

*The Chamber Music of Claude Debussy*  
COMPLETE



DE 3167



*The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center*  
David Shifrin, Artistic Director

**The Chamber Music of Claude Debussy**  
**Complete on 3 CDs**

Première Rapsodie (8:30) • Petite Pièce (1:24) • Sonata for Cello and Piano (11:07) • Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp (16:39) • Syrinx (2:14) • Sonata for Violin and Piano (13:01) • String Quartet (24:39) • Piano Trio (22:54) • Nocturne et Scherzo (6:16) • Six épigraphes antiques (16:30) • En Blanc et Noir (15:33) • Lindaraja (6:07) • Marche Écossaise (6:35) • Petite Suite (13:13)

ARTISTS: Nancy Allen, *harp* • David Golub, *piano* • Gary Hoffman, *cello*  
Ani Kavafian, *violin* • Lee Luvisi, *piano* • Anne-Marie McDermott, *piano*  
Paul Neubauer, *viola* • Fred Sherry, *cello* • David Shifrin, *clarinet* • Joseph Silverstein, *violin* • André Watts, *piano* • Ransom Wilson, *flute* • Orion String Quartet: Daniel Phillips, Todd Phillips, *violins*; Steven Tenenbom, *viola*; Timothy Eddy, *cello*

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: DISC ONE: 53:34 • DISC TWO: 54:07 • DISC THREE: 58:33



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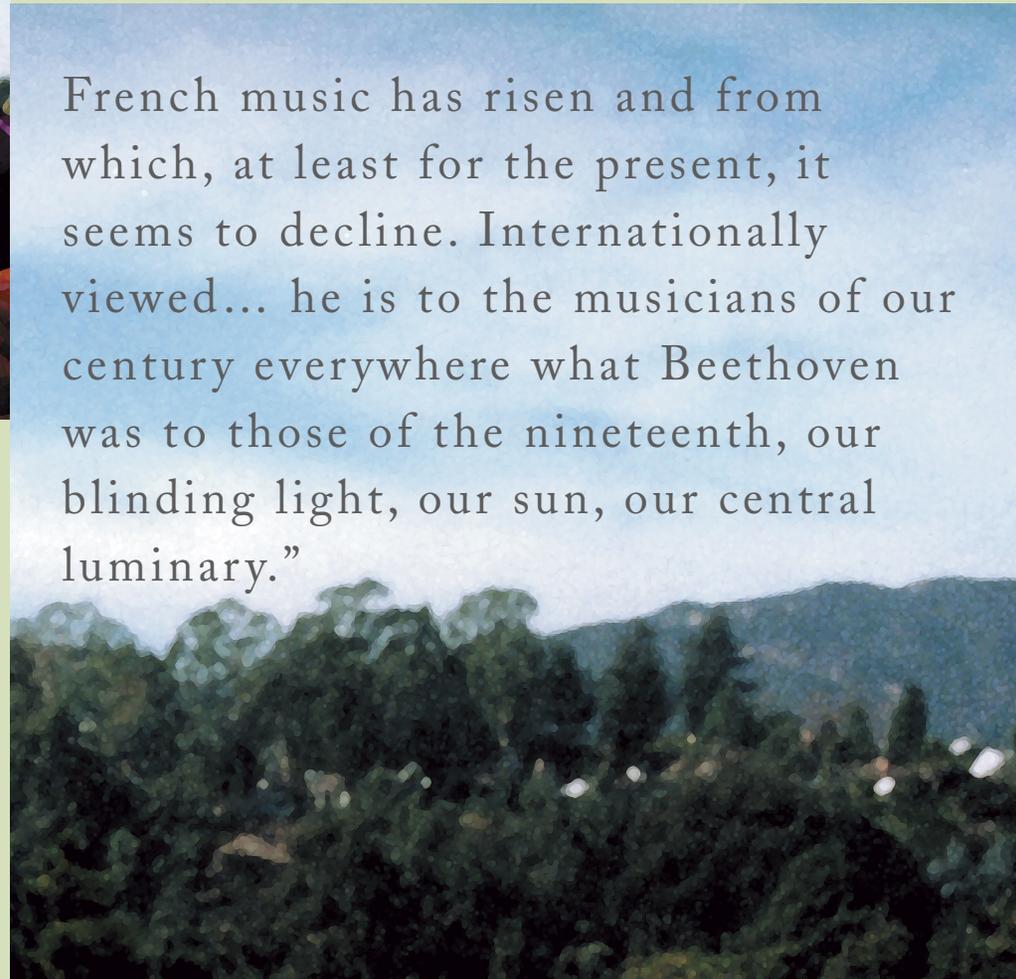
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It would be hard to find a more eloquent appraisal by one composer of another than the one by Virgil Thomson of Claude Debussy: “Historically viewed,” Thomson wrote in 1950, “Debussy is the summit toward which, during the two centuries since Rameau’s death,



French music has risen and from which, at least for the present, it seems to decline. Internationally viewed... he is to the musicians of our century everywhere what Beethoven was to those of the nineteenth, our blinding light, our sun, our central luminary.”



## Disc One

- ① **Première Rapsodie**, 1910 (8:30)
- ② **Petite Pièce**, 1910 (1:24)  
David Shifrin, *clarinet* • André Watts, *piano*
- ③~⑤ **Sonata for Cello and Piano**, 1915 (11:07)  
Gary Hoffman, *cello* • David Golub, *piano*
- ⑥~⑧ **Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp**, 1915 (16:39)  
Ransom Wilson, *flute* • Paul Neubauer, *viola* • Nancy Allen, *harp*
- ⑨ **Syrinx**, 1913 (2:14)  
Ransom Wilson, *flute*
- ⑩~⑫ **Sonata for Violin and Piano**, 1917 (13:01)  
Ani Kavafian, *violin* • Anne-Marie McDermott, *piano*



Nancy Allen



David Golub



Gary Hoffman



Ani Kavafian

## Disc Two

❶~❷ **String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10, 1893 (24:39)**

Orion String Quartet: Daniel Phillips, Todd Phillips, *violins* •  
Steven Tenenbom, *viola* • Timothy Eddy, *cello*

❸~❹ **Piano Trio in G Major, 1879 (22:54)**

Joseph Silverstein, *violin* • Fred Sherry, *cello* • Lee Luvisi, *piano*

❺ **Nocturne et Scherzo, 1882 (6:16)**

Fred Sherry, *cello* • Anne-Marie McDermott, *piano*



Lee Luvisi



Anne-Marie McDermott



Paul Neubauer



Fred Sherry

## Disc Three

1~3 En Blanc et Noir, 1915 (15:33)

4~9 Six épigraphes antiques, 1914 (16:30)

10 Lindaraja, 1901 (6:07)

11 Marche Écossaise sur un Thème Populaire, 1891 (6:35)

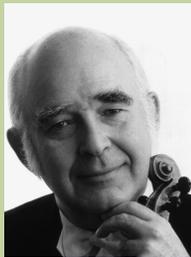
12~15 Petite Suite, 1889 (13:13)

Lee Luvisi, Anne-Marie McDermott, *pianos*

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: DISC ONE: 53:34 • DISC TWO: 54:07 • DISC THREE: 58:33



David Shifrin



Joseph Silverstein



André Watts



Ransom Wilson

# THE COMPLETE CHAMBER MUSIC OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY

## DISC ONE

1. **Première Rapsodie**, 1910 (8:30)
2. **Petite Pièce**, 1910 (1:24)  
~ David Shifrin, *clarinet* • André Watts, *piano*
- Sonata for Cello and Piano**, 1915 [11:07]
3. I. Prologue (4:20)
4. II. Sérénade (3:10)
5. III. Finale (3:37)  
~ Gary Hoffman, *cello* • David Golub, *piano*
- Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp**, 1915 [16:39]
6. I. Pastorale — Lento, dolce rubato (6:35)
7. II. Interlude — Tempo di minuetto (5:28)
8. III. Final — Allegro moderato ma risoluto (4:35)  
~ Ransom Wilson, *flute* • Paul Neubauer, *viola*  
Nancy Allen, *harp*
9. **Syrinx**, 1913 (2:14)  
~ Ransom Wilson, *flute*
- Sonata for Violin and Piano**, 1917 [13:01]
10. I. Allegro vivo (4:50)
11. II. Intermède — Fantasque et léger (3:56)
12. III. Finale — Très animé (4:15)  
~ Ani Kavafian, *violin* • Anne-Marie McDermott, *piano*

TOTAL PLAYING TIME DISC ONE: 53:34

## Disc Two

- String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10**, 1893 [24:39]
1. I. Animé et très décidé (6:09)
  2. II. Assez vif et bien rythmé (3:51)
  3. III. Andantino, doucement expressif (7:49)
  4. IV. Très modéré (6:50)  
~ Orion String Quartet — Daniel Phillips, Todd Phillips, *violins*  
Steven Tenenbom, *viola* • Timothy Eddy, *cello*
  - Piano Trio in G Major**, 1879 [22:54]
  5. I. Andantino con moto allegro (9:14)
  6. II. Scherzo • Intermezzo (3:19)
  7. III. Andante espressivo (4:31)
  8. IV. Finale — appassionato (5:50)  
~ Joseph Silverstein, *violin* • Fred Sherry, *cello* • Lee Luvisi, *piano*
  9. **Nocturne et Scherzo**, 1882 (6:16)  
~ Fred Sherry, *cello* • Anne-Marie McDermott, *piano*

TOTAL PLAYING TIME DISC TWO: 54:07

## DISC THREE

- En Blanc et Noir**, 1915 [15:33]
1. I. Avec emportement (4:31)
  2. II. Lent. Sombre (6:47)
  3. III. Scherzando (4:15)
  - Six épigraphes antiques**, 1914 [16:30]
  4. Pour invoquer Pan, dieu du vent d'été (2:20)
  5. Pour un tombeau sans nom (3:59)
  6. Pour que la nuit soit propice (2:12)
  7. Pour la danseuse aux crotales (2:47)
  8. Pour l'Égyptienne (2:57)
  9. Pour remercier la pluie au matin (2:15)
  10. **Lindaraja**, 1901 (6:07)
  11. **Marche Écossaise sur un Thème Populaire**, 1891 (6:35)
  - Petite Suite**, 1889 [13:13]
  12. En bateau (3:31)
  13. Cortège (3:13)
  14. Menuet (3:05)
  15. Ballet (3:24)  
~ Lee Luvisi, Anne-Marie McDermott, *pianos*

TOTAL PLAYING TIME DISC THREE: 58:33

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*épigraphes, Petite Suite, Fl, Va & Hp Sonata, Syrinx)*  
Editing: *Dmitry Missailov, Chris Landen (Quartet)*  
Recorded February 6, 1995 (*Violin & Cello Sonatas*) –  
St. Peter's Episcopal Church, New York, NY;  
May 23, 1995 (*Rapsodie, Petite Pièce*), St. Peter's;  
January 22-23, 1996 (*Quartet*) – First Congregational  
Church, Los Angeles, CA;  
May 15, 1996 (*Lindaraja, Blanc et noir*) – St. Peter's;  
October 22, 1996 (*Six épigraphes, Petite Suite*) –  
Performing Arts Center, Purchase College, NY;  
October 21, 1997 (*Trio*) – Academy of Arts and Letters,  
New York, NY;  
October 22, 1997 (*Nocturne, Marche*) – Academy;  
October 5, 1999 (*Fl, Va & Hp Sonata, Syrinx*) – Academy

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# Notes on the Music

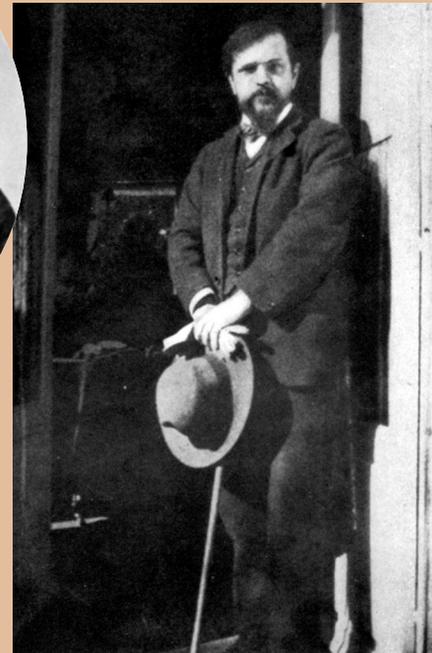
by Shirley Fleming



Debussy  
at age 18



Orion String Quartet



Claude Debussy about 1910

## PROGRAM NOTES

**I**t would be hard to find a more eloquent appraisal by one composer of another than the one by Virgil Thomson of Claude Debussy: "Historically viewed," Thomson wrote in 1950, "Debussy is the summit toward which, during the two centuries since Rameau's death, French music has risen and from which, at least for the present, it seems to decline. Internationally viewed... he is to the musicians of our century everywhere what Beethoven was to those of the nineteenth, our blinding light, our sun, our central luminary."

Debussy's life was not an easy one, and from today's vantage point much of his unrest seems to have been of his own making (as what rebel's isn't, one might ask?). He won the coveted Prix de Rome in 1884 while studying at the Paris Conservatoire, and positively hated the residency in Rome that the prize required. He fled the city twice while being compelled to live there. His amorous affairs were complicated beyond the normal standards of Bohemian existence: He left one of his earlier mistresses, Gabrielle Dupont, after nine years, to marry her friend Rosalie Texier, causing Gabrielle to attempt suicide. Five years later he abandoned Rosalie for Emma Bardac, leaving Rosalie, too, to attempt suicide. Emma bore him his adored daughter, Claude-Emma ("Chou-Chou"), and soon after her birth he and Emma were able to marry.

The pianist E. Robert Schmidt (1889-1949), who studied with Debussy at the Conservatoire and knew him well, gives a vivid glimpse of the composer's complex personality: "He was often anxious and possessed by a curious sense of guilt... He was habitually silent, solitary, taciturn and tormented." The poet Henri de Regnier described him as "passionate and turned in upon himself, with something feline and something of the gypsy about him." Yet another friend wrote of his "ironic and sensual [nature], melancholy and voluptuous.... In his reclusion there was something feline..."

The works on the present CDs are drawn from virtually the entire span of Debussy's composing life, starting with the 1880 Piano Trio, written at the age of 18, and ending with his last work, the Violin Sonata of 1917, which was the final piece he performed in public.

**En blanc et noir**, a suite for two pianos, reflects, at least in two of its three movements, every Frenchman's preoccupation with World War I, raging in 1915 when the work was composed. In a letter to his good friend Robert Godet, Debussy appears to minimize any suggestion of extra-musical reference, urging Godet not to "rack your brains about *En blanc et noir*. These pieces derive their color and their feeling merely from the sonority of the piano." There is sonority aplenty, but the pieces are far

more than “mere” pianistic explorations.

Each movement is headed by a quotation from a poem. The first, dedicated to conductor Serge Koussevitzky, is drawn from the libretto of Gounod’s *Romeo et Juliette*:

*Qui reste à sa place  
Et ne danse pas  
De quelque disgrâce  
Fait l’aveu tout bas.*

Debussy remarked that it was used ironically, alluding to “the men who stood aside from the macabre dance of the battlefields, thus confessing to some physical defect.”

The second movement—which the composer considered the strongest — is dedicated to Lt. Jacques Charlot, a friend associated with Debussy’s publisher Durand, who had been killed in battle in March 1915. Its quotation is from François Villon’s “Ballade contre les ennemis de la France”:

*Prince, porté soit des serfs Eolus  
En la forest ou domine Glaucus.  
Ou privé soit de paix et d’espérance  
Car digne n’est de posséder vertus  
Qui mal voudroit au royaume de France!*

The music is dark and desolate (it has been described as a virtual battle scene, with bugle calls clearly evident) and the unexpected quotation of “Ein feste Burg,” the Lutheran hymn on which J. S. Bach based his Cantata No. 80, lends it additional emotional weight.

The third movement is dedicated to Stravinsky, and bears a heading from a poem by Charles d’Orléans: “Yver, vous n’este qu’un vilain.” It leaves behind the serious references of the preceding pieces, in a quixotic, pleasantly unpredictable spirit.

The two-piano **Lindaraja** of 1901 finds Debussy musing on the artistic possibilities of repetition, both of melody and rhythm. It is his first piece with a Spanish flavor, particularly evident in the repeated pattern in the bass.

The piano duet **Marche Écossaise** (Scottish March) arose from a peculiar encounter described by Debussy’s biographer Edward Lockspeiser:

“At his humble lodgings, about 1891, Debussy received a call, unannounced, from a distinguished Scottish officer, general Meredith Reid. Speaking not a word of French, he thrust before the bewildered composer his elegant visiting card. Composer and general thereupon faced each other in a dumb-show of perplexity, until an interpreter was discovered in a nearby tavern, where the commission was happily received to arrange and orchestrate a march traditionally associated with the general’s ancestors, the ancient Earls of Ross, known also as the Lords of the Isles. The original edition bore the title, *Marche des anciens comtes de Ross, dédiée à leur*

*descendant le général Meredith Reid...*

The general could only have been pleased with his prize, a crisp presentation of the march tune, light-textured and trim, enclosing a rather dreamy interlude. Debussy orchestrated the piece at a later date.

The *March Écossaise* was the second duet written in this period. It was preceded in 1888 by the **Petite Suite**, whose first movement, “En bateau,” rippling and fluid, hints at things to come in the brief appearance of the whole-tone scale that would emerge so significantly in later works. The second movement, “Cortège,” is an alert procession that is surely headed toward some cheerful destination; the middle section relaxes just a bit. The “Minuet” that follows is crystalline; the final “Ballet,” airily off the ground much of the time to a two-beat rhythm, melts into a three-beat waltz at its center.

The outbreak of the War in 1914 oppressed Debussy profoundly; on the 8th of August he wrote his publisher, Durand: “I am just a poor little atom crushed in this terrible cataclysm. What I am doing seems so wretchedly small.” Nevertheless, that year he completed the concise duets of **Six épigraphes antiques**, which drew their imagery from poems by his friend Pierre Louÿs, some of whose “Chansons de Bilitis” he had set to music earlier. (The Bilitis of Louÿs’ title was an imaginary poetess of ancient Greece

whom Louÿs presented as real historical figure, even writing a short biography for her.)

In the opening “Pour invoquer Pan, dieu de vent d’été” it is easy to hear the waft of the wind and a sense of summer peacefulness (along with a whiff of “The Girl with the Flaxen Hair”). The poem describes in considerable detail the actions of two shepherdesses, gathering flowers, bathing, spinning, and amusing themselves, and the music follows these gentle activities fairly closely.

“Pour un tombeau sans nom” arises from a poem in which a girl visits the tomb of her mother’s lover, reading the inscription which ends, “I tell not my name.” Debussy’s deeply descending piano line is wonderfully evocative, and his characteristic use of the whole-tone scale adds to a sense of mystery.

The whole-tone scale turns up again in “Pour la nuit soit propice” (Louÿs’ “Hymn to the Night”), contributing to the prevailing atmosphere of distance and darkness.

“Pour la danseuse aux cortales,” a steamy poem depicting the increasing ecstasy of the dancer as she moves to the accompaniment of her castanets, calls forth dashing displays of pianistic flamboyance, alternating with episodes of muted sensuousness; the click of castanets comes through clearly.

“Pour l’Égyptienne” (from Louÿs’ “The Egyptian Courtesans”) sets glistening oriental ruminations above a pulsing tread in the bass that continues almost to the end.

Delicate raindrops patter down in “Pour remercier la

pluie au matin" ("The Rain of Morning") reminding one of the popular solo piano work "Jardins sous la pluie"; at the same time, there are harmonies that might have come straight from "The Sunken Cathedral." As the last raindrops die away, there is an unexpected reference to the opening of the first piece of the set.

In the final phase of his life, as he was battling cancer, Debussy planned a set of six sonatas for various instruments, to be written in homage to his wife of ten years, Emma-Claude. He lived only long enough to complete three of them: the Cello Sonata, the Sonata for Flute Viola and Harp, and the Violin Sonata.

The **Violin Sonata**, which offers the violinist a wealth of opportunities to travel up and down the full range of the instrument in ways that exploit its colors and fluidity, opens with a sinuous theme that will recur at the beginning of the last movement. There are brief, gritty moments in the course of the first *Allegro*, but for the most part it is marked by delicate interplay of light and shadow, and by the languid beauty of its second theme. The toccata-like whimsy of the second movement leads directly into the finale, whose main subject, Debussy wrote, "is subjected to the most curious deformations and ultimately leaves the impression of an idea turning back upon itself, like a snake biting its own tail." Debussy played the work with the violinist Gaston Poulet on May 5, 1917 — his last public appearance. He died less than a year later.

The **Cello Sonata** of 1915 was the first of the proposed six sonatas, and Debussy remarked that he liked "its proportion and its form, which is almost classical in the true sense of the word." Its form may be classical but its character certainly is not: it abounds in the uninhibited, swirling, arabesque lines so typical of the composer, and its bizarre pizzicato in the antic second movement lives up to the title Debussy apparently planned to give the sonata, "Pierrot fâché avec la lune" — Pierrot angry with the moon. The finale has a decided Spanish flavor, interrupted by a slow middle section labeled "con morbidezza."

While he was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire, the 18-year-old Debussy met — and was employed by — Mme. Nadzehda von Meck, the patron of Tchaikovsky. She took her "little Frenchman" on frequent travels in the summertime as a tutor for her children and as a kind of house musician, and he played chamber music with the other musicians in her entourage and with Madame herself. He composed the **Piano Trio in G** for her domestic ensemble during his first trip with her, and two years later, at the age of 20, produced the **Nocturne and Scherzo** for her resident cellist and himself. Both are highly competent, well-made scores, "romantic" in the conventional sense of the word. Neither of them give a hint of the revolutionary things to come, although Debussy was already considered an "eccentric" by his fellow Conservatory students.

The second of Debussy's final three sonatas, for **Flute, Viola and Harp**, was finished in 1916 and described by the composer as "so terribly melancholy that I can't say whether one should laugh or cry. Perhaps both?" It brings up inevitable images of Melisande weeping at the fountain, which certainly accounts for the melancholy. In any case, the interlocking of the three instruments in this work is masterfully accomplished, with the flute primarily responsible for the fluidity and momentum of the entire work, which has been accurately described as a "sonata in a single piece, a triptych of a single whole." **Syrinx**, for solo flute, was written in 1912 as incidental music for Gabriel Mourey's play *Psyché*. It was originally titled "Flûte de Pan," and depicts the final song and death of the god. In its brief span it offers the flutist lovely opportunities for expressive coloration and seamless phrasing.

The two clarinet works of 1910 were written as test pieces for students at the Conservatoire, where Debussy was serving as a judge for the wind instrument examinations. The **Rapsodie** in particular delighted him, and he declared it to be "one of the most pleasing pieces I have ever written." The short **Petite Pièce**, neat and trim, was designed for sight-reading.

Debussy began work on his only **String Quartet** and his great opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* at about the same time, 1892. The opera took ten years to complete; the quartet

was finished within a year and was premiered in 1893 by the Ysaye Quartet, to whom it was dedicated.

Its feverish first movement opens with the theme on which much of the quartet is built, easily identified throughout — even within complex textures — by its snappish triplet turn. In the first movement it rises to a decisive climax and moments later a second important idea, a smoother, more lyrical one, is heard in the first violin. Much of the central portion of the movement circles around this second subject; both themes are brought into play again before the movement ends. The *Scherzo* concentrates on the snappish main theme, first heard here on the viola amid a shower of pizzicato and eventually transformed into a more singing line high in the first violin. The third movement, in which the "motto" theme is only faintly suggested, is in an outwardly simple ABA form, but one containing a wealth of beautiful details. The solemn opening, of great emotional depth, leads to the striking middle section in which the viola sets forth on a chant-like solo and eventually expands into a melody of exceptional beauty. Considerable tension builds, before the opening of the movement is recalled. The finale contains many echoes of what has gone before, and the motto theme, often heard elusively just beneath the surface, occasionally emerges into clear view.

*Shirley Fleming*

## Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

In 1965, as plans for Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts neared completion, its president, composer William Schuman, dreamed of creating a constituent devoted exclusively to chamber music. This organization would be housed in its own specially designed recital hall, taking its place alongside the great American ballet and opera companies and a world-renowned orchestra. Founding Artistic Director Charles Wadsworth accepted the challenge to create and lead that organization, and, with the inspiring patronage of Miss Alice Tully, Schuman's plan reached fruition. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center mounted its first concert on September 11, 1969 in its permanent home, Alice Tully Hall. Its pioneering structure - a core of distinguished Artist Members augmented by invited guests - allows it to present concerts of every instrumentation, style, and historical period at Lincoln Center, on national and international tours, and on national television on "Live From Lincoln Center." As the nation's premier repertory company for chamber music, the CMS strives to bring audiences the finest performances of an extraordinary body of repertoire, dating as far back as the Renaissance and continuing through the centuries to the finest works of our time. The CMS discography comprises music ranging from Bach to

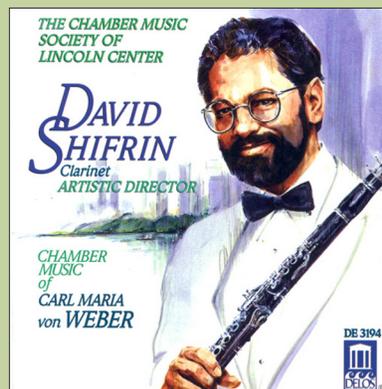
Zwilich. Its releases on the Delos label include critically acclaimed recordings of Dvořák's *Serenade and Quintet*; Beethoven's *Septet and Serenade*; music by Carl Maria von Weber featuring clarinetist/ Artistic Director David Shifrin; five American clarinet quintets; and Bach's complete *Brandenburg Concertos*. *Fi Magazine* named the latter "one of the best recordings of the year" in 1996. In its 30 years, the CMS has commissioned over a hundred new works from a formidable array of composers, including Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, William Bolcom, John Corigliano, George Crumb, Lukas Foss, John Harbison, Alberto Ginastera, Morton Gould, Keith Jarrett, Oliver Knussen, Gian Carlo Menotti, Darius Milhaud, Peter Schickele, Bright Sheng, Joan Tower, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. The Chamber Music Society also supports the work of living composers by awarding the Elise L. Stoeger Prize, a \$10,000 award given annually to each of two outstanding composers of chamber music. The CMS has been guided by three Artistic Directors: founding Artistic Director Charles Wadsworth (1969-1989), Fred Sherry (1989-1992), and since 1992, David Shifrin. To learn more about the CMS and in particular its outstanding roster of Artist Members please visit its website at [www.ChamberMusicSociety.org](http://www.ChamberMusicSociety.org)

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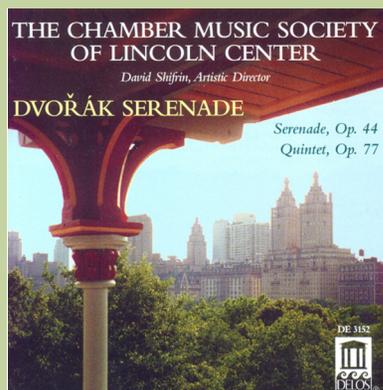
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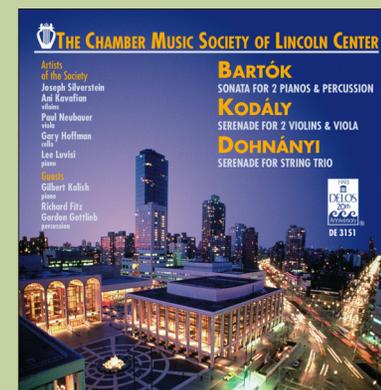
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