



The Cello in Motion

**Co-presented by The Temple Emanu-El Streicker Center
and Orchestra of St. Luke's**

Monday, November 30th, 2020 at 6:30pm

Streamed live from The Temple Emanu-El Streicker Center

Performers

Ilmar Gavilan, Mitsuru Tsubota, *violin*

Kaya Bryla-Weiss, *viola*

Daire FitzGerald, Hamilton Berry, *cellos*

Program

ELEANOR ALBERGA

Ride Through

FRANZ SCHUBERT

String Quintet in C Major, D. 956

Allegro ma non troppo

Adagio

Scherzo

Allegretto

Program Notes

Ride Through by Eleanor Alberga

About the composer

Eleanor Alberga is an internationally recognized British composer, whose oeuvre includes symphonies, concertos, chamber music, songs, opera, dance, and solo instrumental pieces. Her works have been performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Opera House in London, and performed (and commissioned) by artists including Robert Irvine and Thomas Bowes. Her works draw inspiration equally from the canon of Western classical music and her Jamaican heritage, including her time as a singer with the Jamaican Folk Singers. In 2015, the televised performance of her *Arise Athena!* on the Last Night of the Proms, conducted by Marin Alsop, introduced Alberga and her music to an international audience of millions.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Alberga decided at the age of five to be a concert pianist, though five years later she was already composing works for the

piano. In 1970, she won the biennial Royal Schools of Music Scholarship for the West Indies which allowed her to study piano and singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 1974, she was one of three finalists in the International Piano Concerto Competition in Dudley, United Kingdom. While a rehearsal pianist for The London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Alberga began composing works conceived for dance, including her celebrated piano quintet *Clouds* (1984); she would later become the company's musical director.

Alberga's orchestral works, *Sun Warrior* (1990) written for the inaugural Women in Music Festival and her dramatic adaptation of Roald Dahl's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1994) for large symphony orchestra and narrators, were premiered at the Royal Festival Hall in 1994 with Franz Welsler-Möst conducting the LPO. In 2009, the premiere of her opera *Letters of a Love Betrayed* at the Royal Opera House drew comparisons to Berg's *Wozzeck* and Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande*.

In 2001, she was awarded a NESTA Fellowship for composition and premiered her first violin concerto, written for Thomas Bowes and commissioned by The Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Joseph Swensen.

Highlights of Alberga's chamber music include *Shining Gate of Morpheus* and *Succubus Moon*, featuring horn and oboe respectively with string quartet. She has transformed George Herbert's *The Glimpse* into song, and her most recent song cycle *The Soul's Expression* sets poetry by George Eliot, Emily Brontë, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She is currently working on a second violin concerto and a suite of shorter piano works.

About *Ride Through*

Alberga wrote the three-minute *Ride Through* for unaccompanied cello for the celebrated Scottish cellist Robert Irvine, who had asked her to contribute a piece to his 2016 album *Songs and Lullabies*, benefiting UNICEF. The album consists of 18 new works—all for unaccompanied and written and performed by Irvine. Irvine had asked all the composers to compose a piece that reflected

in some way on the mistreatment of children worldwide. Alberga's *Ride Through* is based on a traditional Jamaican children's song, whose cheerful melody contrasts with the lyrics: the narrator is in search of shelter after his home was destroyed in a hurricane

String Quintet in C Major by Franz Schubert

At three o'clock in the afternoon on November 19, 1828, Franz Schubert died at the Vienna home of his brother, Ferdinand, two months shy of his thirty-second birthday. He left behind several recently finished—and unfinished—works, including what would one day become known as some of his best songs and orchestral and chamber works. Some of these works, including a collection of his final songs compiled into the *Schwanengesang* song cycle, would be published soon after his death. Others would languish in obscurity, waiting to be rediscovered and heard. One such work is Schubert's String Quintet in C Major, the composer's only string quintet, considered to be not only one of his greatest works, but one of the most extraordinary works for string ensemble in the Western European classical music canon.

Schubert reportedly completed his only string quintet in just two weeks in September 1828, shortly after he may have learned from his doctor that he was in seriously and irreparably failing life. But it wasn't published in its entirety until 1853, 25 years after its composition and the composer's death. The first public performance had occurred only three years earlier at the Musikverein in Vienna. In choosing to write a string quintet, Schubert seems to have referenced earlier works by Mozart and Beethoven (both of whose string quintets are also in C Major); however, unlike his predecessors, Schubert chose to add a second cello to the string quartet ensemble, whereas Mozart and Beethoven added a second viola to their string quintets. For this reason, Schubert's String Quintet in C Major is often referred to as a "cello quintet." The cello doesn't necessarily have a starring role; instead, it grounds the quintet. The addition of the extra cello greatly expands and broadens the quintet's textures—the addition of a

viola enriches the inner voices of a quintet, whereas the addition of the cello, the lowest instrument in the ensemble, anchors a greater sonic foundation upon which Schubert could build and blossom. Indeed, Schubert's String Quintet in C Major is known for its almost impenetrable depth; despite its critical acclaim and long popularity, the quintet continues to reveal new dimensions to listeners.

The string quintet begins with a deceptively simple C Major chord that soon devolves into unexpected harmonic twists and turns that are threaded together by the two main themes: one characterized by an elegant turn figure and the other by a forward-moving dotted rhythm. The second *Adagio* movement is one of Schubert's most sublime. The outer sections of the movement are in a serene, otherworldly E Major, while the contrasting middle is in a turbulent, anxiety-ridden F minor. Schubert returns to C Major for the third *Scherzo* movement, which begins with effusive folk-like rhythms writ large on an almost symphonic scale contrasting with a brooding, mysterious middle section. The *Allegretto* finale is in sonata-rondo form. Like the *Scherzo* movement it draws on folk-like dance rhythms that fold in the dotted rhythms and turn figure of the first movement and give the entire movement an infectious exuberance. The energy and excitement builds and builds to the coda and the final, dramatic release of harmony, rhythm, and melody.

About Orchestra of St. Luke's

Called “[New York’s] hometown band” by The New York Times, OSL performs at venues throughout the city including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City Center, Merkin Hall, The Morgan Library and Museum, Brooklyn Museum, and many more. OSL is dedicated to cultivating a lifetime of engagement with classical music and offers free instrumental training and mentorship for students from elementary school through conservatory and beyond; produces guided community and educational performances for thousands of students and families; and owns and operates The DiMenna Center for Classical Music, New York City’s only rehearsal, recording, education, and performance facility expressly dedicated to classical music, serving more than 500 ensembles and more than 30,000 musicians each year. OSL has participated in 118 recordings, four of which have won Grammy Awards; has commissioned more than 50 new works; and has given more than 179 world, US, and New York City premieres. Recent guests and collaborators include cellist Alisa Weilerstein, tenor Jonas Kauffman, composer Eleanor Alberga, violinist Christian Tetzlaff, and pianist Jeremy Denk. As New York Magazine notes, the Orchestra has a “...reputation for being able to play virtually any score as if the musicians had all grown up with it under their pillows.” Learn more at OSLmusic.org or @OSLmusic on Instagram, Facebook, Spotify and more.

About Temple Emanu-El

Founded in 1845, Temple Emanu-El is the third-oldest Reform Jewish congregation in the United States. Its odyssey mirrors that of the Jewish community in New York.

Temple Emanu-El is also one of the great Jewish houses of worship in the world. Within our walls, an enormous range of social, educational, and cultural programs are offered.

Awe and soaring spirituality are feelings that are invoked when one first steps into the majestic 2,500-seat Main Sanctuary. In the vastness of the space and the quiet dignity of the mood we feel the presence of God. The play of light refracted through the clerestory windows against the arched side walls is a luminous reminder that this sanctuary is expressive of God’s spirit.

About The Streicker Center

From history to culture, food to politics, music to Israel. Night after night, the Streicker Center offers opportunities for discussion and debate about the most challenging and important issues of the day, from anti-Semitism, fake news, immigration, and racism to the future of the Jewish people.