

## ARTIST NOTES (CONTINUED)

The Aizuri Quartet welcomes two new members this season, violist Brian Hong and cellist Caleb van der Swaagh. They will perform with several notable collaborators including Kim Kashkashian and Marcy Rosen at Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh at Chamber Music Concerts in Ashland, Oregon.

The Aizuri believes in an integrative approach to music-making, in which teaching, performing, writing, arranging, curation, and community engagement are all connected. In 2020 the ensemble launched its self-produced AizuriKids, a free online series of educational videos for children that uses the string quartet as a catalyst for creative learning and features themes such as astronomy, American history, and cooking.

Formed in 2012, the Aizuri Quartet draws its name from "aizuri-e," a style of predominantly blue Japanese woodblock printing that is noted for its vibrancy and incredible detail.

[www.aizuriquartet.com](http://www.aizuriquartet.com)

## PROGRAM NOTES

*Support for the program notes is generously provided by Roberta Viviano.*

### Ludwig van Beethoven

(BONN, 1770–VIENNA, 1827)

**Seven Variations on "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" from Mozart's *Magic Flute*, WoO 46 (1801)**

A decade after the 1791 Viennese premiere of *The Magic Flute*, Beethoven composed his variations on "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" (Men who Feel the Call of Love) for cello and piano. In the operatic duet Pamina consoles the bird catcher, Papageno, who worries that he will never marry. She predicts that his gentle heart and charming demeanor will enable him to woo a soulmate. Beethoven's biographers are quick to note that his involuntary bachelorhood was a disappointment that was excruciatingly painful for him.

Of course, the piece begins with a piano and cello duet as Beethoven introduces Mozart's tender folk song, but the variation set proceeds through some unexpected twists and turns with Beethoven's creation of variations that evoke anxiousness and sadness.

### George Walker

(WASHINGTON, D.C., 1922–MONTCLAIR, NJ, 2018)

**Sonata for Cello and Piano**

In 1996 George Walker became the first Black composer to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music for *Lilacs*, a setting of Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" for soprano and orchestra. Walker was born in Washington, D.C. and graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in 1945. He studied piano with Rudolf Serkin and composition with Rosario Scalero at Curtis and Nadia Boulanger in France. After returning to the United States, he was the first Black student to graduate with a doctoral degree in composition from the Eastman School of Music.

Walker composed the cello sonata in 1957, shortly after he received his doctorate. Seth Parker Woods had the opportunity to work on the piece with the composer in 2009, and writes that Walker "really understood how to write creatively for the instruments, while at the same time challenging the musicians and allowing them to be free and individualistic." Walker incorporates a variety of different styles, ranging from soaring lyrical melodies to blues to boogie-woogie, within traditional classical structures, namely a sonata, ternary, and rondo form. While Walker's lyrical gifts are rightfully lauded, the intricate rhythmic interplay between the piano and cello, difficult to execute and exciting to hear, is also a riveting attribute of his refined compositional technique.

### Arnold Schönberg

(VIENNA, 1874–LOS ANGELES, 1951)

**Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4 (Transfigured Night, 1899)**

Arnold Schönberg composed his string sextet in three weeks in September 1899 while vacationing in Payerbach with Alexander von Zemlinsky, his composition teacher and mentor, and Zemlinsky's sister, Mathilde, who would become Schönberg's wife in 1901. *Verklärte Nacht* was the first programmatic work that Schönberg composed, as well as the first instrumental work that he assigned an opus number. The piece, a lengthy single movement, follows the structure of Richard Dehmel's controversial poem from 1896, which consists of five sections.

In the poem's introductory section, Dehmel establishes the setting: a dark moonlit forest in which a man and woman walk. Schönberg immediately creates a musical parallel to Dehmel's imagery with two contrasting musical themes in the key of D minor: a haunting scalar descent, repeated several times, is followed by a glimmering ascent capped with a long trill. After a silent pause, Schönberg modulates to the key of Bb minor to express the woman's anguish as she reveals her secret to the man: she is carrying the child of another man who she does not love. Several melodic themes unfold in this intense section of the poem and Schönberg musically conveys the woman's rush of emotions by jettisoning the first violin part into a high tessitura. A sudden shift to the key of E major illustrates the relief the woman feels from confiding in her soulmate. Tremolos and pizzicato articulation are coupled with rapid modulatory sequencing to portray the depth of the man's shock and suspense prior to his verbal response. The music comes to standstill, but then the opening forest music returns as the couple continues to walk. Finally, in a radiant section in D major, marked "very bright and slow," we hear Schönberg's depiction of the man's response to the woman as he tells her that he will accept the child as his own. Schönberg writes that this beautiful music – among the most stunning passages that he composed in his late Romantic style – "reflects the mood of a man whose love, in harmony with the splendor and radiance of nature, is capable of ignoring the tragic situation." The bliss of this transfiguration is ecstatic, and the sonic palette expands with the addition of mutes and harmonics. A final coda in the key of D major initially includes mode mixture (the simultaneous combination of D major and D minor) to provide a synoptic encapsulation of the entire piece, and then placidly drifts away in the major mode.

*Program notes by Jessica Payette, Associate Professor of Music, Oakland University.*

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## 2024 Winterfest

Concert 2

### Seth Parker Woods & Friends

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and  
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Emma Frucht, VIOLIN  
Miho Saegusa, VIOLIN  
Brian Hong, VIOLA  
Caleb van der Swaagh, CELLO

#### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Seven Variations on "Bei Männern,  
Weiche Lieb fühlen" from Mozart's  
*Magic Flute*, WoO 46

#### GEORGE WALKER

Sonata for Cello and Piano  
Allegro appassionato  
Sostenuto  
Allegro

INTERMISSION

#### ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG

Verklärte Nacht (*Transfigured Night*), Op. 4

This concert is presented with generous support from  
Kathleen O'Toole Schein and Randolph Schein

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Seth Parker Woods appears by arrangement with Wittenberg Artists,  
New York, New York.

The Aizuri Quartet appears by arrangement with Pink Noise Agency,  
Brooklyn, New York.



#### SETH PARKER WOODS

*This weekend's performances mark Seth Parker Woods' second Chamber Music Detroit appearances; he previously appeared in April of 2022.*

Hailed by The Guardian as "a cellist of power and grace" who possesses "mature artistry and willingness to go to the brink," GRAMMY nominated cellist Seth Parker Woods has established his reputation as a versatile artist and innovator across multiple genres. Inspiring The New York Times to write, "Woods is an artist rooted in classical music," said The New York Times, "but whose cello is a vehicle that takes him, and his concertgoers, on wide-ranging journeys." He is a recipient of the 2022 Chamber Music America Michael Jaffee Visionary Award.

Highlights of his 2023-2024 season include Woods's autobiographical tour-de-force *Difficult Grace*, described as "dazzlingly inventive" (Gramophone Magazine) and "a feast for the ears, eyes and mind" (The New York Times). In addition, Woods performs the Boston premiere of Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *UBIQUE* at Harvard University and goes on to a pair of performances with GRAMMY Award-winning violinist Hilary Hahn at Konzerthaus Dortmund in Germany. With American Modern Opera Company, Woods tours a new version of John Adams' *El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered*, with a libretto by Peter Sellars, to Stanford Live and Yale University. Woods appears in two performances of *Fallen Petals*, a program commissioned by Chamber Music Detroit and inspired by stories of juvenile offenders serving life in prison – starting with a Chamber Music Detroit appearances performance in Detroit as well as at Oberlin Conservatory and in Cincinnati.

Other recent performances include appearances with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Atlanta and Seattle Symphonies, at the Aspen and Ojai Festivals, Washington Performing Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, as well as abroad with the BBC Proms and Musée d'art Moderne et Contemporain, among many others. A fierce advocate for contemporary arts, Woods has collaborated and worked with a wide range of artists from Louis Andriessen, Elliott Carter and Heinz Holliger to Peter Gabriel, Sting, Lou Reed, and Dame Shirley Bassey. His debut solo album, *asinglewordisnotenough* (Confront Recordings-London), has garnered acclaim since its release in November 2016 and has been profiled in The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, and the LA Times, among many others.

Woods serves on the faculty of the Thornton School of Music at The University of Southern California.

#### CONOR HANICK

*This performance marks Conor Hanick's first Chamber Music Detroit appearance.*

Pianist Conor Hanick is regarded as one of his generation's most inquisitive interpreters of music new and old whose "technical refinement, color, crispness and wondrous variety of articulation benefit works by any master" (New York Times). Hanick has recently performed with the San Francisco, Seattle and Alabama Symphony Orchestras and has been presented by the Gilmore Festival, New York Philharmonic, Caramoor, Cal Performances, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and the Park Avenue Armory.



A fierce advocate for the music of today, Hanick has premiered over 200 pieces and collaborated with composers ranging from Pierre Boulez, Kaija Saariaho, and Steve Reich, to the leading composers of his generation, including Nico Muhly, Caroline Shaw and Tyshawn Sorey. This season Hanick presents recitals in the US and Europe, including his San Francisco Performances debut at Herbst Theater, joins Sandbox Percussion at 92NY, returns to the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and in Ojai performing a new set of piano etudes by Samuel Carl Adams, whose piano concerto Hanick premiered last year to wide acclaim with the San Francisco Symphony and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Hanick is the director of Solo Piano at the Music Academy of the West and serves on the faculty of The Juilliard School, Mannes College, and the CUNY Graduate Center,

#### KIRSTEN DOCTER

*This performance marks Kirsten Docter's third Chamber Music Detroit appearance. She most recently appeared with the Cavani Quartet in 2016 as well as in several educational residencies for CMDetroit.*



Kirsten Docter is an accomplished string musician and educator who currently serves as Associate Professor of Viola and Chamber Music at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. First prize wins at the Primrose International and American String Teachers Association Viola Competitions launched her on a career that includes a 23-year tenure with the Cavani Quartet, concerts on major series and festivals throughout North America, Europe, and Australia, and numerous appointments as a master class clinician and teacher.

During her time as violist of the Cavani String Quartet, Docter performed at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Kennedy Center, among many others. She has performed with the quartet numerous times on National Public Radio, and television programs on NBC, CBS, ABC, and PBS. The quartet was also honored with a Cleveland Quartet Award, the Guarneri Quartet Award, an ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, and ten Chamber Music America Partnership Grants.

Docter's festival appearances include performances at major music festivals across the U.S. and she has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Jaime Laredo, Alisa Weilerstein, Nathan Gunn, and members of the Cleveland, Juilliard, Takács, Emerson, Borodin, and Amadeus string quartets. Her work can be heard on the Azica, Albany, New World, and Gasparo labels.

#### AIZURI QUARTET

*This weekend's concerts mark the Aizuri Quartet's first Chamber Music Detroit appearances.*

Praised by The Washington Post for "astounding" and "captivating" performances that draw from its notable "meld of intellect, technique and emotions," the Aizuri Quartet was named the recipient of the 2022 Cleveland Quartet Award by Chamber Music America, and was awarded the Grand Prize at the 2018 M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition. The Quartet's most recent recording, *Earned Skies*, released in 2023, was praised by *NPR Music* as an album that "convincingly connects the dots in wildly diverse music stretching over eight centuries." The Quartet's debut album on New Amsterdam Records, *Blueprinting*, was nominated for a 2019 *GRAMMY* Award and named one of NPR's Best Classical Albums of 2018.

In recognition of the Cleveland Quartet Award, the Aizuri Quartet performs during the 2023-24 season with Chamber Music Detroit, Market Square Concerts, Friends of Chamber Music Kansas City, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, and Buffalo Chamber Music Society, where they will perform the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Azure Waves*, written for the Quartet in celebration of the series' 100th anniversary season. Last season they performed at Carnegie Hall, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, and Texas Performing Arts in Austin.

