

Shanghai to Vienna

WORLD CHAMBER MUSIC ANCHORS MID-FEST DAYS AND NIGHTS By Xana McCrea

East meets West, and the twain twine to the benefit of OBF audiences.

This summer at the Bach Festival, the renowned tones of the Shanghai Quartet will join the tingling anticipation in our Olympic Trials air. The Quartet, composed of Weigang Li and Yi-Wen Jiang on violin, Honggang Li on viola and Nicholas Tzavaras on cello, performs on its own and in special concerts with OBF's featured soloists for concerts that span the Northern Hemisphere.

Recognized worldwide for its expert marriage of Eastern and Western flair and repertoire, the Quartet possesses a style highly befitting the East-meets-West quality of the Beijing Olympics in August. For just that reason, OBF Executive Director John Evans chose them as a featured quartet. Their chamber-flavored performances demonstrate the motif that is the backbone of this year's Festival. "There is an aim this year, for the first time, to provide a chamber music series that is in itself a thematic series, with all sorts of connections and cross-connections, so this strand of programming adds up to more than the sum of its parts," Evans says. Each of the Shanghai's performances is built upon a foundation of a string masterpiece, and each is meant to carry both player and listener to a different place in the world.

The Shanghai Quartet's first performance on Sunday, July 5, is comprised of a pair of sextets by Strauss and Brahms built around the virtuosic **Mendelssohn Octet** in E-flat major. In this performance, the OBF string principals (Gernot Süssmuth and Rahel Rilling on violin, Tom Turner on viola and cellist Jakob Eschenburg) join the group.

Second up on Monday, July 7, the Quartet features its own program in **China Song**, a show designed to draw a musical line from West to East and back again. The



The Shanghai Quartet

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program sandwiches China Song (a mesh of traditional Chinese folk tunes) between quartets from Barber and Ravel. This worldly production especially captures the spirit of both Eugene at the trials and

the world at the summer Olympics. The Shanghai Quartet will also be playing excerpts from their China Song for medalists at the trials at Hayward Field on Sunday, July 6, an offering celebrating the

athletes' journey to Beijing.

Moving to another part of the world on Tuesday, July 8, the Shanghais will join with eight of the OBF's premier soloists to take a joyful journey to France in **Le Salon Français**. Quintets from Poulenc and Debussy are followed by Saint-Saëns' "Fantasy" and Ibert's "Trois pièces brèves." The OBF's clever Ravel thread shows itself in **Le Salon Français**, for the production is anchored by the French chamber masterpiece, Ravel's "Introduction and Allegro for Flute, Clarinet, Harp, and String Quartet". Popular OBF wind principals, including Allan Vogel (oboe) and Lorna McGhee (flute), play along with the Quartet.

Ending with a tremendous final concert in the spirit of Viennese salons, the Quartet joins with OBF soloists and the Schubert Singers of the OBF Men's Chorus Wednesday, July 9, for the **Schubertiade**, a musical gala that brings together well-known faces from many different OBF performances. Evans says the program was designed as a shared showcase. "It gives all the major artists of this year's festival a chance to collaborate in a musical party for the festival audience who will have, by then, got to know their music-making in other contexts."

The Schubert-ful show is designed in the spirit of a real Schubertiade, "a sort of house party where Schubert, his family and musical friends met to entertain one another," Evans said. The performance aims to entertain musicians and audience alike, so both may enjoy the music from different dimensions. Highlighted in this Viennese fête are the "Quartettsatz," "Fantasy in F minor" for piano duo, "Der Hirt auf dem Felsen," "Auf dem Strom" and "Erlkönig," all by Schubert, all night long.

This five-day smorgasbord of music gives everyone something to love. Pick one performance or four; head out to Hayward for the musical sendoff; but whatever you do, don't miss the Shanghai Quartet's residency at the fest this year as East and West blend in harmony.

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