

# City of Angels

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7 | 7:30 P.M.

**PHILIP GLASS**  
(b. 1937)

**String Quartet No. 3, “Mishima”** (1985)

18 min

I. 1957 - Award Montage  
II. November 25 - Ichigaya  
III. 1934 - Grandmother and Kimitake  
IV. 1962 - Body Building  
V. Blood Oath  
VI. Mishima/Closing

Yun-Ting Lee and Miran Kim, violin  
Olivia Chew, viola  
Joseph Johnson, cello

**ENNIO MORRICONE**  
(1928-2020)

**“Gabriel’s Oboe”** from *The Mission* (1985)

3 min

Joseph Johnson, cello  
Kenny Broberg, piano

**ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD**  
(1897-1957)

**Piano Quintet in E major, Op. 15** (1921)

33 min

*Mäßiges Zeitmaß, mit schwungvoll blühendem Ausdruck*  
*Adagio: Mit größter Ruhe, stets äußerst gebunden und aus drucksvoll*  
*Finale: Gemessen beinahe pathetisch*

Wyatt Underhill and Sarah Grimes, violin  
Dave Auerbach, viola  
Joseph Johnson, cello  
Kenny Broberg, piano  
*Mr. Broberg appears by arrangement with the Cliburn.*

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**String Quartet No. 3 - Glass**

The 1985 movie *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* portrays the life of Japanese writer and nationalist Yukio Mishima, who, after a failed 1970 coup, committed seppuku (a form of Japanese ritual suicide). Director and co-writer Paul Schrader took an unusual approach to the script, discarding chronological storytelling and following interwoven thematic strands instead. One thread focuses on Mishima's writing; another depicts the last day of his life; and a third consists of flashbacks to his childhood.

Composer Philip Glass was hired to compose the soundtrack. To help differentiate the various thematic strands, Glass decided that he'd employ different kinds of ensembles for each one's score. For the flashbacks, he settled on a string quartet.

"At the time of writing the film music, I anticipated the String Quartet sections would be extracted from the film score and made into a concert piece in its own right," he later wrote, and that's exactly what happened. However, even though the quartet began life as film music, it's still classic Glass. All six movements feature his trademark short, obsessively repetitive phrases, creating a transporting atmosphere for concertgoers and moviegoers alike.

**Gabriel's Oboe - Morricone**

The 1986 historical epic *The Mission* tells the story of an eighteenth-century Spanish Jesuit priest named Gabriel, sent to establish a mission in the Brazilian jungle to convert the Guarani people. The film portrays the mission as a place of peace. Ultimately, however, Gabriel and most of the Guarani are murdered by encroaching soldiers and settlers.

Music plays an outsize role in the story. When Gabriel arrives, in an attempt to convince the Guarani that he comes in peace, he plays a gently bittersweet piece on his oboe ("Gabriel's Oboe" in the soundtrack). The warriors are entranced and allow him to live. Later, Gabriel and the Guarani resist the violence of the invading forces by singing. This time, however, music is not enough to save them.

The responsibility of composing the soundtrack fell to Italian composer and conductor Ennio Morricone, whose 500+ film and television credits include the scores for *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *The Untouchables*, and *Cinema Paradiso*. His music for *The Mission* was widely acclaimed (many critics thought it was the strongest element of an otherwise middling film) and it netted him one of his six Oscar nominations.

**Piano Quintet - Korngold**

Erich Wolfgang Korngold seemed destined to become a great composer. His father was a music critic; his mother was a pianist and singer; and the Korngolds named their second son, born in 1897, after Mozart himself. Against all odds, Erich followed the same prodigious trajectory that his namesake did. He was composing by the age of seven, and by twelve, he'd written a cantata that led none other than Gustav Mahler himself to declare Erich a "genius." Before he was out of his teens, he was widely acknowledged to be one of the greatest operatic composers of his day.

Korngold's first big post-war success was his opera *Die tote Stadt*, which premiered in 1920 and became one of the most popular operas of the decade. But he soon ran into an artistic identity crisis. Other young artists of his generation, traumatized by the devastation of World War I and searching for something new, began experimenting with new influences, new instrumentation, and new sounds. Almost overnight, his lush, late-Romantic style began to sound outdated, even anachronistic. Another threat loomed, as well: the Nazis' rise to power. In the 1930s, he fled Austria for America. While here, he paved the way for modern movie music as we know it, transplanting techniques he learned writing opera in decadent Vienna to Golden Age Hollywood. Because of his continued embrace of a lush, sentimental style - in a famously catty swipe, the *New York Post* once called his work "more korn than gold" - his reputation as a "serious composer" (whatever that means) soon dimmed, and he's only now experiencing a revival.

Korngold's Piano Quintet was premiered in 1923, before the shift in his personal and professional fortunes, but it is nevertheless clearly pointing the way to the film scores he'd compose in Hollywood a decade later. This is a work of profound energy and intensity, full of cinematic glitz and glamour.

The work's most noticeable trait is perhaps its sheer overwhelming passion, which Korngold expresses using a variety of techniques. One of the most noteworthy is abundantly clear in the piece's opening, which features a series of striving, upward swells. He's also constantly changing time signatures, writing in rich and unpredictable chromatic harmonies, and preferring orchestra-like textures. Put together, those techniques help to create an emotionally frenzied atmosphere. The crown jewel of the quintet is the second movement, which consists of nine breathtaking variations on a theme he wrote for his future wife. The work's finale goes wild with a quirky, darkly giddy virtuosity that is constantly threatening to spin out of control, but somehow the instruments manage to hold everything together until a satisfying scurry of a conclusion.