



**CONCERT ARTISTS GUILD AND M-PRIZE WINNER:
ARGUS QUARTET**

Sunday, January 27, 2019, at 3pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

CONCERT ARTISTS GUILD AND M-PRIZE WINNER:

ARGUS QUARTET

Jason Issokson, violin

Clara Kim, violin

Dana Kelley, viola

Joann Whang, cello

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

String Quartet No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op. 12
Adagio non troppo-Allegro non tardante
Canzonetta: Allegretto
Andante espressivo
Molto allegro e vivace

Christopher Theofanidis
(b. 1967)

Visions and Miracles (1997)
All Joy Wills Eternity
Peace Love Light YOUMEONE
I Add Brilliance to the Sun

20-minute intermission

Christopher Cerrone
(b. 1984)

Can't and Won't (2017)

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10
Animé et très décidé
Assez vif et bien rythmé
Andantino, doucement expressif
Très modéré-En animant peu à peu-
Très mouvementé et avec passion

Audience and rising young performers share the stage of the Foellinger Great Hall in these events, fostering a close mutual connection. The stage ticket price includes light refreshments; balcony seating, which does not include refreshments, is available at a reduced price. The 2018-19 series includes Cleveland Quartet Award Winner: Rolston String Quartet (December 2); Concert Artists Guild and M-Prize Winner: Argus Quartet (January 27); Young Concert Artists Winner: Hanzhi Wang, accordion (February 10); and the Krannert Center Debut Artist (April 14). For more information about these events, please visit KrannertCenter.com/calendar.

Argus Quartet appears by arrangement with:

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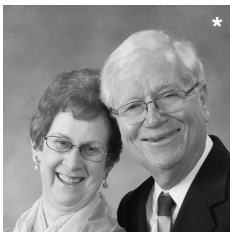
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PROGRAM NOTES

In this program of works by Mendelssohn and Debussy, the Argus Quartet invokes a certain timeliness. The anti-Semitism practiced against Mendelssohn brings an unfortunate reminder of the recent and past horrors brought on by that prejudice. With the Debussy work, the Argus Quartet honors the 100th anniversary of the premature death of that irreplaceable composer who is currently being honored around the world. Thanks to the Argus Quartet for bringing its thoughtful diversity to us in this concert.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg, Germany
Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig, Germany
String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 12

Mendelssohn's few critics suggest that he missed the mark of greatness because of his birthright as a member of the wealthy bourgeoisie. That Mendelssohn was free of the impoverishment so often associated with musical careers and that he wore his genius lightly should not obscure his greatness. It would seem a harsh sentence for a composer whose particular talent is unmatched, so much so that Robert Schumann, in an 1840 edition of *Neue Zeitschrift*, called him "the Mozart of the 19th century."

Yet, it was Beethoven whom Mendelssohn most admired. In an 1830 letter to his composition teacher, Carl Freidrich Zelter, Mendelssohn wrote: "In your last letter you seemed to be anxious lest, following my predilection for one of the great masters, I might . . . be led into imitation. Such, however, is certainly not the case. Naturally, nobody can forbid me to enjoy the inheritance left by the great masters nor to continue to work at it, because not everybody has to begin at the

beginning. But then it must be continued creation according to one's ability and not a lifeless repetition of what is already there."

Continue Mendelssohn did, and with anything but lifeless repetition or imitation. By the time he was 20, Mendelssohn would conduct the first performance of *St. Matthew Passion* since Bach's death in 1750 as well as compose his famous *Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20*, the first two of his six great string quartets, the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the first of the two string quintets that would punctuate the beginning and end of his career.

Anti-Semitic trends already evident in the mid-19th century, including Wagner's notorious essay "Judaism in Music," limited the spread of Mendelssohn's music, and the Nazi era completely suppressed it. His memorial in Leipzig was destroyed in 1936 by the fascists. Fortunately, today his music has been restored to its rightful place in history. In Charles Rosen's impressive book *The Romantic Generation* he calls Mendelssohn "the greatest child prodigy the history of Western music has ever known." Furthermore, Rosen adds that Mendelssohn's models were "the most eccentric and imaginative works of the final years of Beethoven's life, the last sonatas and quartets."

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 12, the second of Mendelssohn's six string quartets in compositional order, but the first to be published, was completed in England in 1829 at the beginning of a three-year grand tour of Europe. This quartet is serious in nature and reflects the influence of Beethoven, particularly in its use of mottos and the linking of movements by thematic references. The voice, however, is

pure Mendelssohn with its ease of composition despite the virtuosic demands he makes on the performers. He used different keys for each movement: E-flat major for the first, B-flat major for the second, G minor for the third, and C minor for the fourth. (The last two, interestingly enough, are the favored minor keys of Mozart and Beethoven, respectively.) As usual in his string quartets, Mendelssohn seems to put aside his Hegelian belief in music of “moderate affection” and gives us the strong stuff of Op. 12.

The gracious first movement, with its slow opening, has an underlying sadness and urgency. Mendelssohn immediately employs a four-note motto heard several times in this movement and again in the third. Before the recapitulation, he develops three lyrical themes that retain an interrelationship.

In the famous second movement, he replaces a scherzo with a canzonetta, a 16th- and 17th-century dance-like song form suggesting a fugue. The middle section of the movement is considered to be one of Mendelssohn’s finest achievements—greatly admired by Dvořák.

The lovely Andante espressivo opens with the motto of the first movement. Another lyrical theme is developed and concluded with a first violin solo marked *con fuoco* (with fire). He then elaborates on the opening theme once again using the four-note motto.

We are plunged immediately into the high-energy final movement that takes the form of a tarantella, a dramatic Italian dance here in 12/8 time. After a section of forthright unison playing and a dramatic long note, the movement darkens. The first violin returns to the opening melody

of the first movement, and another dance form appearing before a coda in the home key of E-flat makes yet new explorations of first-movement material.

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CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS

Born December 18, 1967, in Dallas, Texas
Visions and Miracles (1997)

Christopher Theofanidis’ music has been performed by many of the world’s leading performing arts organizations, from the London Symphony and New York Philharmonic to the San Francisco Opera and the American Ballet Theatre. He is a two-time Grammy Award nominee, and his work *Rainbow Body* is one of the most performed works of the new era, having been performed by over 150 orchestras worldwide. Mr. Theofanidis is currently on the faculty at Yale University and the Aspen Music Festival.

Regarding *Visions and Miracles*, the composer writes:

I wrote *Visions and Miracles* after listening to the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a collection of medieval Spanish music, which has melodies which shift between fast rhythmic groupings of two and three in artful ways. Each of the three movements of my work has that approach to rhythm at its heart, and all three are basically trying to create a joyous musical surface. *Visions and Miracles* was originally commissioned in 1997 by the Barlow Endowment for the Cassatt, Muir, and Cuartetto Latinoamericano string quartets.

The first movement, *All Joy Wills Eternity*, draws its title from a line of Nietzsche, and its extroverted quality is owed to two sets of materials—the fast, eighth-note underpinning of the opening melody and the fast, but more homorhythmic chorale heard in relief shortly afterwards.

The second movement, *Peace Love Light YOUMEONE*, takes its title from the writing of the 1960s counterculture figure Timothy Leary. The entire movement is presented over a middle C drone, with shifting scales of different flavors continuously rising and leaving short melodies in their wakes. At the end, this drone is released.

The third movement's fantastical title, *I Add Brilliance to the Sun*, is taken from an anonymous, medieval, troubadour poet's writings and has a melodically falling shape that in repetition is constantly changing length.

CHRISTOPHER CERRONE

Born March 5, 1984, in Huntington, New York
Can't and Won't (2017)

Can't and Won't began its life as a song cycle based on texts by one of my favorite authors, Lydia Davis. The idea for the project would be that I would set a few of her very short pieces into songs that keep using a recurring melody. In between these short songs, I would compose a long and intense setting of Davis' story called—appropriately—*Story*, broken into three parts. But try as I might, I could never quite make the piece I wanted to out of her words. It didn't help that so many composers I admire had already made fantastic settings of her work. Perhaps her work is just complete in itself. But rather than throw aside these musical ideas, I decided to make a new string quartet out of them, a series of little "songs without words" interspersed with one long violent and dramatic movement.

The quartet begins with the faintest of sounds: the violinist gently tapping on their fingerboard to elicit a quiet ringing of open strings. Little by little, the quartet bows their strings, revealing a delicate texture of swirling harmonics. A long, stretched-out melody emerges from the cello. Suddenly, as the song begins to form, it is cut off sharply, and a violent round of Ds is fired like bullets from the entire quartet. These two elements form the main drama, the "can't" and "won't" of the form. As the work progresses, the songs without words move higher and higher, forming into a proper melody, while the violent and rhythmic music descends to the lowest range of the instruments.

As I was writing this quartet, it became clear that something else was occupying my subconscious. A lot of this past year has been about trying to find some sense of repose in a deeply chaotic time amid constant and often terrifying distractions. *Can't and Won't* seems to both acknowledge this sense of disturbance, yet also optimistically point towards the hope for a place of composure, even if it's a temporary one.

Christopher Cerrone

Christopher Cerrone is internationally acclaimed for compositions characterized by a subtle handling of timbre and resonance, a deep literary fluency, and a flair for multimedia collaborations.

In the 2018-19 season, Cerrone writes a major new orchestral work with electronics for the Los Angeles Philharmonic led by Roderick Cox. Other commissions include a new sextet co-commissioned by Latitude 49, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, and Sentieri selvaggi and a new concerto for Third Coast Percussion, co-commissioned by the Civic Orchestra of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Britt Festival. Cerrone also orchestrates his opera *All Wounds Bleed* for Chicago Fringe Opera,

curates a series, *Reiterations*, for the Metropolis Ensemble, holds residencies at Chatterbird and Baylor University, and was the 2018 Conducting/Composition Fellow at the Britt Festival. An all-Cerrone disc recorded by Christopher Rountree and wildUp will be released on New Amsterdam Records in August 2019, and excerpts from his new opera, *In a Grove* (libretto by Stephanie Fleischmann), will be heard at the Morgan Library in New York in March 2019.

Recent highlights include *Breaks and Breaks*, an acclaimed violin concerto for Jennifer Koh and the Detroit Symphony led by Peter Oundjian; a Miller Theatre Composer Portrait performed by Third Coast Percussion; *Will There Be Singing* for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra for Jeffrey Kahane's final concert as music director; *Can't and Won't*, commissioned by the Calder Quartet by the Los Angeles Philharmonic; and new works for artists including Tim Munro, Eighth Blackbird, Vicky Chow, and Rachel Lee Priday.

Cerrone's opera *Invisible Cities*, based on Italo Calvino's landmark novel, was praised by the *Los Angeles Times* as "A delicate and beautiful opera . . . [which] could be, and should be, done anywhere," and received its fully staged world premiere in a wildly popular production by The Industry directed by Yuval Sharon in Los Angeles' Union Station. Both the film and opera are available as CDs, DVDs, and digital downloads.

Cerrone holds degrees from the Yale School of Music and the Manhattan School of Music. He is published by Schott Music New York and Project Schott New York.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Died March 25, 1918, in Paris, France

String Quartet in G Minor, L. 85, Op. 10

In his October 29, 2018, *The New Yorker* article "Beauty in the Void," music critic Alex Ross states, "Debussy accomplished something that happens very rarely, and not in every lifetime: he brought a new kind of beauty into the world."

Indeed, Claude Debussy established a new direction in music, which put Impressionism on the musical map. Despite that association with the famous movement in painting, it is important to note that Debussy saw himself more as Symbolist than Impressionist and was as much influenced by the Symbolist poets as Impressionist painters. The significant point remains, however, that Debussy represented a daring departure. "Any sounds in any combination and in any succession are henceforth free to be used in a musical continuity," he ruled.

Yet, this statement should not lead us to think that Debussy lacked form in his composition. Quite to the contrary, his music reflects a thorough understanding of Classical form, even if its actual sound suggests new concepts. While most of musical Europe was dividing its loyalties between Brahms and Wagner and focusing attention on the emergence of the Second Viennese School, Debussy, along with Fauré and Ravel, took an entirely new direction in French music that transcended those situations. Although we assign the name "Impressionism" to that direction, we should understand that the term is a reference to a new sense of harmony and color in music rather than a total disregard of Classical form. Nor is Impressionism in music one and the same idea as it is in painting. If we are having a hard time defining it in regard to

Debussy, it is because the composer himself eluded classification with the exception that he wished to be understood as French. That, of course, introduces the question of national identity in music, another elusive subject.

Debussy's *String Quartet in G Minor, L. 85, Op. 10* represents a daring departure from standard string quartet writing. Pierre Boulez speaks of Debussy as freeing the string quartet from "rigid structure, frozen rhetoric, and rigid aesthetics." Melody becomes secondary to tone colors, and constantly shifting harmonies break all the rules. Because of this, the work stands as a model for 20th-century quartet composers, namely Webern and Bartók.

Any thoughts of watery Impressionism are dispelled in the first movement with its ferocious opening statement, the motto for the entire quartet. Debussy offers it in many guises resulting in great harmonic and melodic richness. Most noticeable in this movement is the repeated pattern of rising tension and release, each time more dramatic before the climactic end.

In the starkly contrasting second movement, the viola presents an ostinato version of the motto, while the other instruments give a

brilliant pizzicato show. The cello then offers accompaniment to the first violin's further explorations of the motto. All ends quietly.

In the elegiac third movement, one is reminded of Debussy's statement in an 1894 letter to Chausson: "The color of my soul is iron-gray, and sad bats wheel about the steeple of my dreams." The only consolations to sadness in this movement are beauty and a passionate tenderness. Both the viola and cello offer exquisite solos, but at no cost to the collaborative quality of the movement with its dramatic unison passages. This movement, too, ends quietly after a return to the opening melody.

The ominous last movement brightens momentarily, but grows dark again. The motto reappears in fugue form. New themes are developed and then offered as accompaniment for the motto. Once again, stark unison playing is contrasted against richly textured passages. An elaborate exploration leads to a breathtaking conclusion. The work was completed in August 1893 and premiered by the Ysaÿe Quartet in Paris on December 29, 1893.

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PROFILE

The **ARGUS QUARTET**, praised for playing with “supreme melodic control and total authority” and “decided dramatic impact” (*Calgary Herald*), has quickly emerged as one of today’s most dynamic and versatile young ensembles, winning First Prize at both the 2017 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition and the 2017 M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition.

The Argus Quartet’s busy 2018-19 season takes them to 15 states across the country featuring debut concerts in New York City at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, and a return to Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall. Additional season highlights include Chicago’s Dame Myra Hess Concert series, Washington Performing Arts (Washington, DC), UCLA’s Clark Memorial Library, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Purdue Convocations (Indiana), Kravis Center for the Performing Arts (Florida), Chamber Music Society of Detroit (Michigan), University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and Juneau Jazz and Classics (Alaska). They began the season with two June 2018 performances at the Ravinia Festival, collaborating with legendary pianists Misha Dichter and Leon Fleischer, respectively.

The Argus Quartet is dedicated to reinvigorating the audience/performer relationship through innovative concerts and diverse programming. The quartet’s core mission is to connect with and build up a community of engaged listeners with the strong belief that today’s ensembles can honor the storied chamber music traditions of our past while forging a new path forward. In that spirit, the ensemble’s repertoire includes not just master works of the chamber music canon, but also a wide range of pieces by living composers.

In fall 2017, the Argus Quartet began a two-year appointment as the Graduate Quartet in Residence at the Juilliard School where they work closely with the Juilliard String Quartet. In addition, Juilliard presented the quartet’s Lincoln Center recital debut at Alice Tully Hall in May 2018. From 2015 to 2017, the quartet served as the Fellowship Quartet in Residence at the Yale School of Music (as the first ensemble mentored by the Brentano String Quartet in that capacity), and during the 2016-17 season, they served as the Ernst Stiefel Quartet in Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts.

As passionate advocates for the music of our time, the Argus Quartet served as the Quartet in Residence at New Music on the Point under the guidance of the JACK Quartet and was also selected as one of three ensembles to perform works from Kronos Quartet’s *Fifty for the Future* commissioning project at Carnegie Hall. Recent commissions include new quartets by Donald Crockett, composer and Grammy nominee Eric Guinivan, the 2014 Hermitage Prize winner Thomas Kotcheff, and Guggenheim Fellowship recipient Juri Seo. The quartet has received grants from Chamber Music America and the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts in support of their commissioning efforts and has also performed works by some of today’s most important composers: Augusta Read Thomas, Garth Knox, Jason Eckardt, Christopher Theofanidis, Martin Bresnick, Andrew Norman, and many others.

The quartet has performed at a number of leading music festivals including the Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Birdfoot Festival, the Albany Symphony's American Music Festival, Cello Biennale Amsterdam, Bang on a Can at the Noguchi Museum, the Hear Now Music Festival, and Music Academy of the West.

Education and outreach are an important part of the Argus Quartet's mission. The quartet has worked with students through residencies and masterclasses at Yale University, James Madison University, Rockport Music, the Milken School, the Young Musicians Foundation, California State University Long Beach, Los Angeles City College, and Princeton University.

AWARDS

M-PRIZE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER MUSIC COMPETITION, based in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, was founded in 2016 supported by U-M's Office of the Provost and an anonymous donor. Including the grand prize, more than \$200K in prize money was distributed among the top three winners in three different categories—strings, woodwinds and open—in Junior (ages 18 and under) and Senior (ages 19-35) divisions. Krannert Center was a founding presenting partner of M-Prize.

The goals of the competition—to provide a world-class performance and adjudication platform for chamber arts; to launch and advance the careers of chamber ensembles through prizes, visibility and professional development opportunities; and to evolve the breadth and depth of the chamber arts landscape and associated professional opportunities for exceptional ensembles—are embodied in the competition winners, including Aizuri Quartet (2018), Russian Renaissance (2017), and Calidore String Quartet (2016).

The **CONCERT ARTISTS GUILD's** mission is to discover, nurture, and promote young musicians. Since 1951, CAG has helped more than 500 young musicians launch concert careers. Winners of CAG's annual competition receive comprehensive management support, including a debut recital on the CAG Presents Series at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, concert bookings, opportunities through the CAG Commissioning Program and CAG Records label, marketing, publicity, and mentorship.

Notable alumni artists include violinists Jennifer Koh, Joseph Lin (Juilliard Quartet), and Eugene Drucker (Emerson Quartet); pianists Barry Douglas, Michael Brown, and Daniel Hsu; clarinetists David Shifrin and David Krakauer; flutists Carol Wincenc, Marina Piccinini, and MacArthur Fellow Claire Chase; groundbreaking ensembles Imani Winds, the Brasil Guitar Duo, and Sybarite5; and Grammy-winning ensembles Pacifica and Parker String Quartets, Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, and MacArthur Award-winner Eighth Blackbird.