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## Southwest String Quartet

Southwest Chamber Music Society

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S O U T H W E S T C H A M B E R M U S I C S O C I E T Y

**Southwest String Quartet:**

Peter Marsh and Susan Jensen (Violins), Jan Karlin (Viola) and Roger Lebow (Cello)  
Stuart Horn, Oboe



PROGRAM

*Phantasy, Op. 2*

**Benjamin Britten**  
(1913-1976)

*Celestial Mechanics for Oboe and String Quartet (1990)*

**Donald Crockett**  
(1951 b.)

I  
II

**INTERMISSION**

*String Quartet No. 15, Op. 144*

**Dmitri Shostakovich**  
(1906-1975)

Elegy  
Serenade  
Intermezzo  
Nocturne  
Funeral March  
Epilogue  
(Movements played without pause)

Please join the performers for a reception following the performance

Friday, November 18, 1994  
Sunday, November 20, 1994

Pasadena Presbyterian Church  
Chapman University

8:00 PM  
3:00 PM

## PROGRAM NOTES

Benjamin Britten and Dmitri Shostakovich are two of the most articulate exponents of moral conscience in twentieth century music. Britten was certainly one of the few Western composers with whom Shostakovich developed friendly relations, dedicating his extraordinary *Fourteenth Symphony for Soprano, Bass, Strings and Percussion* to Britten. That artistic commonalities exist between the homosexual Britten and the politically suppressed Shostakovich is no surprise. Their musical voices, from *Peter Grimes* and *Billy Budd* to *Katerina Ismailova* and *Stenka Razin*, speak directly to issues that, however intensely symbolic they might be, go beyond gay or political causes. Britten and Shostakovich are grounded in an Apollonian tradition of classicism, an amalgamated classicism that incorporated Mozart and Haydn, but also paradoxically represents the culmination of 19th century nationalism. Dowland and Purcell for the English Britten or Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky for the Russian Shostakovich cast significant shadows throughout either composer's music. The conservative nature of their harmonic choices do not represent a capricious search for the *Paradise Lost* of tonality nor a strident repudiation of the genuine harmonic and rhythmic innovations that swirled around their careers. Their art is concerned with a complicated debate: the fate and freedom of the individual in an age subsumed with suppression and totalitarianism.

The *Phantasy, Op. 2 for Oboe and Strings* by Benjamin Britten was written for Leon Goosens. In one movement, it is a bright and energetic composition, with a muted string march metaphorically leading the work on and off stage. Britten's lifelong characteristic of focusing on a protagonist is present in this early chamber work. The oboe soloist functions in an almost operatic role. Britten, who was a violist, exhibits a staggeringly high professional knowledge of orchestration - the work "sounds" from start to finish.

Jeff von der Schmidt

*Celestial Mechanics* - When the possibility of a commission for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's Mozart Festival materialized in early 1990, I was asked by Stephen Hartke, the orchestra's Composer-in-Residence at that time, which of Mozart's chamber works I would be interested in addressing in some way in my own work. I immediately thought of Mozart's *Oboe Quartet* and of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's extraordinary principal oboist, Allan Vogel. From the outset, Allan's input as a musician influenced the composition of the piece. Before I had written a note, I attended a rehearsal of the Mozart *Oboe Quartet* involving Allan and a trio of distinguished string players. Hearing the piece take shape and hearing the varied aspects of Allan's playing were truly inspiring, and were the springboards for *Celestial Mechanics*. Though you probably will not hear music of Mozart in a direct way, the spirit of the *Oboe Quartet* - and particularly of its slow movement - pervades the work. *Celestial Mechanics* is in two large movements, and is dedicated to Allan Vogel. It was completed in September 1990.

Donald Crockett

"I thought perhaps my experience could also be of some use to people younger than I. Perhaps they wouldn't have the horrible disillusionment that I had to face, and would go through life better prepared, more hardened, than I was. And perhaps their lives would be free of the bitterness that has colored my life gray." These words, attributed to Shostakovich by Solomon Volkov, represent an extreme internal existentialism. Without question Dostoevsky and Mussorgsky were an inherited

cultural mantle for Shostakovich. The *String Quartet No. 15 in E flat minor* became the end of the line for Shostakovich and his affinity for the string quartet medium. He had intended to write string quartets in every key, but fate ordained this somber minor keyed quartet to be the last. All the movements are marked *Adagio*, but not a trudging one if the composer's fast  $J=80$  is observed. The discourse is further animated by virtuosic cadenzas, early on in the *Intermezzo* and then again in the last movement. The work is rich, deep and dramatically a walk on ice. There are hints of past composers, especially Beethoven and Wagner, but the solemnity of acceptance becomes almost ritual. How astonished Shostakovich would be to know he prepared the way for the commercial recording success of slow moving music from other former-east-bloc composers.

Jeff von der Schmidt

**Donald Crockett** (b. 1951 in Pasadena, California) has been Composer-in-Residence with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra since 1991, and is also Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California. Commissions and performances of his music have come from such artists and ensembles as the Kronos Quartet, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Stanford String Quartet, Los Angeles Philharmonic, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, tenor Jonathan Mack and many others. *Celestial Mechanics* for oboe and string quartet, commissioned by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, took second prize in the 1991 Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards. Crockett has also received grants and prizes from BMI, the National Endowment for the Arts, Meet the Composer, the Aaron Copland Fund, the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities and the Burlington Northern Foundation. Most recently, he received the Goddard Lieberson Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Also active as a conductor of new music, Crockett has presented many national and regional premieres with the Contemporary Music Ensemble of the University of Southern California, and as a guest conductor with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Monday Evening Concerts, XTET, and the Green Umbrella series of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His music is published by MMB Music, St. Louis, and recorded on Pro Arte, Orion, Dominguez Digital and CRI.

**The Southwest Chamber Music Society**, founded in 1987, includes the *Southwest String Quartet*, *Southwest Early Music Consort*, *Southwest Wind Quintet*, as well as double bass, keyboards and percussion. The Society is Southern California's busiest chamber music ensemble, presenting concert series throughout the year in Pasadena, Orange County, Santa Monica, and The Huntington Library in San Marino. Recipient of a Chamber Music America Residency Grant, Southwest begins a three-year residency in 1994-1995 at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena for educational and community outreach activities. The ensemble has toured and been presented throughout California by the University of California, the Orange County Performing Arts Center, the Getty Center for the History of Arts and the Humanities, the San Francisco Symphony and the Ojai Festival, among others, and is regularly featured on the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department "Sundays at Four" radio broadcasts on KUSC-FM. Southwest has collaborated on educational and community outreach activities with the Southwest Museum in Highland Park, Newport Harbor Art Museum, Pasadena Library, Orange County Philharmonic Society and the Armory Center for the Arts. Music by Prokofiev and Poulenc is featured on Southwest's compact disc recording for Cambria Records.

*Many thanks to the Friends of  
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