University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

Sphinx Virtuosi

with

Catalyst Quartet

Sunday, September 30, 2012, 2 p.m.
University Auditorium

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Guardian
THE SPHINX VIRTUOSI
with CATALYST QUARTET
MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS

Program

Four Seasons in Buenos Aires
Astor Piazzolla

Ottono Porteno
Invierno Porteno
Primavera Porteno
Verano Porteno

Bryan Hernandez-Luch and Ade Williams, violins

Tenebrae, First Movement
Osvaldo Golijov

Catalyst Quartet

Strum
Jessie Montgomery

Catalyst Quartet

INTERMISSION

Lamentations
Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson

Gabriel Cabezas, cello

Suite for Strings
Heitor Villa-Lobos

I. Timide: Poco Andante
II. Mysterieuse: Andantino
III. Inquiete (Air de Ballet)

Concerto for Strings, Op. 33
Alberto Ginastera

Finale: Furioso

The national Sphinx Virtuosi Tour is made possible with the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from Art Works, the Metlife Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The Sphinx Virtuosi and Catalyst Quartet are exclusively represented in North America by California Artists Management (www.CalArtists.com)
Program Notes

Four Seasons in Buenos Aires
Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Astor Piazzolla’s Seasons in Buenos Aires have recently been attracting some of the greatest presenting venues around the world. The legendary figure behind Nuevo Tango, Piazzolla created something of “movement” in the music world, by transforming the sensual dance form into a beautiful hybrid of jazz, classical and traditional. Since the 1980’s, many of the world’s greatest artists have been incorporating Piazzolla’s music into their repertoire. Interestingly, Piazzolla composed the Four Seasons as separate works, one of which (Verano Porteno, or Summer) preceded the other three. Gidon Kremer, one of today’s most renowned violinists and champions of new music, commissioned Leonid Desyatnikov to adapt the works into a single series of concerti for solo violin with string orchestra, which could be, essentially, paired with the Vivaldi Seasons. This version pays a stirring homage to the great Vivaldi. With clear references to the Baroque master, both the direct quotations and more subtle echoes are masterfully woven into the tapestry of sultry tangos, expressed through the virtuosic façade of the violin.

Tenebrae, First Movement
Osvaldo Golijov (1960- )

Golijov’s Tenabre was composed in 2002. The composer was inspired to create this work as a reaction to two perspectives on the world: a violent occurrence in Israel and a contemplative experience with his son in New York’s new planetarium. Following is a poignant excerpt from the composer’s own notes to the piece:

“I wanted to write a piece that could be listened to from different perspectives. That is, if one chooses to listen to it ‘from afar,’ the music would probably offer a ‘beautiful’ surface but, from a metaphorically closer distance, one could hear that, beneath that surface, the music is full of pain. I lifted some of the haunting melismas from Couperin’s Troisieme Leçon de Tenebrae, using them as sources for loops, and wrote new interludes between them, always within a pulsating, vibrating, aerial texture. After finishing the composition, I realized that Tenebrae could be heard as the slow, quiet reading of an illuminated medieval manuscript in which the appearances of the voice singing the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet (from Yod to Nun, as in Couperin) signal the beginning of new chapters, leading to the ending section, built around a single, repeated word: Jerusalem.”

Strum
Jessie Montgomery (1982- )

Strum is the culminating result of several versions of a string quintet written by New York-based composer, Jessie Montgomery in 2006. It was originally written for the Providence String Quartet and guests of Community MusicWorks Players, then arranged for string quartet in 2008 with several small revisions. In 2012, the piece underwent its final revisions for the Catalyst Quartet in a performance celebrating the 15th Annual Sphinx Competition. Originally conceived for the formation of a cello quintet, the voicing is often spread wide over the ensemble, giving the music an expansive quality of sound. This version utilizes texture motives, layers of rhythmic or harmonic ostinati that string together to form a bed of sound for melodies to weave in and out. The strumming pizzicato serves as a texture motive and the primary driving rhythmic underpinning of the piece. Drawing on American folk idioms and the spirit of dance and movement, the piece has a kind of narrative that suggests an unwinding transformation from fleeting nostalgia to ecstatic celebration.
Lamentations
Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (1932-2004)

One of the greatest African-American composers, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson composed Lamentations, his suite for solo cello, in 1973 for cellist Ronald Lipscomb. One of the foremost musicologists of our time, Dominique Rene de Lerma, explains the subtitle Black/Folk Song Suite based on the composer’s own notes: “the common denominator of these tunes is the reflection and statement of a people’s crying out.” Throughout the four-movement work, Perkinson employs such contrasting elements as the fugue (borrowed from the Baroque era), pizzicato, as well as references to the Afro-American spiritual, Calvary. The energetic final movement heard today, Perpetual Motion, features a persistent pulse, with melody woven around that structure. Listen for the two middle open strings on the cello, C and D, as the composer builds the character of the piece surrounding this repetitive energy.

Suite for Strings
Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)

Heitor Villa-Lobos composed his Suite for Strings in 1912, scored for double string quartet. The work was premiered in Rio de Janeiro by Orquestra da Sociedade de Concertos Sinfônica, under Francisco Braga. This composition represents an example of a rare gem in the chamber music repertoire. All three movements are written in a language not terribly characteristic of the composer’s later style. The suite is an inspired example of late Romantic writing, comparable to Dvorak or Tchaikovsky. The movements are titled in French, using the female gender adjectives Timid (Timide), Mysterious (Mystérieuse) and Restless (Inquiète). The first two movements are incredibly lyrical, slow-paced, using sonorous harmonies through a very accessible language. The second movement branches out a bit more, using a more complex harmonic foundation to depict its mysterious character in action. The final movement is a true dance, suggestive of its subtitle, Air de Ballet.

Concerto for Strings, Op. 33
Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983)

Alberto Ginastera composed his String Quartet No. 2 in 1958. His Concerto per Corde, Op. 33 (Concerto for Strings) came seven years after, as an adaptation of the quartet for full string orchestra. The new first movement, Variazioni Per I Solisti, is really a raw-sounding and clearly challenging theme and variations, where soloists lead prominently in a complex dialogue with the orchestra. This is followed by Scherzo Fantastico: Presto, which leaves a listener with a sense of chaos, disorientation, a frantic chase, perhaps. The Adagio Angoscioso explores the concept of sound from a contemplative perspective, paying tribute to the past and incorporating traditional melodic elements. Today we hear the Finale Furioso: colorful, rhythmic, almost breathless. This movement showcases folk idioms, changing meters, hidden melodic ideas from preceding movements, all expressed through excellent writing for the string medium (much like Bartok, an inspiration behind much of Ginastera’s work). Get immersed in the ferocious energy of the unyielding rhythm and virtuosic brilliance of the sound.

Program notes by Afa Sadykhly Dworkin, artistic director and VP of programming, Sphinx Organization. Special thanks to Jessie Montgomery for her contributions in Strum and Star-burst.
About Sphinx Virtuosi

The Sphinx Virtuosi, formerly known as The Sphinx Chamber Orchestra, is a conductor-less ensemble of soloists, comprising top alumni of the national Sphinx Competition for young Black and Latino string players. This unique group first performed in New York’s Carnegie Hall in December 2004, earning rave reviews from *The New York Times*. Music critic Allan Kozinn described their performance as “first-rate in every way” and the ensemble “produced a more beautiful, precise and carefully shaped sound than some fully professional orchestras that come through Carnegie Hall in the course of the year.” The chamber orchestra has returned to Carnegie Hall annually since 2006, presenting outstanding programs to sold-out halls of more than 2,800, and earning continued praise from *The New York Times* for each of its performances.

The Sphinx Virtuosi also earned critical acclaim during its inaugural national tour, which included concerts at the University of Illinois’ Krannert Center, the Harris Theater in Chicago, Pennsylvania State University and other major performance venues. During its second annual tour, the SV performed in 13 venues across the country, increasing touring appearances by more than 50 percent in just a year. The press praised the ensemble’s performances for “technical prowess” and playing with “utmost sensitivity and intelligence to the musical detail, large and small.” In fall 2012, the Sphinx Virtuosi’s fifth national tour, the string orchestra performs at the New World Theatre in Miami, the Phillips Center at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Chicago’s Harris Theater, Luther College, Hancher at the University of Iowa and Denver’s Newman Center, among others.

Inspired by the Sphinx Organization’s overarching mission, Sphinx Virtuosi works to advance diversity in classical music while engaging young and new audiences through performances of varied repertoire. In addition to masterpieces by Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart and Tchaikovsky, this group has been a champion for the more seldom presented works by composers of color, including Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, George Walker, Michael Abels and Astor Piazzolla.

Members of the Sphinx Virtuosi have completed and continue to pursue their studies at the nation’s top music schools — Juilliard, Curtis, Eastman, Peabody, Harvard and the University of Michigan. Several members already hold professional orchestral positions with the Oregon, Grand Rapids and San Antonio Symphonies. Sphinx Virtuosi members have appeared as soloists with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland, Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras, among others, and roster members have been named Laureates of other prestigious international competitions, including the Queen Elizabeth and Yehudi Menuhin.
About Catalyst Quartet

Hailed by *The New York Times* at their Carnegie Hall debut as “invariably energetic and finely burnished … playing with earthy vigor,” the Catalyst Quartet is comprised of top Laureates and alumni of the internationally acclaimed Sphinx Competition for young Black and Latino string players. Inspired by music’s ability to transform, the Catalyst Quartet seeks to change the way that classical music is perceived through diverse programming for a wide range of audiences, advancing diversity in classical music and inspiring new and young audiences with dynamic performances of cutting-edge repertoire by a wide range of composers. Founded by the Sphinx Organization, the Catalyst Quartet combines a serious commitment to diversity and education with a passion for accessible contemporary works.

The quartet has held residencies both domestically and abroad, including South Africa, U.K. and Colombia, and serves as principal faculty at the Sphinx Performance Academy at Oberlin College and Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University. Featured in *The Strad and Strings Magazine*, as well as on Detroit Public Radio, The Catalyst Quartet’s first recordings will be released in 2012 on the White Pine label. The CQ maintains an active performing schedule and will lead the Sphinx Virtuosi during 2012 national tours.

Biographies

Gabriel Cabezas

Cellist Gabriel Cabezas was the Senior Division First Place Laureate of the 2012 Annual Sphinx Competition and performs as part of the Sphinx Professional Development Program. The 18-year old cellist has soloed with the Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Costa Rica’s National Symphony, Boston Pops, Rochester Philharmonic, New World Symphony, Florida Orchestra, Nashville Symphony, Chicago Civic Orchestra and Lake Forest Orchestra. Television appearances include performances with Yo-Yo Ma on *The Tavis Smiley Show* and *Good Morning America*, and with Béla Fleck in *From The Top — Carnegie Hall*. A zealous chamber musician, Cabezas has appeared at the Marlboro, Seattle and Aspen Music Festivals, Music at Menlo, *Symphony Center Presents Series*, *Bargemusic* and *ProMusica Series*, among others. He has received numerous awards and distinctions, including both the gold and bronze medals at the Fischoff Chamber Music Competition Junior Division. Recipient of an education grant by the Rachel Elizabeth Barton Foundation, Cabezas has supported outreach programs including Midori’s “Partners in Performance-Young Artists,” the Sphinx Organization and Costa Rica’s national SINEM education programs. He is the Dr. Bobby Ellen Kimbel Annual Fellow at the Curtis Institute of Music where he studies with Carter Brey.
Bryan Hernandez-Luch
Violinist Bryan Hernandez-Luch is a Utah native of Peruvian descent. He began his violin studies at age 6, and at 15 made his solo debut with the Utah Symphony Orchestra. Hailed by the press for his compelling performance with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at the 2003 Sphinx Competition, Bryan won first place in the senior division. As a Sphinx Laureate he has appeared with the symphony orchestras of Cleveland, Atlanta, New Jersey, Utah, Chautauqua, New World, Colorado, Nashville, Grand Rapids and Battle Creek, the Prince George Philharmonic and Canada’s National Arts Center Orchestra. He has been soloist with conductors Franz Welser-Möst, Robert Spano, Keith Lockhart, David Lockington, Arthur Fagan, David Cho and Thomas Wilkins. Bryan has toured extensively across the U.S., Japan and Korea as guest artist with the piano chamber ensemble, The 5 Browns. His arrangement for violinist Gil Shaham and The 5 Browns was recorded on the album, *Browns in Blue* (RCA Red Seal/Sony). A sought after studio musician, he has recorded soundtracks for major motion films, and has freelanced with Josh Groban, Sarah Brightman, Rod Stewart, Il Divo and other popular artists. Bryan is currently pursuing a master’s degree at The Juilliard School, studying with Joseph Lin, first violinist of the Juilliard String Quartet.

Adé Williams
Adé Williams, 15, is the first place laureate of the Junior Division of the 2012 Sphinx Competition, the Vivaldi Seasons Competition in Cambridge, England (2012) and several others competitions beginning in 2005. Her recent thrills include a 14-city tour with the Sphinx Virtuosi and international soloing in England, Switzerland and Bermuda. Adé’s orchestral debut with the Chicago Sinfonietta at age 6 launched a wonderful succession of such performances, including her forthcoming Italian debut in the summer of 2013. In 2004, Adé founded SugarStrings, a string trio of cousins known for exhilarating performances on WFMT, CNN/Essence, NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams, CSO/Milwaukee Symphony/Ravinia events and numerous civic and charitable events around the country. Adé is a scholarship student of Almita and Roland Vamos in the Music Institute of Chicago’s Academy program. She performs on a violin by Jan van Rooyen, 2008, after the “Comte de Villedes” Stradivarius, 1720, on generous loan from the Rachel Elizabeth Barton Foundation. She is a Bauder Fellow, Links Fellow and Nichols Scholarship recipient. She is a charter member of the Junior Division of the Chicago Music Association.