



OMER QUARTET



Photo: Matt Dine

THE NEW YORK TIMES:

“These four musicians certainly rose to the occasion (New York debut at Merkin Hall). They opened with a poised, mature and ebullient account of Haydn, gave a glowing, vividly dramatic performance of Debussy, and brought out the punchy energy of Chris Rogerson’s String Quartet. To end, the intrepid players tore through the contrapuntal tangles of Beethoven’s Grosse Fuge, a fearless rendering of this astonishing piece.”

SAN DIEGO UNION TRIBUNE:

“The Omer Quartet played as if the ink were still wet on the page. It made it seem as if Haydn was not some bust on the piano, but a living, breathing composer. This was an invigorating interpretation, played with a sense of discovery and adventure, but also with considerable finesse.”

OBERON’S GROVE (New York):

“A first-rate ensemble of young artists, the Omer Quartet shone delightfully. It was music-making at its finest.”

artsBHAM (Birmingham, AL):

“The quartet’s vividly executed program was an indicator of the energy and enthusiasm that has garnered widespread attention for them. It was a compelling performance, and convincing evidence that the Omer Quartet is capable of joining the upper echelon of string quartets.”

First Prize, 2017 Young Concert Artists International Auditions

Peter Jay Sharp Debut Concert Prize • Buffalo Chamber Music Society Prize • Hayden’s Ferry Chamber Music Series Prize
Tri-Noon Recitals Prize (New York) • Tryon Concert Association Prize • Tarisio Trust Young Artists Grant
Top Prize, 2017 Premio Paolo Borciani Competition (Italy) • Top Prize, 2017 Trondheim International Competition (Norway)
Grand Prize and Gold Medal, 2013 Fishoff National Chamber Music Competition
Doctoral Fellowship String Quartet in Residence, University of Maryland

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The New York Times

The Week in Classical Music

Dec. 14, 2018

Our list of our favorite albums of the year and the New York debut of a young string quartet were among the highlights.



Last year was a big one for the Omer Quartet. The group took second prize in the Trondheim Competition in Norway and [first prize in the auditions held by Young Concert Artists](#), which presented the Omer in its New York debut at Merkin Concert Hall this week. These four musicians, who came together at the Cleveland Institute of Music, certainly rose to the occasion. They opened with a poised, mature and ebullient account of Haydn's String Quartet in C (Op. 20, No. 2); gave a glowing, vividly dramatic performance of Debussy's String Quartet in G minor; and brought out the punchy energy of Chris Rogerson's String Quartet No. 1, written in 2009, when its composer was just 20. To end, the intrepid players (Mason Yu and Erica Tursi, violins; Jinsun Hong, viola; Alex Cox, cello) tore through the contrapuntal tangles of Beethoven's Grosse Fuge, a fearless rendering of this astonishing piece. You can see them on this 2017 video giving an arresting performance of Bartók's Third String Quartet, my favorite of that composer's six quartets. *ANTHONY TOMMASINI*

The Omer Quartet @ Merkin Hall



Above: The Omer Quartet

New York, NY - Tuesday December 11th, 2018 - **Young Concert Artists** presenting The Omer Quartet at Merkin Hall. **These young players had made an excellent impression** in a 'calling card' performance, playing Piazzolla with accordionist Hanzhi Wang at her YCA debut concert at Zankel Hall in October. **Their program tonight was expertly planned: book-ended by works of the masters of the string quartet genre (Haydn and Beethoven), with some delicious Debussy and a highly enjoyable piece by Chris Rogerson (who was a YCA Composer-in-Residence from 2010 to 2012), the Omer Quartet scored a genuine triumph.**

Haydn's *Quartet No. 2/Op. 20 C-Major*, from 1772, was an ideal way to open the evening, its light and bustling start later bringing on big swirling motifs. **The Omers weave lovely subtleties into the music**, with tiny pauses giving a touch of suspense. A minor-key, tempestuous mid-section draws some fiery playing, which turns wistful. A soft glow infuses the return to major, with a gentle end.

The *Capriccio: Adagio* starts with the players in unison, finessed with etched-in trills. Throughout this, and the ensuing *Minuetto*, the Omers' integrated harmonies and perfectly-judged tempi gave us **music-making at its finest**. The Haydn closes with a sprightly fugue that leads to a final burst of energy.

Claude Debussy's *String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10*, is a coloristic treasure trove; it veers from darkish and subtle to fast and furious in the opening *Animé et très décidé*. The music is becalmed before rising to a dramatic end.

In the ensuing *Assez vif et bien rythmé*, gentle plucking supports a dance for the viola, played by Jinsun Hong. Mason Yu's violin and Alex Cox's cello dance in turn, with more gentle *pizzicati* moving on to a delicate finish.

The *Andantino, doucement espressif*, is the heart of the matter. Second violinist Erica Tursi passes a pensive theme over to Ms. Hong's viola. Then Mr. Yu commences a haunting violin solo over dense, perfumed harmonies. Mr. Cox's cello is heard in a yearning passage; Ms. Hong's viola has another melody, with the other voices commenting. Ms. Tursi's violin gets dreamy. As passion rises, Mr. Yu's violin soars onto silken heights. The music turns wonderfully sensuous.



A deep cello prelude opens the concluding *Très modéré - Très mouvementé*, which soon becomes enlivened. Swerving from lyrical to animated, with a rising rhythmic acceleration, to an exultant ending.

In the Debussy, we have been able to savour the artists of the Omer Quartet as individual voices. Taking the lead, Mason Yu displays astonishing intensity and power whilst at all times maintaining a gorgeous sheen on his tone.

Composer Chris Rogerson (left) charmingly spoke of how humbled he felt to be featured on a program alongside Haydn, Debussy, and Beethoven; Mr. Rogerson described his own *String Quartet No. 1* as "modest." I found it to be thoroughly engaging and engrossing.

I hear an awful lot of 'new' (or recent) music, and I have to admit that, while much of it shows astute craftsmanship and is sometimes pleasing in a quirky way, very little

of it leaves a lasting impression or makes me want to hear it again. Mr. Rogerson's string quartet is thus a very pleasing discovery.

The music clocks in at twelve minutes, and left me wishing there had been a couple more movements. Such as Mr. Rogerson has given us, each of the three has a title: **DUEL**, **HYMN**, and **DANCE**; the music does what the titles say.

Slashing motifs and a pulsing cello mark the start of **DUEL**. It's brisk and driven. There's a violin solo with just a hint of jazz; dynamics are very much in play as the swordsmen feint and parry. There's a relentless energy, whether loud or soft: an ever-forward impetus. It ends suddenly.

HYMN is gorgeous...*gorgeous*, I tell you. The harmonies are achingly beautiful as they bend and shift thru slow modulations. The second violin, cello, and first violin each sing forth over blendings of lustrous colours. The tempo increases somewhat; the violin heads heavenward. Superb playing made it all the more inspiring.

DANCE springs up on a 3-note motif; the energy calms to some poignant harmonies over deep cello. It's over all too soon. It seemed to me that the Rogerson *String Quartet #1* is ready-made to be a ballet. I'm sending news of it on to Claudia Schreier.

Igor Stravinsky described **Beethoven's Grosse Fuge, Op. 133**, as "...an absolutely contemporary piece of music that will be contemporary forever..." and thus it seemed this evening: fresh, daring, ahead of its time. Originally conceived as the finale for his Quartet #13, the composer was persuaded by his publisher that the music was too off-putting and he traded it out for something more conventional, retaining the *Grosse Fuge* as a stand-alone piece.

The Omer Quartet did a fabulous job with it, relishing all the weirdness and playing like gods and goddesses. The audience was vigorously receptive, calling for two encores. Cellist Alex Cox announced the first - a "very short" Kurtag piece, slow and mysterious, that ended abruptly just as we were starting to savour it. And then a Haydn *Vivace*, full of comfort and joy.

I'll look forward to my next encounter with The Omer Quartet.

~ Oberon

December 12, 2018 https://oberon481.typepad.com/oberons_grove/

CONCERT REVIEW | OMER QUARTET

MUSIC | NOVEMBER 16, 2018 | BY MICHAEL HUEBNER



Omer Quartet: Alex Cox, cellist; Erica Tursi, violinist; Jinsun Hong, violist; Mason Yu, violinist

Entering **ArtPlay** Thursday night, it was hard not to time-travel to the salon concerts that characterized Biedermeier Vienna in the 19th century. A distinctive spire, ionic columns and ornamental railings adorn the exterior of the Victorian mansion on the edge of the UAB campus. Inside, a glass chandelier, high ceilings and restored woodwork provide a cozy backdrop to chamber music.

Converted to an arts education facility that opened in 2011, ArtPlay hosts a Parlor Series, which features young, up-and-coming talent. On Thursday, the **Omer Quartet**, international prizewinners and residency recipients now in residence at the **University of Maryland**, performed music by Haydn, Debussy, **Chris Rogerson** and Beethoven. **The program was an indicator of the energy and enthusiasm that has garnered widespread attention for them.**

Haydn's String Quartet in C major, Op. 20, No. 2 **highlighted the quartet's lyric sensibilities**, especially in solos by cellist Alex Cox and first violinist Mason Yu. The final "Fuga" movement, **played with furious abandon**, set the stage for Beethoven's "Grosse Fuge," which closed the concert.

Debussy's String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10, **revealed an ensemble well-endowed with technical acumen and eager to show it. There were plenty of highlights to go around; in particular, engaging and nuanced deliveries** of the largely pizzicato second movement and "Très modéré" finale, and a beautifully rendered solo from violist Jinsun Hong in the Andantino.



Chris Rogerson

Chris Rogerson's energetic String Quartet No. 1 was given an inspired reading. The ostinato pizzicato in the opening "Duel" was reminiscent of the Debussy pizzicato movement heard previously, and led to a movement organized on a four-note theme that developed into a sweet, passionate "Hymn," and a richly animated "Dance."

Beethoven's "Grosse Fuge," Op. 133, a daunting work for listeners and performers alike, lucidly capture the composer's conflicting emotions. Once described as "fiendishly difficult to play," **its sudden character shifts from ebullient to lyrical to restless and beyond, were vividly executed. This was a compelling performance, and convincing evidence that the Omer Quartet is capable of joining the upper echelon of string quartets.**

Parlor Series continues March 7, 2019 with pianist Nathan Lee.

<http://www.artsbham.com/concert-review-omer-quartet/>



Omer String Quartet Opens Moore County Arts Council's Series

By William Thomas Walker Classical Voice of North Carolina October 15, 2018 - Southern Pines, NC:

Southern Pines' charming and intimate Sunrise Theater was well filled with music lovers for the opening program of the 2018-19 Classical Concert Series. Now beginning its 27th season, it has been under the aegis of the Moore County Arts Council in recent years. The organizers are savvy about lining up some of the finest new ensembles at the start of their careers. This concert featured the Omer String Quartet.

The Omer Quartet won first prize at the 2017 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, and they have been appointed Ernest Stiefel Quartet-in-Residence at Caramoor. The Omer Quartet consists of violinists Mason Yu and Erica Tursi, violist Jinsun Hong, and cellist Alex Cox.

From the rich solo notes of Cox's fine cello that opened Haydn's Quartet in C, Op. 20, No. 2, the Omer's intonation was superb, as was their close matching of playing style. The violins of Yu and Tursi blended immaculately. Besides her fine playing, the distinct beauty of Hong's Amati viola reproduction was a constant pleasure: it projected into the hall ideally at all dynamics. The Omer's approach to Haydn is as fine as any top ensemble active now or in the recent past.

A long delay due to a broken cello string aside, the Omer brought similar mastery to the very different sound-world of Debussy's Quartet in G minor, Op. 10. Their control of dynamics and their meticulous care in recreating Debussy's kaleidoscopic range of instrumental color and timbre was excellent. In the slow movement, marginally more deliberate than usual, their expressive choices were convincing.

Violinist Tursi introduced the Haydn and Debussy. The long hiatus of the broken string was not wasted, as Yu, Tursi, and Hong answered audience questions about themselves, their instruments, and the quartet's founding. Tursi then went ahead and gave the information about the last two works on the program.

Quartet No. 1 (2009), by Chris Rogerson (b.1988), is in three movements ("Duel," "Hymn," and "Dance") and lasts about twelve minutes. The composer has racked up an impressive array of awards and commissions. Praised for the "virtuosic exuberance" of his music by *The New York Times*, he is on the roster of the Young Concert Artists. He has recently been composer-in-residence with the Amarillo Symphony, among others.

What a pleasure to hear an imaginative, tonal new work of some substance and length! The ensemble brought plenty of drama to the opening movement, a relentless driving rhythm with a brief, gentle drop in dynamic. The slow movement, "Hymn," might take on a life of its own, excerpted like the very different Adagio from Samuel Barber's First Quartet. A meditative, spiritual atmosphere is created by long, sustained harmonics from the cello and viola with prayerful commentaries or, in turn, songs from the first violin and others. Without pause, the tempo quickens for the finale. The Omer tossed about quick, repeated rhythmic patterns and floated a brief lyrical episode before ending with a dramatic flourish.

The *Große Fugue* in B-flat, Op. 133, by Ludwig van Beethoven is the craggy, monumental piece originally planned to be the final movement of his Quartet in B-flat, Op. 130. The Quartet reined back *fff*, applied *ppp* widely, and slowed tempi for an individual but very satisfying interpretation.



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OMER QUARTET

Mason Yu and Erica Tursi, violins

Jinsun Hong, viola Alex Cox, cello

Distinctive among today's young string quartets, the **Omer Quartet** won First Prize in the 2017 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, and holds the Helen F. Whitaker Chamber Music Chair of YCA. It debuts this season in the Young Concert Artists Series at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and recently debuted in the Peter Jay Sharp Concert of YCA, with additional support from the Summis Auspiciis Fund, in New York at Merkin Concert Hall.

The New York Times raved, "These four musicians certainly rose to the occasion. They opened with a poised, mature and ebullient account of Haydn, gave a glowing, vividly dramatic performance of Debussy, and brought out the punchy energy of Chris Rogerson's String Quartet. To end, the intrepid players tore through the contrapuntal tangles of Beethoven's Grosse Fuge, a fearless rendering of this astonishing piece."

At the Young Concert Artists Auditions, the Omer Quartet received four special Performance Prizes: the Tri-I Noon Recitals Prize from New York's Rockefeller University, the Tryon (NC) Concert Association Prize, the Buffalo Chamber Music Society Prize, and the Hayden's Ferry Chamber Music Series Prize. It has also received Top Prize at the 2017 Premio Paolo Borciani Competition in Italy and Grand Prize and Gold Medal at the 2013 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition.

In addition to its New York and Washington, DC debuts, the Quartet performs this season for the Ellingwood Concert Series, Historic Portsmouth Chamber Music Series, Berea College, Music Mondays in New York City with clarinetist David Krakauer, Caramoor Center, St. Louis Concert Series, Port Washington Library, Brookhaven at Lexington, Fox Hill Village, Brooksby Village, Evergreen Museum and Library, Levine School of Music, St. Lawrence Emerging String Quartet Residency, and Chamber Music Abu Dhabi.

The Omer Quartet has performed with renowned artists Clive Greensmith, Eugene Drucker, Cho-Liang Lin, the Assad Brothers and YCA alumnus Borromeo String Quartet, and collaborated with composers including Sean Shepherd and Perry Goldstein. It served as Chamber Ensemble in Residence at the 2018 Bravo! Vail Music Festival, and has performed for the Princeton University Summer Chamber Concerts, Tannery Pond Concerts, the Honest Brook, Great Lakes Chamber, Caroga Lake and Yellow Barn Music Festivals, the McGill International String Quartet Academy, the Ravinia Steans Institute, and in the Perlman Music Program.

Committed to community engagement, the Quartet devotes time to creating original and interactive programs. With a grant by The Boston Foundation it performed in homeless shelters and drug rehabilitation centers in the area. It completed a fellowship with Music for Food to aid local hunger relief through a musician-led initiative directed by Kim Kashkashian, and a Taxisio Trust Young Artists Grant allowed it to continue this organization's mission by initiating a Music for Food concert series in the Washington, D.C. area.

Following study at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Omer Quartet completed a graduate residency at the New England Conservatory, where its members gave coachings and masterclasses and worked closely with Paul Katz, Donald Weilerstein, Kim Kashkashian, and Soovin Kim. The Quartet is currently the Doctoral Fellowship String Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Maryland, working with Katherine Murdock and David Salness, and the 2018-19 Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence at New York's Caramoor Center for Music and Arts.



OMER QUARTET

REPERTOIRE

THOMAS ADÈS	The Four Quarters, Op. 28
BARTOK	Quartet No. 1 Quartet, No. 3
BEETHOVEN	Quartet in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3 Quartet in F Major, Op. 59, No.1 Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2 Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132 Quartet in F Major, Op.135
DEBUSSY	Quartet in G minor, Op. 10
ZOSHA DI CASTRI	Quartet No. 1
GRIEG	Quartet No. 2 in F Major (unfinished)
HAYDN	Quartet No. 25 in C Major, Op. 20, No. 2 Quartet No. 40 in F Major, Op. 50, No. 5 Quartet No. 59 in G Minor, Op. 74, No. 3 (“Rider”) Quartet No. 64 in D Major, Op.76, No. 5 “Blossoming”
HOSOKAWA	
PIERRE JALBERT	Icefield Sonnets
JANACEK	Quartet no. 1 “Kreutzer Sonata”
KURTAG	Six Moments Musicaux
MENDELSSOHN	Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Op.13 Quartet No. 6 in F Minor, Op. 80
MOZART	Quartet No. 19 in C Major, K. 465 (“Dissonance”)
SCHUBERT	Quartettsatz
SCHUMANN	Quartet No. 1 in A minor
WEBERN	Bagatelles for String Quartet