



JUPITER STRING QUARTET
15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Thursday, September 28, 2017, at 7:30pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

JUPITER STRING QUARTET 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

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

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

String Quartet No. 15 in D Minor, K. 421
Allegro
Andante
Minuetto: Allegretto; Trio
Allegretto ma non troppo

György Kurtág
(b. 1926)

Officium breve in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky, Op. 28
I. Largo
II. Più andante
III. Sostenuto, quasi giusto
IV. Grave, molto sostenuto
V. Fantasie über die Harmonien des Webern-Kanons: Presto
VI. Canon a 4: Molto agitato
VII. Canon a 2 (frei nach Op. 31/6 von Webern): Sehr fließend
VIII. Lento
IX. Largo
X. arr. of Webern Canon a 4, Op. 31/6: Sehr fließend
XI. Sostenuto
XII. Sostenuto, quasi giusto
XIII. Sostenuto, con slancio
XIV. Disperato, vivo
XV. Arioso interrotto (di Andreae Szervánszky): Larghetto

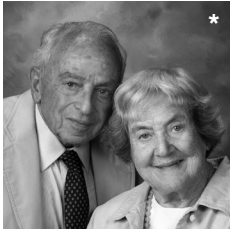
20-minute intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

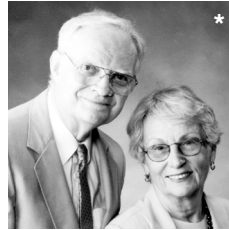
String Quartet No. 15, Op. 132
Assai sostenuto; Allegro
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto adagio; Andante
Alla Marcia, assai vivace
Allegro appassionato; Presto

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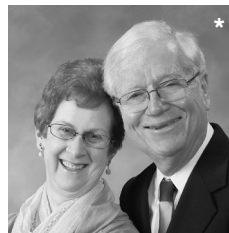
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PROGRAM NOTES

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born January 27, 1756, in Getreidegasse,
Salzburg, Austria

Died December 5, 1791, in Vienna, Austria
String Quartet No. 15 in D Minor, K. 421

Mozart was so impressed with Haydn's Op. 33 quartets that he undertook the composition of six string quartets (K. 387, 421, 428, 458, 464, and 465), which he dedicated to his hero. He sent them to Haydn on September 1, 1785, with a letter, addressed to "My dear friend Haydn," referring to them as his "sons." After hearing the quartets, Haydn made his famous comment to Mozart's father, quoted in a letter from Leopold Mozart to Maria Anna Mozart in 1785, saying that he considered Mozart the greatest composer known to him.

Mozart's bow to Haydn in the six quartets he dedicated to him reveals much about the genius of both Haydn and Mozart as well as the complexity of the string quartet form itself. Essential to Mozart's admiration of Haydn's quartets was the older composer's integration of musical ideas that extended far beyond simple sonata form and his equal treatment of all four instruments. Mozart, in turn, took these principles and applied his own singular genius to them. Thus we have, in Mozart, the building of melodies from kernel phrases followed by the expansion and reintegration of them in ways far more complex than any composer had done before. This concept would lead to Beethoven's highly developed use of the motto in his great canon of string quartets and even to what Arnold Schoenberg would call the "developing variation" in Brahms. Nor let us omit the ultimate effects on Bartók and Shostakovich. In other words, what Mozart recognized in Haydn and recreated in

his own way was essential to the development of Western music, and specifically the string quartet, from the 18th century to the present and presumably beyond.

That Mozart, by his own admission, struggled with the string quartet form is not evident in his six quartets dedicated to Haydn. The first three, including K. 421 we hear in this program, were composed between December 1782 and July 1783 and the second three between November 1784 and January 1785.

History tells us that Mozart's wife Constanze insisted that the *D Minor Quartet* was inspired by her confinement with the birth of their child Raimund Leopold who would die two months later. Apparently, she even sang the labor-pain passages to Vincent and Mary Novello as a resource for Vincent's biography of Mozart. Historical implications aside, the *D Minor Quartet* is fraught with a complex melancholy sometimes associated with Mozart's compositions in G minor, his so-called "key of fate." We are thrust into this melancholy with the downward octave leap that becomes the motto of the first movement. The ominous gives way to virtuosic display in the highly developed part writing before the opening motto returns with its dark mood. A four-note rising figure in the second movement Andante leads to emotionally charged harmonic shifts from major to minor that retain the darkness of the work. There is little relief even in the following Minuetto with its unusually strong opening in D minor and its nervous dotted rhythms. The darker voice of the viola reigns in the variations of the Allegretto ma non troppo. While the work ends in a major key, the melancholy and even pathos are not dispelled in this great and moving work.

GYÖRGY KURTÁG

Born February 19, 1926, in Lugoj, Romania

Officium breve in memoriam Andreae

Szervánszky, Op. 28

György Kurtág left his native Hungary after the notorious suppression of the 1956 uprising, fleeing to Paris where he studied with Olivier Messiaen and Darius Milhaud. There he also encountered the works of Anton Webern and the plays and poetry of Samuel Beckett that inspired his Op. 36 song settings for baritone, string trio, and percussion. He returned to Budapest in 1959 and was appointed professor of piano and chamber music at the Franz Liszt Academy where he taught until 1993. Kurtág has not achieved the fame of his fellow Hungarian and contemporary György Ligeti, but he is revered both in his native land and throughout Europe. He was named an Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2001.

Although we may be accepting of a Frank Stella black canvas without a recognizable object, a Samuel Beckett 35-second play without characters, and John Cage's famous 4' 33" of silence, György Kurtág's *Officium breve in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky* still brings a certain shock. Perhaps that shock comes, first of all, from the brevity of each section, the longest being No. 11 at approximately two minutes and the mere 17 seconds of terrifying No. 6. Despite its 15 movements, the work is only 12 to 13 minutes in total length. It was composed in 1989.

As indicated in its title, the piece honors the Hungarian composer Andreae Szervánszky (1911-1977), who wrote a requiem oratorio in 1963 based on a text by János Pilinsky describing the Auschwitz concentration camp. Because of this requiem and his many other efforts, Szervánszky received from the state of Israel the Righteous Among Nations Award, which honors non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazi terrorism of World War II.

Most important is the emotional impact of the work. Auschwitz is immediately brought to mind in the opening fragment that suggests the approach of a train on the way to its dreadful destination. Inexplicable sadness and terror follow throughout the remaining fragments, including those treated in complex canon form reflective of Webern's and Schoenberg's influence but updated by Kurtág. We are left astounded by this remarkable work, which ends in silence as indicated in the final fragment marked *Arioso interrotto* (Song interrupted).

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 1770, in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

String Quartet No. 15, Op. 132

Beethoven suffered a grave illness during the winter of 1824 and spring of 1825 while he was working on the *Op. 132 String Quartet*. While his own problems are reflected in the work, so does it also speak of universal suffering.

The grim intensity of the first movement is mitigated only by the occasional flourishes of the violin. Flourishes though they may be, they are also downward swirls into darkness. We are pulled back and forth between darkness and light, and the pulling itself is ominous. The tempo quickens after the painfully slow opening *Assai sostenuto*, but the mood remains serious despite the occasional shots of sunlight. With all its seriousness, however, the movement is not without its lyricism.

Indeed, Beethoven had not deserted song—or dance—as illustrated in the second movement *Allegro ma non tanto*. Relief comes in this second movement, but it is short-lived. Yet one thing we must not miss in that moment is Beethoven's incredible use of counterpoint. If there is any relief in the movement, it lies in its abstraction more than in what might be perceived as its rustic charm.

Now we are thrust into the heart of the *Quartet*, the famous third movement *Molto adagio* over which Beethoven wrote the phrase, "Heiliger Dankgesang eines genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Ton" (Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Divinity by a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode). The "thanksgiving" referred to is one for Beethoven's temporary return of good health. The Lydian mode is a reference to a Medieval church scale, used in Gregorian chant, which corresponds to the scale of F major without the B flattened. A more vigorous section follows which Beethoven marked *Neue Kraft fühlend* (Feeling of new strength). The movement ends with a return to the slow hymn of thanksgiving, which Beethoven marked to be played *Mit innigster Empfindung* (With the most intimate emotions). If there are what seems to be strange moments in this movement, they are indeed intentional since Beethoven used them elsewhere in such great works as his final *Op. 111 Piano Sonata*. Rather than strange, they should be perceived as transcendent, which indeed they are.

Beethoven gives us a momentary relief of tension in the fourth movement march, marked *Alla marcia, assai vivace*. The march is left unfinished, and we are thrust, without pause, back into a minor key and into the powerful last movement. In the final *Allegro appassionato*, odd strains of what modern ears might identify as a Russian Christmas carol are heard over a restless rocking motion that pervades this disturbing movement. To this pastiche of musical ideas, Beethoven somehow brings an astounding unity.

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PROFILES

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, DC; 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 New York City; Washington, DC; Boston; Chicago; Tucson; Aspen; Buffalo; Cincinnati; Dallas; and Denver; 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 Lanaudière 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, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Lanaudière Festival in Quebec. They performed the complete Bartók string quartets at the University of Illinois. They have a strong, ongoing

commitment to new music, demonstrated through a series of commissioned works, including string quartets from Syd Hodkinson, Hannah Lash, Dan Visconti, Mark Adamo (*Aristotle* with baritone Thomas Hampson), and a forthcoming quartet by Kati Agócs to be premiered in summer 2018. The quartet can be heard on 10 recordings on various labels including Azica Records, Marquis Classics, and Deutsche Grammophon. *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. Their most recent CD, *Revelations*, is chamber music by Su Lian Tan released in 2017.

The Jupiters have 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. Meg and Liz grew up playing string quartets with their two brothers. They grew to love chamber music during coachings with Oliver Edel, a cellist and teacher in the Washington, DC area. Nelson also comes from a musical family—both of his parents are pianists, his father also conducts, and his twin sisters Alicia and Andrea play clarinet and cello. Although Daniel originally wanted to be a violinist, he ended up on the cello because the organizers of his first strings program declared that he had “better hands for the cello.” He remains skeptical of this comment (he was, after all, only five), and suspects they may just have needed more cellists, but is happy that he ended up where he did. 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. The quartet chose Jupiter as its namesake; it was the most prominent planet in the night sky at the time of its formation. Its astrological symbol resembles the number four and numerous musical references emphasize connotations of happiness and strength associated with the Roman god. The quartet owes much of its musical philosophy to the influences of the original Cleveland Quartet

and the current Takács Quartet, in which all four members form a dynamic and democratic union. The Jupiters spent their formative years under the instruction of these eminent chamber musicians, and continue to adhere to many of their central principles today.

The Jupiter String Quartet is in its fifth year as Artists-In-Residence at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where each member maintains a private studio as well as responsibility for running the chamber music program. In addition to its formal concert and teaching schedule, the Jupiter String Quartet places a strong emphasis on developing relationships with future classical music audiences through outreach work in the schools and other educational performances. They believe that chamber music, because of the intensity of its interplay and communication, is one of the most effective ways of spreading an enthusiasm for “classical” music to new audiences.

The quartet will perform at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts twice more throughout the current season: Thursday, November 30, 2017, with Michael Brown, piano; and Thursday, April 5, 2018, with Timothy Ehlen, piano.