

# SCHAROUN ENSEMBLE



**MONDAY, MARCH 18, 7:30 PM**  
**MOESER AUDITORIUM, HILL HALL**

**PRESENTING SPONSOR**

*The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust*

**PERFORMANCE BENEFACTORS**

*Susan and James Moeser*



## PROGRAM

**MOZART** Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K.581  
(1756-1791)  
I. Allegro  
II. Larghetto  
III. Menuetto  
IV. Allegretto con variazioni

**SEAN SHEPHERD** *Octet* (2008)\*  
(b. 1979)  
I. And sometimes the sea  
poured brilliant iris on the  
glistening blue  
II. A too-fluent green suggested  
malice  
III. Sovereign clouds came  
clustering  
IV. The perplexed machine

*\*The four movements are  
played without pause.*

## INTERMISSION

**SCHUBERT** *Octet in F Major, D.803*  
(1797-1828)  
I. Adagio – Allegro – Più allegro  
II. Adagio  
III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace  
IV. Andante - Un poco più mosso  
– Più lento  
V. Menuetto: Allegretto  
VI. Andante molto – Allegro  
– Andante molto – Allegro  
molto

## SCHAROUN ENSEMBLE

**Micha Afkham**, Viola  
**Alexander Bader**, Clarinet  
**Claudio Bohorquez**, Cello  
**Wolfram Brandl**, Violin  
**Christophe Horák**, Violin  
**Kristian Katzenberger**, Horn  
**Peter Riegelbauer**, Double Bass  
**Rachel Schmidt**, Violin  
**Markus Weidmann**, Bassoon



**F** **OUNDED IN 1983** by members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Scharoun Ensemble is one of Germany’s leading chamber music organizations, with a repertoire encompassing music from the Baroque period to the present. The ensemble has been inspiring audiences for more than a quarter of a century with innovative programming and spirited interpretations. This is their first performance at Carolina Performing Arts.

The Scharoun Ensemble was named after the architect Hans Scharoun (1893-1972), who built the Berlin Philharmonie, where the group resides. The ensemble’s permanent core is a classical octet (clarinet, bassoon, horn, two violins, viola, cello and double bass), all but two of whom are members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

Its artistic focus bridges the gap between tradition and the modern—premiering works by contemporary composers such as Gyorgy Ligeti, Hans Werner Henze, and Pierre Boulez, and interpreting works from the past. Among the cornerstones of its repertoire are Schubert’s *Octet*, D.803, which the ensemble will perform at Hill Hall.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K.581

Shortly after moving to Vienna in 1781, Mozart met clarinetist Anton Stadler at a gathering at the home of Countess Wilhelmine Thun. The two became fast friends and frequent musical collaborators. They played together regularly and Stadler accompanied Mozart to Prague in 1787 and 1791. Mozart also featured him on basset horn for

music for Freemason meetings and on clarinet in his more public-facing compositions.

In Mozart’s time, the clarinet was still somewhat of a work in progress. The earliest version of the instrument dated back to the beginning of the eighteenth century and featured a forceful upper register and a weak lower range. Various technical developments through the middle of the century (the addition of keys, changes in the construction of the mouthpiece) opened up the middle and lower ranges, and the instrument gradually found its way into the orchestra. The instrument was still tricky to play and a bit unstable—many composers used it primarily for special effects, taking advantage of the brasher side of its character. It wasn’t until the middle of the nineteenth century that the instrument evolved to what would now be considered its modern form.

Anton Stadler played an important role in this continued evolution, working with instrument maker Theodor Lotz to develop the basset clarinet in 1787. This instrument added four keys to the standard clarinet, extending its range down a third from E to C. Mozart loved the sound and expressive possibilities of this instrument, featuring it in this quintet from 1789, the clarinet concerto of 1791 (his last completed work), and in sections of his operas *Così fan tutte* and *La clemenza di Tito*. In all those works, Mozart recognized the lyrical possibilities of the clarinet, which he considered closest to the human voice. Consequently, he often gave it long, flowing melodies or graceful obbligatos.

The quintet, written in the summer of 1789 for a gathering of Vienna’s Society of Musicians, was originally performed with Stadler on clarinet and Mozart on viola. The clarinet spends much of its time moving gently through delicately winding lines, combining with the string quartet to create warm, capacious structures throughout. The ringing, woody tone of the clarinet lends everything a melancholy, nostalgic air, even turning the stately Minuet into a wistful remembrance of a dance long-since passed.

### SEAN SHEPHERD

#### Octet

“An exciting composer of the new American generation” (*New York Times*), Sean Shepherd has earned wide acclaim and commissions from major ensembles and performers across the US and Europe. In 2012, the New York Philharmonic named Shepherd their inaugural Kravis Emerging Composer. Previously, he served as the Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow at the Cleveland Orchestra and composer-in-residence of the Reno Philharmonic. About his *Octet*, composed in 2008 for the Scharoun Ensemble, the thirty-nine-year-old Shepherd wrote:

“The titles of my *Octet* are taken from the lines of a poem by Wallace Stevens: ‘Sea surface full of clouds.’ While writing the piece at the American Academy in Berlin on the Wannsee, I told my fellow Fellows that I had a feeling that the piece I was writing had something to do with the color blue, and we started talking poetry. Ellen Levy and Ken Gross, both brilliant literary scholars, sent me running toward the water and the

sky in all great directions, yet once I found these words, I kept returning to them. For each movement, I found the title at a different point of completion. Some were completely finished, some in the middle, and some started some musical possibilities for me. As titles go, these are not meant to provide anything that might be taken literally; a vague impression may, in the end, reveal more.”

### FRANZ SCHUBERT

#### Octet in F Major, D.803

“I seem once again to have composed two operas for nothing,” Schubert complained in a letter to his friend Leopold Kupelweiser in March 1824. The twenty-seven-year-old composer wanted nothing more than to break into the opera world, but he could find no opera house willing to present his works. He found solace from that profound disappointment by pouring his energy almost exclusively into instrumental music: two string quartets (No. 13, “Rosamunde” and No. 14, “Death and the Maiden”), the Arpeggione Sonata, assorted piano works, and his *Octet*. In the letter to Kupelweiser, Schubert proclaimed that he planned to use those works to “pave my way towards a grand symphony.”

More than any other work from this period, the *Octet* seems to contain the ambitions of both a symphonist and an opera composer. The piece was commissioned by Count Ferdinand Troyer, a talented amateur clarinetist who wanted a piece for clarinet, possibly to pair with Beethoven’s *Septet* from 1799. The *Septet*—scored for the unusual ensemble of clarinet, horn,

bassoon, violin, viola, cello, and bass—remained incredibly popular, and Schubert eagerly built off of Beethoven’s model, mimicking its six-movement form and adding an additional violin to fill out the ensemble. Schubert also stays true to the mood and manners of Beethoven’s work. The piece is almost deliriously sunny, bursting with unabashedly cheerful themes and a formal backbone out of the Classical era.

Schubert put the large chamber ensemble to full use, writing thick textures that wouldn’t feel out of place in a piece for orchestra, as in the rollicking full-group writing in the third movement, or the stately dances of the fifth. At the same time, he also pushes the ensemble in unexpected directions, dividing and subdividing them in inventive ways. In the second movement, for instance, what at first appears to be a song for clarinet and accompaniment quickly becomes a much more complicated dialogue, with melodies and countermelodies pinging around the ensemble. The final movement, meanwhile, begins with a turn to the opera house: ominous tremolos in the low strings and bombastic chords in the rest of the ensemble. While the remainder of the movement is a stately march, Schubert occasionally draws the music to an unexpected halt, a reminder of an earlier, unresolved sense of foreboding. It also suggests the continued presence of the opera in Schubert’s mind, even as he sought to move on from it. ■

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*Dan Ruccia is a Durham-based composer, writer, and graphic designer.*