

Hopkins Center for the Arts

at Dartmouth

presents

St. Lawrence String Quartet

Geoff Nuttall, violin

Owen Dalby, violin

Lesley Robertson, viola

Christopher Costanza, cello

Funded in part by the Frank L. Harrington 1924 Fund No. 3, the Aires Family Fund for the Performing Arts, and a gift from Linda and Rick Roesch '60 TU'61.

Thu, Oct 10, 7:30 pm

2019 • Spaulding Auditorium • Dartmouth College

Program

String Quartet in D major, Op. 20, No. 4 (1772)

Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809)

Allegro di molto

Un poco adagio affettuoso

Allegretto alla zingarese

Presto (scherzando)

Second Quartet (2014)

John Adams (b. 1947)

Allegro molto

Andantino-Energico

Intermission

Yiddishbbuk

Osvaldo Golijov (b. 1960)

Composed in 1992 for the St. Lawrence String Quartet

I.

Ia. D.W. (1932-1944)

Ib. F.B. (1930-1944)

Ic. T.K. (1934-1943)

II. I.B.S. (1904-1991)

III. L.B. (1918-1990)

String Quartet in C, Op. 20 No. 2 (1772)

Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809)

Moderato

Capriccio: Adagio

Menuetto: Allegretto

Fuga a 4tro soggetti: Allegro

The St. Lawrence String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists,
www.davidroweartists.com. St. Lawrence String recordings can be heard on EMI Classics.

The quartet is Ensemble-in-Residence at Stanford University.

www.slsq.com

Approx duration: 90 minutes, including intermission

Program Notes

Franz Josef Haydn

Op. 20, Number 4, in D Major

“Every page of the six quartets of Op. 20 is of historic and aesthetic importance... there is perhaps no single or sextuple opus in the history of instrumental music which has achieved so much or achieved it so quietly...”

—Sir Donald Francis Tovey

These particular quartets by Haydn are the first great masterpieces—by any composer—for the medium of two violins, viola and cello. In addition to solidifying the formal four-movement structure of the string quartet, for the first time in a small ensemble context one can hear the democratic participation of four truly equal voices. Haydn draws on an immense range of emotional expression in Op. 20, with brilliant compositional flourishes to match. He synthesizes the very pinnacle of baroque-era counterpoint with his distinctive wit, whimsy and pathos, and his groundbreaking use of silence as “topic.” It is these six quartets specifically that threw down the gauntlet and which inspired every major later composer to compose their most profound utterances for the medium of string quartet.

The calm pastoral theme that opens this musical story gives no hint of the virtuosic, brilliant and quicksilver music that follows without warning. This movement is a tale of two distinct characters—one serene, one excited—that interact and interrupt each other throughout. The slow movement is perhaps Haydn’s most deeply felt and emotional theme and variations. It sustains an almost painful *affettuoso*, culminating in an extended final variation and coda that explodes in anguish, and then ends with quivering pain. A dance follows: a jubilant minuet in the Hungarian Romani (gypsy) style. Here Haydn is playing on the knowledge and expectation of the minuet rhythm (see No. 6). One can almost hear him chuckling as players and the dancing audience stumble. In contrast, the “trio” (the middle section) could not be a more perfectly symmetrical, danceable and proper cello solo. The emotional release from the *adagio* continues with an effervescent *rondo* finale. *Scherzando* prevails throughout—musical laughter with a hint of bluegrass.

St. Lawrence String Quartet

John Adams

Second Quartet

Commissioned by Stanford Lively Arts, The Library of Congress, Carnegie Hall Corporation, the Juilliard School and Wigmore Hall, London, John Adams’ Second String Quartet was composed for the St. Lawrence String Quartet and premiered by the quartet in 2015. Speaking of his relationship with the St. Lawrence String Quartet, Adams says:

“String quartet writing is one of the most difficult challenges a composer can take on. Unless one is an accomplished string player and writes in that medium all the time—and I don’t know many these days who do—the demands of handling this extremely volatile and transparent instrumental medium can easily be humbling, if not downright humiliating. What I appreciate about my friends in the St. Lawrence String Quartet is their willingness to let me literally improvise on them as if they were a piano or a drum and I a crazy man beating away with only the roughest outlines of what I want. They will go the distance with me, allow me to try and fail, and they will indulge my seizures of doubt, frustration, and indecision, all the while providing intuitions and frequently brilliant suggestions of their own. Quartet writing for me seems to be a matter of very long-term ‘work in progress.’”

The work is comprised of two movements, *Allegro molto* and *Andantino-Energetico*, and is built on musical fragments from two piano sonatas by Beethoven. The *Allegro molto* is entirely based on two short phrases from the scherzo of Beethoven’s Opus 110 piano sonata. The movement careens forward at the fastest pace possible for the performers to play it, with Beethoven fragments reappearing throughout the music and dissipating quickly into increasingly remote harmonies and rhythmic patterns. The second movement begins with a gentle melody drawn from the opening movement of Beethoven’s Opus 111 piano sonata and grows in complexity until arriving at the *energico*. Here, Adams plays with the shortest of the Diabelli Variations which is driven by a series of chromatic *appoggiaturas* and emphatic gestures. The busy and convivial mood reaches hyperactivity among the four voices for the boisterous finale.

Alessandra Rose Aquilanti

Program Notes *continued*

Osvaldo Golijov

Yiddishbbuk

“A broken song played on a shattered cymbalon.” Thus, writes Kafka, begins *Yiddishbbuk*, a collection of apocryphal psalms which he read while living in Prague’s Street of the Alchemists. The only remnants of the collection are a few verses interspersed among the entries of Kafka’s notebooks, and the last lines are also quoted in a letter to Milena: “No one sings as purely as those who are in the deepest hell. Theirs is the song which we confused with that of the angels.” Written in Hebrew characters and surrounded with musical notation, marks similar to those of the genuine texts, the psalms’ only other reference to their music is “In the mode of the Babylonian Lamentations.”

Based on these vestiges, these inscriptions for string quartet are an attempt to reconstruct that music. The movements of the piece bear the initials of the five people commemorated in the work. The first movement remembers three children interned by the Nazis at the Terezín concentration camp: Doris Weiserová (1932-1944), Frantisek Bass (1930-1944) and Tomás Kauders (1934-1943). Their poems and drawings appear in the book *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, published by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. The second movement

bears the initials of the writer Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991), and the last movement the initials of Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990).

Osvaldo Golijov, 2003

Franz Josef Haydn

Op. 20, Number 2, in C Major

This quartet begins with a cello solo, while the viola plays the bass line—musical democracy in action! The second violin leads a dramatic transformation in the second half of the movement to stormy minor material before a return to the sunny opening music. The *adagio* is one of the most groundbreaking and influential movements in the history of the string quartet. It invokes a Greek chorus, opera, recitative, aria and full symphony orchestra, all in one capricious musical journey. The movement flows without pause to the sound of bagpipes in the folk-inspired minuet. The trio returns to the solo cello and the dark, brooding qualities of the slow movement. Haydn proudly announces a fugue with four subjects to end this quartet. It’s serious counterpoint, albeit with a very unserious jig-like spirit. Haydn wrote at the end of his autograph score, counterpointing a deep religious faith with characteristic wit, “Laus omnip: Deo / Sic fugit amicus amicum.” (Praise to Almighty God / Thus one friend escapes another).

St. Lawrence String Quartet

About the Artists

St. Lawrence String Quartet

Geoff Nuttall, violin

Owen Dalby, violin

Lesley Robertson, viola

Christopher Costanza, cello

“Modern,” “dramatic,” “superb,” “wickedly attentive,” “with a hint of rock ‘n’ roll energy” are just a few ways critics describe the musical phenomenon that is the St. Lawrence String Quartet (SLSQ). The SLSQ is renowned for the intensity of its performances, its breadth of repertoire, and its commitment to concert experiences that are at once intellectually exciting and emotionally alive.

Established in Toronto in 1989, the SLSQ quickly earned acclaim at top international chamber music competitions and was soon playing hundreds of concerts per year worldwide. It established an ongoing residency at Spoleto Festival USA, and made prize-winning recordings for EMI of music by Schumann, Tchaikovsky and Golijov, earning two Grammy nominations and a host of other prizes before being appointed ensemble-in-residence at Stanford University in 1998.

At Stanford, the SLSQ is at the forefront of intellectual life on campus. It directs the music department’s chamber music program, and frequently collaborates with other departments including the Schools of Law, Medicine,

About the Artists *continued*

Business and Education. The quartet frequently performs at Stanford Live, hosts an annual chamber music seminar attracting musicians from all over the world, and runs the Emerging String Quartet Program through which they mentor the next generation of young chamber musicians. In the words of Alex Ross of *The New Yorker*: “The St. Lawrence are remarkable not simply for the quality of their music making, exalted as it is, but for the joy they take in the act of connection.”

This year, the SLSQ marks its 30th anniversary season with musical engagements celebrating new compositions alongside cornerstones of the chamber music repertoire. The season kicks off with a new album of all six Haydn Opus 20s, alongside a concert at Wigmore Hall of the same program, which the *Los Angeles Times* recently hailed as “in-your-face exhilarating.” The season follows with engagements in North America and Europe featuring Haydn Discovery Concerts, and programs including Beethoven Opus 135, Amy Beach’s Piano Quintet with pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, the Debussy String Quartet, Franck’s Piano Quintet with pianist Stephen Prutsman, Korngold’s String Quartet No. 3, Paul Wiancko’s Oboe Quintet with oboist James Austin Smith, and new commissions by Douglas Balliett, Osvaldo Golijov and Patricia Alessandrini.

Recent highlights include recitals at Carnegie Hall and Wigmore Hall, and solo performances with Michael Tilson Thomas and the SF Symphony, Gustavo Dudamel and the LA Philharmonic and Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony in John Adams’s *Absolute Jest* for string quartet and orchestra, and the European premieres of Adams’s second string quartet. Fiercely committed to collaboration with living composers, the SLSQ’s fruitful partnership with Adams, Jonathan Berger, Osvaldo Golijov and many others has yielded some of the finest additions to the quartet literature in recent years.

The quartet is also especially dedicated to the music of Haydn, recording his groundbreaking set of six Opus 20 quartets in high-definition video for a free, universal release online in 2019. According to *The New Yorker*, “...no other North American quartet plays the music of Haydn with more intelligence, expressivity, and force.”

Geoff Nuttall (violin) and Lesley Robertson (viola) met as students while studying music in their native Canada and in 1989 founded the St. Lawrence String Quartet. Christopher Costanza (cello) joined the ensemble in 2003 after performing for many years with the Chicago String Quartet. Owen Dalby (violin) is a founding member of Decoda, the Affiliate Ensemble of Carnegie Hall. He joined the SLSQ in 2015.

Connecting Artists to the Community

While at Dartmouth, the St. Lawrence String Quartet visited the Upper Valley Music Center for a demonstration and discussion of their work. They also participated in a public pre-show panel discussion. For more information about Hop Engagement and Community programs, call 603.646.2010 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu/faculty-staff or hop.dartmouth.edu/community.

Upcoming Events



Isango Ensemble *The Magic Flute*

Tue & Wed, Oct 22 & 23, 7:30 pm

Mozart's best-loved opera is transposed to South Africa—and marimba.



Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra

Tue, Nov 5, 7:30 pm

Time-travel to a Jewish ghetto in 17th-century Italy with America's foremost early music ensemble.



For tickets or more info, call the Box Office at 603.646.2422 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu. Share your experiences! #HopkinsCenter

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