U.S. Army String Quartet

4 February 2026, 6:15 PM

PROGRAM

Contrapunctus I, IV from *The Art of the Fugue,* BWV 1080

Johann Sebastian Bach Arr. Richard Klemm and Carl Weymar

String Quartet No.8 in C minor, Op.110 — Dimitri Shostakovitch

Sleep, My Love — Stephen J. Carlson Arr. Patrick Lin

Anyone Can Cook! — Alice Y Hong

Program Notes

Contrapunctus I, IV from The Art of the Fugue, BWV 1080

Johann Sebastian Bach arr. Richard Klemm and Carl Weymar

Composed: before 1742; rev. ca. 1745 and 1748–1749

Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Art of Fugue* stands as one of music's most enigmatic monuments—a work left incomplete at the composer's death in 1750, its intended instrumentation unspecified, its purpose unclear.

What remains is a cathedral of counterpoint, fourteen fugues and four canons that explore every conceivable transformation of a single, austere theme. Some have posited that Bach conceived it not as music for performance but as a theoretical treatise made audible, a final meditation on the possibilities inherent in a simple musical idea. Yet for all its intellectual rigor, the work resonates with profound emotion, particularly in light of its incompleteness. The manuscript breaks off mid-phrase in what would have been the final fugue, the notes ceasing at the moment Bach introduced his own musical signature—B-A-C-H (B ♭ -A-C-B in German notation)—into the contrapuntal fabric, as if inscribing his name into eternity before the pen fell silent.

Tonight's performance presents two movements from this monumental cycle in Richard Klemm and Carl Weymar's arrangement for string quartet. *Contrapunctus I* introduces the work's germinal theme in its simplest form: four voices entering one by one, each taking up the subject and weaving it into an ever-denser tapestry.

Contrapunctus IV ventures into more complex terrain. Bach inverts the theme—turning it upside down—and sets the original and its mirror image in dialogue. The effect is both intellectually dazzling and

sublimely moving, as if the subject were examining itself from every angle, discovering hidden facets with each iteration.

Though Bach never specified how *The Art of Fugue* should be performed, the string quartet proves an ideal medium for this music. The four unique voices allow listeners to trace each melodic line as it winds through the dialectical maze. In these arrangements, we hear Bach's abstract musical thought made flesh—not merely notes on a page, but living voices in conversation, exploring the infinite possibilities contained within a single musical idea.

String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110

Dmitri Shostakovich

Composed: 1960

Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8 in C minor* comprises a mere twenty minutes of anxious, and rarely tender music, written in only three days in 1960 after a visit to Dresden, the German city devastated by Allied firebombing in 1945. Officially dedicated to the "Victims of Fascism and War," the quartet has sparked endless debate about its true meaning.

Shostakovich himself offered contradictory accounts: he sarcastically dismissed it as an "ideological piece of no use to anyone," yet privately described it as a deeply personal work—an epitaph reflecting on his own life and struggles. Whether commemorating wartime destruction, protesting Stalinist oppression, or mourning his own compromises with the Soviet state, the work stands as a profound expression of anguish that transcends any single interpretation. What remains undeniable is its visceral emotional power and its status as one of the most important string quartets of the twentieth century.

The quartet appears to be obsessively autobiographical. Shostakovich wrote his musical signature—DSCH (D-E ♭ -C-B in German notation)—wherever he could manage it, providing a genetic code that saturates the entire work. Like Bach's use of the B-A-C-H motif in final contrapunctus in The Art of Fugue, Shostakovich transforms his musical initials into a subject for contrapuntal exploration. This four-note motive opens the quartet fugally, flashes as a frightening ostinato in the violent second movement, dances macabrely in the scherzo, and becomes the subject of a heartbreaking fugue in the finale.

Looking back through Shostakovich's lifetime, the quartet quotes liberally from his earlier compositions: the First and Fifth Symphonies, the Second Piano Trio, the Cello Concerto, and his censored opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk. These quotations emerge like memories floating within a stream of consciousness. The fourth movement grows particularly apocalyptic, incorporating fragments of Russian funeral songs, punctuated by ominous knocking that has been variously interpreted as gunfire, bombing, or fate's arrival. The five movements run together without pause, tightly integrated yet violently interrupted, as if depicting a life flashing before one's eyes.

Shostakovich claimed to have shed countless tears while composing this quartet, and the music bears witness to that grief. It explores the darkest aspects of human experience—sorrow, terror, violence, shock, and a sardonic gallows humor. The work is not beautiful in any traditional sense, but it is riveting, immensely powerful, and achingly lyrical. Its emotional turmoil speaks directly to trauma that cannot be adequately expressed in words. Whether listeners recognize the intricate musical and topical references or not, the quartet delivers an unforgettable experience: a distillation of visceral emotion that functions as both personal lament and collective requiem.

Sleep, My Love

Stephan J. Carlson Arr. Patrick Lin

Composed: 2013

Sleep, My Love was originally written as a barbershop quartet — a short, harmonically rich piece— composed at the request of a young quartet looking for something intimate and contemporary in style. Inspired by the warmth and emotional directness of modern vocal music, Carlson imagined a quiet, deeply personal scene: one partner comforting another through fear, darkness, or sleeplessness, using nothing but the sound of the human voice.

At its heart, *Sleep, My Love* is a lullaby — not just about rest, but about reassurance. The music mirrors the lyrics' message of protection and devotion, with close harmonies and gently unfolding lines that suggest both vulnerability and strength.

In this performance, our violinist Patrick Lin has arranged the piece for string quartet, translating the vocal intimacy of barbershop harmony into a purely instrumental language. The result preserves the warmth, closeness, and expressive breathing of the original, while allowing the strings to sing in their own way — offering a moment of calm, tenderness, and human connection.

Text from the original Barbershop Quartet

When your fears are too heavy and darkness seems to strangle the day,

When your heart's near to breaking, I'll take it all away.

Just close your eyes, and sleep a while.

Just close your eyes, and be at peace.

And when the night is long, I'll keep you warm.

If shadows rend the trembling walls around your soul, just let them go.

And close your eyes - Let me keep you safe tonight.

Just close your eyes as dreams unfold.

And if nightmares roam the halls within your mind,

Just let my arms become your very lullaby.

If the sky seems to crumble, and thunder seems to roar overhead,

If the earth seems to tremble, if it seems like it's the end

Just close your eyes, and soon you'll feel the light.

Just close your eyes, and you'll be free. If the tears restrained should fall tonight,

Wipe them all away, because you're mine.

Just close your eyes and sleep, my love.

Just close your eyes, let me take it all away.

Our love is stronger than your fears could ever be.

I'll hold you close because you're all I'll ever need.

Don't you know that you're my world?

I'll love you 'til my dying day.

So sleep, my love, just sleep.

Anyone Can Cook!

Alice Y Hong

Composed: 2025

From the Composer:

Anyone Can Cook comes from a place of celebration: celebrating the wonderful tenure of Jonathan Crow as the Music Director of Toronto Summer Music from 2016 - 2025, Toronto Summer Music marking their 20th anniversary, and the strong community that TSM has cultivated surrounding and embracing classical music and incredible musical talent.

But the piece also comes from a very personal and sentimental memory of mine: when I walked into a violin lesson with Jonathan, then a first-year student pursuing her doctorate, just one week before my first doctoral recital. When he asked how I was doing, I burst into tears from the stress I was feeling. In response, instead of focusing on the impending recital, Jonathan sent two tickets to Ratatouille in Concert with the Toronto Symphony.

For me, these tickets were a sweet reminder that in music, despite all of the necessary hours and focus needed to pursue this career, we are allowed to take time for mental and emotional health. This was a message no teacher had ever relayed to me before Jonathan, and now it is always something I remind my own students, colleagues, and myself. I will always be grateful for that anecdote. So, in honor of Jonathan, TSM and Ratatouille, I hope *Anyone Can Cook* brings a smile to your face and reminds you to always take some time for yourself.

Lewinsville's ***Concerts in the Community*** strives to bring arts into the McLean and Tysons area. Concerts are free and open to the public. ***Concerts in the Community*** is made possible by the generous support of the Lewinsville Music Fund. A donation to support Lewinsville's music program will take place following the concert.

Join our concert mailing list before or after tonight's program!

Concerts in the Community Upcoming

Wednesday, February 25th at 6:15 pm - U.S. Air Force 'Airmen of Note' Jazz Combo perform

Friday, March 20th at 7:00 pm - Herseth Family Brass and Organ Celebration, featuring William Gerlach, Michael Harper, Joshua Kauffman, and John Nothaft perform

Wednesday, April 22nd at 6:15 pm - U.S. Navy Band Woodwind Quintet Performs

Wednesday, May 26th at 6:15 pm - J Clark Young Artist Recital - Abbie Wood performs Organ masterworks

Lewinsville Presbyterian Upcoming Events

Sunday, February 15th at 11:00 am - Jazz worship service, with Chancel Choir and NOLA Jazz Sextet

Tuesday, February 17th at 6:00 pm - Mardi Gras Dinner Church

Wednesday, February 18th at 12:00 pm and 7:30 pm - Ash Wednesday Communion Worship services

February 2026 - Music of Black local composers of the DMV during worship.

Lewinsville Presbyterian Church
1724 Chain Bridge Rd, McLean, VA 22101
https://www.lewinsville.org/