt's cyclical technique, carrying a single motto theme through subtle transformations across all four movements. Shimmering pizzicato, modal harmonies, and colors drawn from Debussy's fascination with Javanese gamelan music replace the architecture of German symphonic form with something more fluid and atmospheric.

Participants: Sara Bitlloch, violin; Clara Neubauer, violin; Sofia Gilchenok, viola; Laura Navasardian, cello

Sunday, July 26 at 2:30 pm

***Canticle III: Still Falls the Rain, Op. 55* (1954)**

Benjamin Britten

Born November 22, 1913, Lowestoft, England • Died December 4, 1976, Aldeburgh, England

Duration: approx. 12 minutes

Composed in November 1954 in memory of the young Australian pianist Noel Mewton-Wood, this canticle sets a wartime poem by Edith Sitwell that reads, beneath its title referencing the Blitz, as an allegory of Christ's Passion. Because Sitwell's verse resists conventional meter, Britten declaims the text in free recitative, building to a moment of raw *sprechgesang* where the poem quotes Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Between each vocal statement, horn and piano weave interludes based on a theme and six variations, music written for the legendary hornist Dennis Brain, who gave the premiere alongside Britten and Peter Pears.

Participants: Eric Finbarr Carey, tenor; Carys Sutherland, horn; Lydia Brown, piano

Piano Trio in G Major, K. 564 (1788)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria • Died December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

Duration: approx. 14 minutes

Written in October 1788, during a summer and fall that also produced Mozart's final three symphonies, this trio was his last contribution to the genre and shares its warmth and geniality with much of that late, prolific stretch. The piano leads throughout, introducing each theme before the strings echo and expand upon it, prompting some to wonder whether the work began life as a piano sonata. Whatever its origins, the trio unfolds with an affable opening Allegro, a gently songful set of variations, and a spirited closing Allegretto that is pure Mozart.

Participants: *Solomon Ge, piano; Clara Neubauer, violin; Jay Campbell, cello*

Quintet, Op. 39 (1924)

Sergei Prokofiev

Born April 23, 1891, Sontsivka, Russian Empire • Died March 5, 1953, Moscow, Soviet Union

Duration: approx. 21 minutes

Written in Paris for a traveling dance troupe's production about circus life, this quintet began as ballet music before Prokofiev discovered the choreography was too difficult for the dancers and repurposed the score as a standalone concert work. Scored for the unusual pairing of oboe, clarinet, violin, viola, and double bass, the six-movement suite retains its circus-inspired energy: clashing harmonies, irregular rhythms, and grotesque, sharply etched character sketches abound. It remains one of Prokofiev's most technically demanding scores, prized by chamber musicians for its acrobatic wit.

Participants: *Alexander Mayer, oboe; Jonathan Leibovitz, clarinet; Joseph Lin, violin; Jonathan Chu, viola; Tobias Vigneau, double bass*

String Quartet No. 1 in D Major, Op. 25 (1941)

Benjamin Britten

Duration: approx. 26 minutes

Commissioned in 1941 by the American patroness Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, who had already commissioned quartets from Bartók and Schoenberg, this work was composed in a garden shed in Escondido, California, where Britten worked outdoors so as not to hear his hosts rehearsing. The opening movement juxtaposes an ethereal, high-lying texture with a vigorous contrasting tempo, an idea Britten borrowed from Beethoven's Op. 130 quartet. A driving scherzo-march, a spacious slow movement anticipating the moonlit atmosphere of *Peter Grimes*, and an exuberant finale complete a work Britten himself called his best piece to date.

Participants: *Tiffany Chang, violin; Masha Lakisova, violin; Hsin-Yun Huang, viola; Dilshod Narzillaev, cello*
