



EMERSON STRING QUARTET

Acclaimed for its insightful performances, dynamic artistry and technical mastery, the Emerson String Quartet has amassed an impressive list of achievements: a brilliant series of recordings exclusively documented by Deutsche Grammophon since 1987; eight Grammy Awards including two for "Best Classical Album;" an unprecedented honor for a chamber music group; three Gramophone Magazine Awards and performances of the complete cycles of Beethoven, Bartók and Shostakovich quartets in major concert halls throughout the world. The ensemble is lauded globally as a string quartet that approaches both classical and contemporary repertoire with equal mastery and enthusiasm. For three decades, the group has collaborated with such artists as Emanuel Ax, Misha Dichter, Leon Fleisher, the Guarneri String Quartet, Thomas Hampson, Lynn Harrell, Barbara Bonney, Barbara Hendricks, the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, Paul McCartney, Menahem Pressler, Mstislav Rostropovich, David Shifrin, Richard Stoltzman and the late Isaac Stern and Oscar Shumsky.

In 2006-2007 the quartet celebrates its 30th Anniversary Season with an eight concert Perspectives Series titled Beethoven In Context that will be held in Carnegie Hall's historic main venue, Isaac Stern Auditorium. The series juxtaposes Beethoven's quartet repertoire with notable compositions spanning three centuries. For this series, Carnegie Hall has commissioned composer Kaija Saariaho to write a quartet for the group in honor of the project and the 30th Anniversary. The Emerson celebrates 20 years of exclusivity with Deutsche Grammophon with the release of an all-Brahms disc comprising the three Brahms Quartets and the Piano Quintet with Leon Fleisher. Additional performances of note are a Shostakovich cycle at Washington's Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and an extensive European tour including concerts in London, Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Paris and complete Beethoven cycles in Valencia and Badenweiler. The quartet continues its residency at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, now in its 27th sold-out season. In the fall of 2002, the Emerson joined Stony Brook University as quartet-in-residence, coaching chamber music, giving master classes and providing instrumental instruction. The ensemble conducted its first International Chamber Music Festivals at Stony Brook in June 2004 and 2006 with plans for a third Festival in 2009. In addition to these duties the group performs several concerts during the year at Stony Brook's Staller Center for the Arts, and continues its educational affiliation with Carnegie Hall. This season, the quartet will offer its third Professional Training Workshop at Carnegie's Weill Music Institute. In 2000, the Emerson was named 'Ensemble of the Year' by Musical America, and in March 2004, the quartet

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became the 18th recipient of the Avery Fisher Prize - another first for a chamber ensemble.

Throughout its history, the Emerson String Quartet has garnered an international reputation for groundbreaking chamber music projects and correlated recordings for Deutsche Grammophon. In 1988, the Quartet attracted national attention with the presentation of the six Bartók quartets in a single evening for its Carnegie Hall debut. The Emerson's subsequent release of the cycle received the 1989 Grammy Awards for "Best Classical Album" and "Best Chamber Music Performance" and Gramophone Magazine's 1989 "Record of the Year Award" - the first time in the history of each award that a chamber music ensemble had ever received the top prize.

In March 1997, the Quartet released a seven-disc set of the complete Beethoven quartets and organized a series of performances over two seasons at New York's Lincoln Center entitled "Beethoven and the Twentieth Century," a total of eight concerts that paired two Beethoven quartets with a twentieth-century composition. Initial reviews of this series were so strong that the remaining performances were completely sold out, and the recording earned a Grammy Award for "Best Chamber Music Album."

In 2000, the Emerson performed the complete Shostakovich quartets in a critically acclaimed five-concert series presented at New York's Alice Tully Hall, as well as at Wigmore Hall and the Barbican Centre in London. The series culminated with *The Noise of Time*, a theatrical presentation directed by Simon McBurney (*Street of Crocodiles*, *The Chairs*) featuring the Quartet and *Complicité*. The project explored the haunted life of Dmitri Shostakovich through his 15th String Quartet. Blending film, choreography, taped readings and live music, the multimedia work captured the essence of this composer and his music. The theatrical nature of Shostakovich's music and its powerful effect on audiences led the Emerson to record the Shostakovich Quartets live during three summers of performances at the Aspen Music Festival. Meticulous editing eliminated virtually all background noise, and the recording on the Deutsche Grammophon label has been praised for the intensity and energy of its performances. The disc won the 2000 Grammy Awards for "Best Classical Album" and "Best Chamber Music Performance" and Gramophone Magazine's 2000 "Record of the Year" Award for "Best Chamber Music Performance." Additional projects of note include the 2001 US premiere performances of Wolfgang Rihm's *Dithyrambe* for Quartet and Orchestra with Christoph von Dohnanyi and the Cleveland Orchestra in Severance Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall and New York's Carnegie Hall. Through these theatrical and orchestral experiences, the quartet became intrigued with the idea of standing while performing and began to experiment with this style in chamber music appearances.

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The two violinists and the violist of the Emerson now stand for all performances; the cellist plays on a small podium.

Additional discs on the Deutsche Grammophon label include the recent Grammy Award winning release *Intimate Voices*, a recording of Grieg, Nielsen and Sibelius string quartets, and the complete Mendelssohn string quartets and octet, which received 2005 Grammy awards for "Best Chamber Music Performance" and "Best Engineered Album, Classical." The Emerson Quartet has also recorded Haydn's Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross, Bach's Art of Fugue, The Haydn Project (a selection of seven quartets from various periods of Haydn's career) and The Emerson Encores, preceded by interpretations of quartets by Schumann, Brahms, Dvorák, Smetana, Tchaikovsky, Borodin and Prokofiev, the set of six quartets Mozart dedicated to Haydn, the Schubert Cello Quintet with Mstislav Rostropovich, the Schumann Piano Quintet and Quartet with Menahem Pressler, the Grammy-nominated Dvorák Piano Quintet and Quartet with Pressler, and the Grammy-nominated complete string works of Anton Webern and Samuel Barber's Dover Beach with baritone Thomas Hampson. In 1994, the Emerson won its third Grammy Award for "Best Chamber Music Recording" with a disc of American Originals - the quartets of Ives and Barber.

Dedicated to the performance of classical repertoire, the Emerson String Quartet also has a strong commitment to the commissioning and performance of 20th- and 21st-century music. Important commissions and premieres include compositions by Nicholas Maw (2006), Andre Prévin (2003), Joan Tower (2003), Ellen Taaffe Zwillich (1998), Edgar Meyer (1995), Ned Rorem (1995), Paul Epstein (1994), Wolfgang Rihm (1993), Richard Wernick (1991), Richard Danielpour (1988), John Harbison (1987), Gunther Schuller (1986), George Tsontakis (1984), Maurice Wright (1983), Ronald Caltabiano (1981) and Mario Davidovsky (1979).

Formed in the bicentennial year of the United States, the Emerson String Quartet took its name from the great American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. Violinists Eugene Drucker and Philip Setzer alternate in the first chair position and are joined by violist Lawrence Dutton and cellist David Finckel. The Quartet has performed numerous benefit concerts for causes ranging from nuclear disarmament to the fight against AIDS, world hunger and children's diseases. The Quartet members were honored by the Governor of Connecticut for their outstanding cultural contributions to the state, and in 1994 received the University Medal for Distinguished Service from the University of Hartford, where they were quartet-in-residence for two decades until 2002. In 1995, each member was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by Middlebury College in Vermont. They have also received a Smithsonian Award from the Smithsonian Institution. In 2006, the quartet received an honorary doctorate from Wooster College, where it has performed frequently.

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The Emerson String Quartet has been featured in The New York Times Magazine, USA Today, Elle, Bon Appetit, Gramophone, The Strad, and Strings. Television appearances include PBS's NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, WNET's City Arts, WLIW's Metroguide, and A&E's Biography of Beethoven and Breakfast with the Arts. The ensemble has been the subject of two award-winning films: the nationally televised WETA-TV production In Residence at the Renwick (Emmy Award for Excellence, 1983) and Making Music: The Emerson String Quartet (First Place for Music, National Education Film Festival, 1985). To commemorate its 25th-anniversary season, the Quartet compiled a commemorative book entitled Converging Lines. Written in the members' own words, the book contains never-before-published text, graphics and photos from the Emerson's private archives. The Quartet is based in New York City.

"America's greatest quartet." -Time Magazine

"The Emerson has the traditional string-quartet virtues; each player is a strongly characterized individual, but the ensemble is temperamentally as well as sonically in balance. The four minds play upon each other, and upon the work, in perfect harmony; the players are in tune in all senses of the phrase."
-The New Yorker

"The Emerson give us playing of exceptional technical accomplishment and an unusually wide expressive range. They continually offer new insights into some endlessly enthralling music. Do hear them."
-Gramophone