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STRING QUARTET

FEBRUARY 7, 2024



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JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024 | 7:30 PM



Juilliard String Quartet

Areta Zhulla, *violin*
Ronald Copes, *violin*
Molly Carr, *viola*
Astrid Schween, *cello*

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JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

With unparalleled artistry and enduring vigor, the **Juilliard String Quartet (JSQ)** continues to inspire audiences around the world. Founded in 1946 and hailed by The Boston Globe as “the most important American quartet in history,” the ensemble draws on a deep and vital engagement to the classics, while embracing the mission of championing new works, a vibrant combination of the familiar and the daring. Each performance of the Juilliard String Quartet is a unique experience, bringing together the four members’ profound understanding, total commitment, and unceasing curiosity in sharing the wonders of the string quartet literature.

In the 2023/2024 season the quartet returns to Japan with concerts in Tokyo, Niigata, Mishima, Hyogo, and Nagano. In Europe appearances include the Konzerthaus Berlin, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Schumann Saal in Dusseldorf and the Wimbledon Festival. In North America appearances include Arizona Friends of Chamber Music, Buffalo Chamber Music Society, South Mountain Concerts, SOKA Arts, Hartt School of Music, Lied Center of Kansas, Chamber Music Society of Louisville, Emory Chamber Music Society and the Amelia Islands Chamber Music Festival in addition to concerts at Alice Tully Hall and People’s Symphony Concerts. Their programs will feature new works by Jörg Widmann (String Quartets Nos. 8 & 10) and Tyson Davis (String Quartet No. 2) commissioned by the quartet and premiered last season, in addition to works by Janacek, Beethoven and Schubert.

Adding to its celebrated discography, an album of works by Beethoven, Bartók, and Dvořák was released by Sony Classical in April 2021 to critical acclaim. Additionally, Sony Masterworks released a JSQ catalog release (The Early Juilliard Recordings) in June 2021. In the fall of 2018, the JSQ released an album on Sony featuring the world premiere recording of Mario Davidovsky’s Fragments (2016), together with Beethoven’s Quartet Op. 95 and Bartók’s Quartet No. 1.

EVENING SERIES

Additionally, Sony Classical’s 2014 reissue of the Quartet’s landmark recordings of the first four Elliott Carter String Quartets along with the 2013 recording of Carter’s fifth quartet traces a remarkable period in the evolution of both the composer and the ensemble. The Quartet’s recordings of the Bartók and Schoenberg Quartets, as well as those of Debussy, Ravel and Beethoven, have won Grammy Awards, and in 2011 the JSQ became the first classical music ensemble to receive a lifetime achievement award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Devoted master teachers, the members of the Juilliard String Quartet offer classes and open rehearsals when on tour. The JSQ is String Quartet in Residence at the Juilliard School and its members – Areta Zhulla, Ronald Copes, Molly Carr, and Astrid Schween – are all sought-after teachers on the string and chamber music faculties. Each May, they host the five-day internationally recognized Juilliard String Quartet Seminar. During the summer, the JSQ works closely on string quartet repertoire with students at the Tanglewood Music Center.

PROGRAM

LEOŠ JANÁČEK (1854-1928)

String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters"

Andante - Con moto
Adagio - Vivace
Moderato
Allegro

TYSON GHOLSTON DAVIS (b.2000)

String Quartet No. 2, "Amorphous Figures" (2022)

INTERMISSION

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

String Quartet No. 15 in G Major, D. 887

Allegro molto moderato
Andante un poco moto
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Allegro assai

CZECH COMPOSER LEOŠ JANÁČEK was the fiery younger colleague of Dvořák and Smetana. Trained in the classic-romantic tradition, Janáček destroyed much of his early work during the 1890s and began to write “music of truth,” an art expressive of higher reality. Disdainful of the merely beautiful and interesting, Janáček created actual dramas, each brought to life through varied tone qualities, ever-changing dynamics, and strongly contrasting themes. Although opera became his favorite genre, he wrote numerous instrumental works that, he wrote, should sound “as if dipped in blood.” Every piece should contain not only “roses” but also “thorns.”

In the early 1920s the Bohemian quartet, led by Dvořák’s son-in-law Josef Suk, asked Janáček to compose two string quartets for them. Janáček’s String Quartet No. 2 (1928) was inspired by his long friendship with the beautiful Kamila Stösslová, a married woman thirty-eight years his junior. The quartet, which develops with unpredictable shifts of texture, color and rhythm, was intended to reflect the character of their relationship as revealed in their exchange of more than 600 letters.

The opening Andante portrays the fateful first meeting of these platonic lovers. As Kamila gradually becomes the composer’s muse, the music grows faster and more rapturous. The viola, which assumes the persona of Kamila, maintains the dominant role. After a fortissimo trill in the cello and an introductory theme in the violins, the viola articulates an eerie theme *sul ponticello* (on the bridge). The cello, taking the persona of the composer, then shares this theme as the violins develop a melody alternately forceful and elegiac. The movement closes with a statement of the opening theme accompanied by high violin trills.

In the second movement the composer contemplates Kamila giving birth to a son and considers his future life. (Janáček was actually devoted to Kamila’s real-life son. Shortly after completing the quartet the composer went on holiday with Kamila’s family. Janáček caught a chill while hunting for the boy in the woods and quickly died of pneumonia.) The thematic material is based primarily on the viola theme heard in the first movement. A lively melody in 5/8 time provides a rhythmic contrast.

Strong contrasts of mood characterize the third movement. Two themes are explored through continuously varying tempos and textures.

The Allegro finale portrays the composer’s devotion to his muse: “You stand behind every note, you, living, forceful, loving. The fragrance of your body, the glow of your kisses—no, really of mine. Those notes of mine kiss all of you. They call for you passionately.” An initial folklike melody is interrupted by a conflicting rhythmic pattern that gradually insinuates itself into the entire texture. The movement becomes a colorful amalgam of sounds: a cello line alternating pizzicato and bowed notes on successive beats; a rapidly accelerating theme; intrusions of the opening theme into the ongoing material. Near the end all four instruments play stridently at the bridge on a strong dissonance. The second violin trills a four note theme, which leads to a re-exposition of the quartet’s three primary motifs. The work closes on Janáček’s favorite chord of D-flat major with the added dissonance of E-flat.

FROM TYSON GHOLSTON DAVIS

Amorphous Figures (String Quartet No. 2) (2022) is a work written in response to Jacob’s Ladder (1957), a painting by the American abstract expressionist Helen Frankenthaler. I first discovered this work in 2019 when I had been taking frequent visits to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Frankenthaler’s color palette and her sublime sense of space and movement immediately drew me to the canvas. I began to see musical characteristics of her abstraction. The hues dance around one another in a way that they begin to morph into one another subtly. The soft edges of these oil paints thinned with turpentine aid this quality of variations I found. With these themes in mind, musical elements such as motivic development and developing variation allotted me to begin my sketches of this work. *Amorphous Figures* consist of continuous variations that gradually expand on the melodic and gestural content of the work. The variations are interrupted by scherzo-like sections “Bursts I and II”. These contrasting sections are distinctive due to their pitch content and seemingly spontaneous, violent gestures. “Bursts I and II” influence the structure material of the variations that follow them until they begin to synthesize into an amorphous collage in the same fashion as Frankenthaler’s masterpiece.

Amorphous Figures was commissioned by Da Camera Society of Houston, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Chamber Music of Cincinnati for the Juilliard String Quartet.

SCHUBERT'S D. 887 QUARTET in G major is the last of his fifteen string quartets and perhaps the most remarkable. Within a ten day period in June, 1826 Schubert created a towering work of astounding modernity from the briefest of thematic ideas. Recognizing its uniqueness, he chose to program the quartet's first movement on the breakthrough invitational concert held six months before his death. Although the critics present praised its "spirit and originality," publishers rejected the work because of its length and difficulty. The quartet was eventually published posthumously fifteen years after its completion.

A restless, questioning atmosphere is established at the outset. The quartet begins with a harmonically ambiguous motif--a sustained opening chord in G major abruptly resolves on G minor, followed by a staccato response. The second theme, a poignant utterance played in short, syncopated phrases by the violin, is repeated by the cello. Freely cast in sonata form, the movement unfolds within a framework of harmonies that continuously alternate between the major and minor modes. Agitated tremolos and virtuoso passagework contribute to the orchestral quality of this extensive movement.

The last three movements of D. 887 reveal relationships to Schubert's D. 810 String Quartet in D minor ("Death and the Maiden"), premiered in January of the same year. While the earlier Andante is clearly based on the eponymous song in which Death comes to claim a young girl, the dramatic Andante (E minor) of D. 887 also suggests mortality. The theatrical qualities of this movement have been recognized by the cinema industry. Both irony and death were conveyed in "Crimes and Misdemeanors" (1989): in an extended scene, the female love interest, a naive devotee of Schubert's gentler songs, walks a deserted street as the cello plays the wistfully melancholy opening solo. But suddenly, in the second thematic area (G minor), a violent Schubert emerges.

Abruptly loud, jagged rhythms and vehemently roiling melodic cells, made even more emphatic by their separating rests, accompany the demise of this hapless woman.

The Scherzo (B minor) returns to Schubert's more familiar world. A buoyant melodic idea is followed by a central trio section (G major) that resembles a Ländler, a genial Austrian peasant dance. This slower and lilting area offers one of Schubert's characteristic glorious modulations (here to B major) before the repeat of the Scherzo.

The brilliant finale unfolds with relentless energy. Formally this lengthy movement is a rondo with two themes and two contrasting interludes. The harmonic ambiguity heard in the opening movement now returns as the key center continuously vacillates between major and minor. As in the earlier "Death and the Maiden" Quartet, its first subject resembles a tarantella, a fast Italian dance originally intended to purge venom from a spider's victim. The strongly accented second subject perpetuates the momentum of a feverish dance.

Notes for the Janáček and Schubert by Nancy Monsman

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Michael Stephen Brown, piano Wednesday, November 8, 2023 7:30 p.m.	Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival	Leilehua Lanzilotti <i>abupua'a</i> Argus Quartet January 17, 2024 Arizona Premiere
Isidore String Quartet Wednesday, December 6, 2023 7:30 p.m.	Winter Festival 2024 March 3–10, 2024 Peter Rejto, <i>Artistic Director</i>	Pierre Jalbert <i>Quintet for Clarinet and Strings</i> Dover Quartet March 10, 2024 World Premiere
Argus Quartet Wednesday, January 17, 2024 7:30 p.m.	Dover Quartet Joel Link, <i>violin</i> Bryan Lee, <i>violin</i> Julianne Lee, <i>viola</i> Camden Shaw, <i>cello</i>	<i>Tickets online or at the box office.</i>
Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Wednesday, January 31, 2024 7:30 p.m.	Edward Arron, <i>cello</i> Jennifer Frautschi, <i>violin</i> Romie de Guise-Langlois, <i>clarinet</i>	<i>For program and artist information, please visit arizonachambermusic.org.</i>
Juilliard String Quartet Wednesday, February 7, 2024 7:30 p.m.	Bernadette Harvey, <i>piano</i> Jeewon Park, <i>piano</i> Masumi Per Rostad, <i>viola</i> Randall Scarlata, <i>baritone</i> Axel Strauss, <i>violin</i>	
Fauré Quartett Wednesday, March 27, 2024 7:30 p.m.		
Piano & Friends	<i>If you are interested in sponsoring a concert or a musician, please contact Cathy Anderson in the box office or at arizonachambermusic.org.</i> <i>If you are interested in sponsoring a commissioned work, please contact Cathy Anderson at office@arizonachambermusic.org</i> <i>As all are aware, sustaining the legacy of Jean-Paul Bierny is important as he single-handedly expended a tireless energy and endless generosity on Arizona Friends of Chamber Music's behalf. Thus, thanks to the generosity of our long-term supporter, eddy Hodak, he is offering complementary student tickets to the first ten students that come to any AFCM concert. Apply through the box office by sending an email to cathyanderson@arizonachambermusic.org or calling 520-577-3769.</i>	
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Nikki Chooi, violin Timothy Chooi, <i>violin</i> Sunday, January 7, 2024 3:00 p.m.		
Steven Banks, saxophone Xak Bjerken, <i>piano</i> Sunday, February 18, 2024 3:00 p.m.		

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Rosauro: Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra, with Dorothy Vanek
Youth Concerto winner, Campbell Stewart (marimba)
Gershwin: *Porgy and Bess* "A Symphonic Picture"
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November 11 & 12 **Lalo:** *Le roi d'Ys* Overture
Various: Arias and duets from operas, with Renata Vari,
Diana Peralta and Alonso Sicairos
Strauss: *Serenade*, Op. 7
Tchaikovsky: *Romeo and Juliet* Overture

February 10 & 11 **Fernandez:** *Batuque* from *Reisado do Pastoreio*
Coleridge-Taylor: Violin Concerto, Op. 80, with violinist Carissa Powe
Walker: *Lyric for Strings*
Stravinsky: Violin Concerto in D Major (movement 1), with
Dorothy Vanek Youth Concerto winner, Rachel Gardner (violin)
Still: *Symphony No. 1 (Afro-American Symphony)*

March 16 & 17 **Asia:** *Gateways*
Dvořák: Cello Concerto Op. 104, with cellist Zuill Bailey
Dvořák: *Symphony No. 7* Op. 70

April 27 & 28 **Guest conductor Giovanni Pompeo**
Verdi: Overture to *I Vespri Siciliani*
Kalman: *Hudson* Concerto, with pianist Alexander Frey
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