

Ravel was heavily influenced by Debussy's string quartet, and both works are strikingly similar. Both quartets follow the four-movement classical structure, have a movement in sonata form, and thematic material is developed throughout the entire work.

The lyrical first movement is in sonata form, highlighting the interplay of two contrasting themes. The first theme is introduced initially by the entire quartet, but the first violin takes over quickly, with accompaniment from the second violin and viola. Ravel uses this theme throughout the work. The second theme is featured in the viola and first violin in octaves.

Ravel's Spanish roots are evident in the second movement, and the abundant use of pizzicato is reminiscent of the percussive Javanese Gamelan music. The movement features great rhythmic complexity with the "first violin and cello in 3/4 (with eight notes grouped in 2), and the second violin and viola in 6/8 (with eight notes grouped in 3)." "Each measure contains 6 eight notes, but because of their groupings they are stressed differently." The contrasting middle section of the movement features a beautiful melody in the cello after which the first section of the piece returns briefly.

The slow and tranquil third movement can be considered the epitome of impressionism. In a minor key, Ravel uses melodic material from the first movement, featuring the viola in various hauntingly beautiful solos.

The powerful final movement is tumultuous and chaotic. The unsettling character of the movement is primarily because of the 5/8 meter, but there are various meter changes throughout. The movement functions like a rondo, with the repeating main motive separated by contrasting sections. The contrasting sections recall material from previous movements. A powerful F major chord marks the end of the work.

"My Quartet in F major responds to a desire for musical construction, which doubtedly is inadequately realized but which emerges much more clearly than in my preceding compositions." – Maurice Ravel

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Wednesday, April 29, 2015:**
Piano Plus! Shun-Lin Chou, director 8:00pm Daniel Recital Hall \$10/7
- **Saturday, May 2, 2015:**
Celebrating Music: Mozart's Mass in C minor & Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, Professor Moni Simeonov, violin; Jonathan Talberg & Johannes Müller-Stosch conductors, 8:00pm Carpenter Performing Arts Center \$15/10
- **Tuesday, May 19, 2015:**
The Music Guild, Lafayette String Quartet, 8:00pm Daniel Recital Hall Tickets Call (310) 558-3500 for ticket information

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BOB COLE
CONSERVATORY
OF MUSIC
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

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THE BOB COLE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC AT
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH AND THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS PROUDLY PRESENT:



UNIVERSITY STRING QUARTET

MONI SIMEONOV, DIRECTOR

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2015 8:00PM

GERALD R. DANIEL RECITAL HALL

PLEASE SILENCE ALL ELECTRONIC MOBILE DEVICES.

PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 8 in C Minor.....Dimitri Shostakovich
Largo (1906-1975)
Allegro molto
Allegretto
Largo
Largo

INTERMISSION

String Quartet in F Major..... Maurice Ravel
Allegro moderato. Très doux (1875-1937)
Assez vif. Très rythmé
Très lent
Vif et agité

UNIVERSITY STRING QUARTET
Nicolette van den Bogerd & Korina Davis—violin
Annie Reed—viola, James Clark—cello

STRING QUARTET NO. 8 IN C MINOR Dmitri Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8* in c Minor comprises a brief twenty minutes of non-stop music. Shostakovich composed it in three days in 1960 as a distraction from a project to write a film score about the Dresden fire bombings of WWII. Officially, Shostakovich dedicated this piece to the "Victims of Fascism and WWII," but privately, he described it as a eulogy for himself. Some even believed it to be a suicide note.

As other composers have done, Shostakovich wrote his name into his music. He used the initials DSCH from the German transliteration of his name (Dmitri SHostakoivch). In German music notation, the letters spell a four note musical motive, D, E-flat (S), C, B (H).

This musical theme is present throughout the entire quartet, appearing in the clear transformations in the texture from violin to cello, melody to accompaniment. It provides the first four notes of the quartet, and the primary theme of the first movement. It flashes constantly throughout the violent second movement, dances wildly in the main melody of the scherzo, fades away in the trio, and returns to become the main subject of a heartbreaking fugue in the finale.

The quartet has another recurring theme: the foreboding five-note motif which dominates the second movement, that reappears in a quieter form throughout the first and last movements. This theme is introduced at the beginning of the quartet

and returns at the end as the final dying notes of the entire piece. As a background figure, it plays the role of a funeral march. As foreground in the second movement, it becomes the shrill subject leading into a storm of counterpoint. In the final fugue, this same theme briefly softens into a countersubject, entwined with the DSCH motive until it becomes dark and fades into silence.

This quartet reflects on Shostakovich's lifetime and quotes several of his other compositions: the *1st* and *5th* symphonies, the *Second Piano Trio*, the *Cello Concerto*, and his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsinsk District*. The quotes appear like distant memories within the unbroken, overlapping movements. The end of the piece returns to the beginning, resuming the somber lament which represents the many tears Shostakovich shed during its composition.

Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8* is not pretty or harmonically beautiful in a traditional sense. It is powerful, dissonant, and sometimes heartbreaking. This piece explores the darker aspects of human emotion: sorrow, terror, violence, death, and even mocking humor.

This work has since become well known and frequently performed as one of the most important string quartets of the 20th century. Dark, dramatic, and devastating, this brief but dense quartet contains a lifetime of music: the life and music of Dmitri Shostakovich.

STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, to a Swiss father and a mother of Basque origin. Shortly after his birth, his father was offered a job in Paris, and the family moved to Paris. Ravel received musical training from an early age, and although he was not considered a prodigy, he was accepted to the Paris Conservatoire at the age of fourteen and remained there for several years. Ravel was only 28 years old when he completed his *String Quartet in F Major* in 1903. Often considered his first masterpiece, the work is dedicated to his teacher Gabriel Fauré.

Ravel had failed several times to win the *Prix de Rome* during his studies at the Paris Conservatoire. The submission of his first string quartet failed and did not make it through even the preliminary round. The Paris Conservatoire also rejected the piece. Although he was generally ignored by the music critics, they rallied behind Ravel once they discovered that these entities had easily dismissed a composer of his caliber. It invoked great publicity, possibly more than he likely would have gotten had he won *Prix de Rome*. Ravel quickly rose to fame as one of the greatest French composers of the early 20th century.

The string quartet was premiered in 1904 by the Heyman Quartet, at a concert of the Société National in Paris. While it was generally well-received, it also received some negative remarks, including one from Fauré who said that the work was "stunted, badly balanced, and in fact a failure." However, Claude Debussy was much more enthusiastic, and wrote: "in the name of the Gods of music, do not touch a single note you have written." It is not surprising that Debussy approved of Ravel's work.