

PHOTO BY SARAH GARDNER



JUPITER STRING QUARTET

Tuesday, April 4, 2017, at 7:30pm

Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

JUPITER STRING QUARTET

Nelson Lee, violin
Megan Freivogel, violin
Liz Freivogel, viola
Daniel McDonough, cello

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Selection from *Cypresses, B. 152*

II. Death Reigns in Many a Human Breast: Allegro ma non troppo

III. When Thy Sweet Glances on Me Fall: Andante con moto

XII. You Ask Me Why My Songs Are Racing: Allegro animato

IX. Thou Only, Dear One, but for Thee: Moderato

XI. Nature Lies Peaceful in Slumber and Dreaming: Allegro scherzando

Leoš Janáček
(1854-1928)

String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters"

Andante

Adagio

Moderato

Allegro

20-minute intermission

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

String Quartet in A Major, Op. 41, No. 3

Andante espressivo; Allegro molto moderato

Assai agitato; L'istesso tempo; Un poco adagio; Tempo risoluto

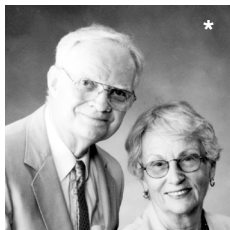
Adagio molto

Finale: Allegro molto vivace

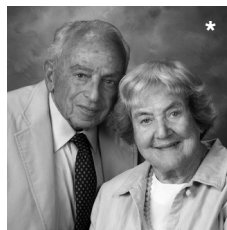
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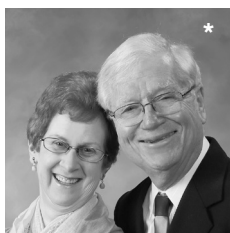
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PROGRAM NOTES

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves,
Czech Republic

Died May 1, 1904, in Prague, Czech Republic

Selections from *Cypresses*, B. 152

Chamber music permeated Dvořák's compositional life from his Op. 1 String Quintet of 1861 to his Op. 106 String Quartet of 1896. While his love of folk music is ever present in his some 40 chamber works, he was not confined in them by his nationalistic interests. More important than any national identification are the freshness, spontaneity, and sense of exploration which pervade his chamber music.

Dvořák's gift for lyricism is much reflected in his *Cypresses* of 1887, originally a setting of 18 songs on poems by Moravian poet, playwright, and novelist Gustav Pflieger Moravský (1833-1875). The poems are an ode to unrequited love which, in Dvořák's hands, becomes an exquisite expression of his gift for melody. The later string quartet version of 12 of the songs adds his talents for instrumental writing to his lyrical gifts. The combination is irresistibly beautiful. Apparently the works were inspired by Dvořák's unreturned love for his piano student Josephina Čermáková, interestingly, the sister of the woman he would marry. Scholarly debate persists today on whether or not Dvořák ever got over his love for Josephina. At her death many years later, Dvořák added a quotation from the songs to the last movement of his famous B Minor Cello Concerto.

The title of each song is reflected in its musical treatment, thus offering a great variety of tempo and sonority in the Jupiter's selection from the set. Dvořák had originally entitled the set *Echo of Songs* and later *Evening Songs*. The current name

Cypresses was assigned to them by the famous Czech violinist Joseph Suk who studied with Dvořák and championed his music.

LEOŠ JANÁČEK

Born July 3, 1854, in Hukvaldy, Czech Republic
Died August 12, 1928, in Ostrava, Czech Republic
String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters"

"I proclaimed freedom in harmonic progressions long before Debussy and really do not need French Impressionism," Leoš Janáček said in a 1926 letter to Jan Mikota. The statement reveals Janáček not only as the Modernist he was but also as the independent spirit defying categorization. Even his nationalism was unique since he was not readily grouped with Czech composers Smetana and Dvořák because of his Moravian background. The Moravian folk music that shaped his music, however, is incorporated in such a way that it underscores Janáček's idiosyncratic approach. Janáček did his finest work in the 20th century—namely his four great operas, the *Sinfonietta*, *Glagolitic Mass*, the song cycle *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, and the two great string quartets of 1921 and 1928. His earlier music may have had a Late Romantic tinge, but these later works put him squarely in the ranks of 20th century music.

As the ink dries on the musical history of the 20th century, Janáček's place in it becomes more and more substantial as one of the most original and effective composers of the era. Nor is his impact confined to the realm of great Czech composers.

The muse of Janáček's Second Quartet, like his first, was Kamila Stosslova. He inscribed the quartet to her in 1928, but even more illuminating than that, wrote her actual letters describing the work in progress while proclaiming his passion for her. The irony of these letters is the historical fact that Janáček's relationship with Kamila was largely in his mind. If it took an imaginary relationship, however, to produce such great music, one is tempted to accept the validity of it.

It would be unfair to overload this commentary with only the emotional references in the "Intimate Letters" Quartet and fail to mention its groundbreaking musical effects such as freedom of form and use of unconventional string techniques, namely, the *sul ponticello* (near the bridge) playing and the intentional stridency and abruptness with which the highly romantic nature of the quartet is punctuated.

The first movement, Andante, bursts upon us with a strangeness brought on not only by its modernity but also by its energy, provoking string techniques, and rhythmic intensity. All this gives way momentarily to a gentle romanticism, but volatility rules, and we return to a wrenching emotionalism before a surprisingly simple conclusion.

Janáček's description of childbirth which he assigned to the second movement, Adagio, we shall leave to his imagination and speak instead of the repeated motto that brings a new emotional impact. This is hardly a traditional adagio as we might think of it, yet it does have poignant moments. Those moments, however, are surrounded by a kind of eerie merriness stated in curious five-note quips. The movement also brings to mind the Brahmsian "developing variation" form.

Janáček suggests an earthquake in the third movement, Moderato. The dotted rhythms are stated in dark harmonies that bring additional passion to the music. A breakneck, full-speed-ahead section would seem to abandon all control except for Janáček's subtle references to earlier moments in the movement. Even within what seems to be Janáček's unbridled passion, there is still strong evidence of serious musical form.

Is there finally some merriness in the last movement, Allegro? It is better to call it frenzy and ecstasy coupled with the despair and anguish that beset Janáček's life. Moments of rocking tenderness, terrifying tremolos, and a bow to Moravian folk dance all contribute to the changing moods of the movement before Janáček seems to triumph over his despair.

The quartet was given its first performance by the Moravian Quartet in Brno on September 11, 1928, a month after the death of Janáček.

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born June 8, 1810, in Zwickau, Germany
Died July 29, 1856, in Eindhoven, Bonn, Germany
String Quartet in A Major, Op. 41, No. 3

Schumann was preoccupied with chamber music between 1841 and 1843. This period, following his marriage to Clara Wieck in September of 1841, was marked by the extremes of happiness and pain that beset Schumann all his life. He was aware of being in Clara's shadow but suffered much from any separation from her as she pursued her active career. When she returned from a month-long trip to Copenhagen in April 1841, he set to work on three string quartets followed in the fall by the Piano Quintet; the Piano Quartet; the Andante and Variations for two pianos, two cellos, and horn (published later as his Op. 46 piece for two pianos); and the Piano Trio in A Minor.

Schumann's three string quartets reveal both his reverence for Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven—and certainly Mendelssohn—and his basic contention with traditional Classical form. He admired it but wanted to reach beyond it. Without arrogance, Schumann undertook that challenge in his string quartets. They were dedicated to his close friend and colleague Felix Mendelssohn and premiered on September 13, 1842 as a present for his wife Clara on her twenty-third birthday.

The first movement of the A Major Quartet is very much as its tempo marking indicates—expressive. From its opening sigh and great melodic developments through its rhythmic eccentricities, it is expressive of Schumann's particular genius. The second movement, *Assai agitato*, is again just as its tempo marking suggests, highly agitated, so much so that we feel here Schumann's attempt to both honor and elude form. This extraordinary movement with its variety of tempo markings is a set of four variations and a concluding coda. Within those variations we easily sense the warring sides of Schumann's musical personality to which he assigned the names "Florestan" and "Eusebius." Florestan represented his bold and impetuous side and Eusebius the introspective and dreamy.

Schumann's introspective side reigns in the moving third movement, *Adagio molto*. Here we have the essence of Romantic expression, yet a certain restlessness suggests something beyond Romanticism. While form is not absent from this beautiful movement, emotional expression is essential to it. We need here to remind ourselves that it was Schumann's musical genius, not his illness, that created this exquisite statement of emotion.

Nor is the exciting *Finale* a straightforward expression as it often is in the Classical and Romantic traditions. Even here Florestan and Eusebius duel in dotted rhythms, syncopations, pauses, sudden returns, and a climactic finish.

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PROFILE

The **JUPITER STRING QUARTET** stands at the forefront of the younger generation of classical chamber music ensembles. Formed in 2002, they concertize across the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, and South America performing in the world's finest halls, including New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center; the Kennedy Center, Corcoran Gallery, and Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; Boston's Jordan Hall; London's Wigmore Hall; Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes; the Esterházy Palace in Austria; and Seoul's National Arts Center and Sejong Chamber Hall. Recent concerts include performances in Aspen, Buffalo, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Middlebury, Montreal, Napa, New Haven, New Orleans, Portland, San Diego, San Jose, Seoul, and Washington, D.C., to name just a few.

They have been enthusiastically welcomed at major music festivals in North America, including Aspen, Bowdoin, Caramoor, Rockport, Yellow Barn, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Madeline Island, Skaneateles, Honest Brook, the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival, Banff, and Lanaudiere Festival, and abroad at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival in Ireland and the Seoul Spring Festival, among many others.

The Jupiter String Quartet feels a particular connection to the core string quartet repertoire. They have presented the complete Beethoven string quartets at the Aspen Music Festival and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Another complete cycle is in progress at the Lanaudiere Festival in Quebec. Last year, they performed the complete Bartók string quartets at the University of Illinois. Their commitment to new music is demonstrated through a series of commissioned works, including string quartets

from Sid Hodkinson, Hannah Lash, and Dan Visconti, as well as Mark Adamo's *Aristotle*, with baritone Thomas Hampson, and a forthcoming quintet by Pierre Jalbert. The quartet can be heard on nine recordings on various labels including Azica Records, Marquis Classics, and Deutsche Grammophon. Their most recent CD, *Rootsongs*, features Dvořák's "American" *String Quartet* with Stephen Andrew Taylor's arrangements of four African-American spirituals, sung by Ollie Watts Davis, and Dan Visconti's *Ramshackle Songs*, a work inspired by the music of Tin Pan Alley and commissioned by the ensemble.

The quartet has received several musical distinctions: an Avery Fisher Career Grant (2008), Grand Prize in the Banff International String Quartet Competition (2004), Grand Prize in the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition (2004), membership in Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society Two (2007-2010), and Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award (2007), which "honors and promotes a rising young string quartet whose artistry demonstrates that it is in the process of establishing a major career." They also won the 2005 Young Concert Artists International auditions. The Jupiter String Quartet is a particularly intimate group, consisting of violinists Nelson Lee and Meg Freivogel, violist Liz Freivogel (Meg's sister), and cellist Daniel McDonough (Meg's husband). Daniel, Nelson, and Meg met at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and when they were searching for a violist Meg suggested her sister Liz, who was at nearby Oberlin College. The four finished their schooling together at the New England Conservatory of Music in the Professional String Quartet Training Program.