

## Decisions, Decisions...

*A Morrison Chamber Music Center post  
from Artistic Director Richard Festinger*



Programming the Morrison Artists Series is a lot like being the proverbial kid in a candy store, my allowance already spent twenty times over in my mind as I look wide-eyed at display cases filled with the most varied and extravagant indulgences. With the scores of top echelon chamber ensembles touring the globe today, how do I settle on a well chosen few to grace the McKenna Theater stage on the half dozen concerts we present each season? The two main ingredients here are not sugar and chocolate, but artistry and variety.

As for artistry, I'm simply looking for the best in the world. Variety is tricky. It takes in both varied types of ensembles and a varied range of repertoire including - in addition to major works from the classical and romantic eras - important under-represented works and styles, and music from the pens of notable living composers.

Many great works of chamber music are rarely heard because their unusual instrumentation is too far from today's standard ensemble types; so I keep my eyes open for opportunities to present something out of the ordinary. In past seasons I've presented woodwind, brass and vocal ensembles, string quartets, piano trios, and ensembles that mix instrument different families, and the resulting variety has been glorious. So what about the coming season's offerings?



The anchor of the 2014-15 Morrison Artists Series is Nordic Voices, a six-voice a cappella group from Oslo. When I heard them I knew I had to present them, and was able to get in on their February 2015 U.S. tour. Their dazzling program will span 500 years from Janequin and Marenzio to living Norwegian composers. I'm most excited to hear three of György Ligeti's Nonsense Madrigals, one a setting of the Lobster Quadrille from Alice in Wonderland.

Windscape, appearing on the series in November, is honestly the best wind quintet I've ever heard. Their high energy precision playing and unsurpassed artistry should not be missed. These remarkable musicians variously perform with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and other great ensembles. You may remember hornist David Jolley from his appearance on the series with Trio Valtorna in April 2012.



There's great chamber music for voice and instruments that's rarely heard because it was composed for non-standard ensembles; but we'll hear some real gems in March 2015 when the preeminent American soprano Lucy Shelton will be our special guest, joining the stellar Lysander Piano Trio in an unusual program featuring music of Beethoven, Dvořák, Schubert, Shostakovich and Ives.



The San Francisco Bay Area is alive with chamber music, and our December concert will be a special showcase event featuring one of the very best of our region's own ensembles, the four hand piano duet Zofu. Eva-Maria Zimmerman and Keisuke Nakagoshi are extraordinary artists at the keyboard, and the program will include the world premiere of a new work by Pulitzer Prize winning composer William Bolcom, who you may recognize as the composer of the celebrated opera, A View from the Bridge, based on the Arthur Miller play.

That brings us to the string quartets! Our season opens with the Alexander String Quartet, our quartet in residence, performing Kodaly's seldom heard second quartet and Beethoven's Grosse Fuge among other works. And the season will close in May with a quartet uniquely special to us, the Afiara Quartet, whose meteoric career was launched during their years as fellowship quartet in residence at SF State. To top it all off, the peerless Juilliard String Quartet returns in April 2015 with the excitement of their 2013 performance and the standing room crowd that turned out to hear them still a vivid memory around here.



That's a bit of what went into designing the 2014-15 Morrison Artists Series. You can find full details on our website, <http://morrison.sfsu.edu>. I look forward to seeing you when the season opens on September 28.