



JUPITER STRING QUARTET

Tuesday, February 4, 2020, at 7:30pm

Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

JUPITER STRING QUARTET

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

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

String Quartet No. 10 E-flat Major, Op. 74, "Harp"
Poco adagio; Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Presto
Allegretto con variazioni

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

String Quartet No. 11 in F Minor, Op. 122
Introduction: Andantino
Scherzo: Allegretto
Recitative: Adagio
Etude: Allegro
Humoresque: Allegro
Elegy: Adagio
Finale: Moderato

20-minute intermission

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 44, No. 1
Molto allegro vivace
Minuetto: Un poco allegretto
Andante espressivo ma con moto
Presto con brio

Jupiter String Quartet, the quartet-in-residence at the University Illinois School of Music, is represented by Jensen Artists, www.jensenartists.com.



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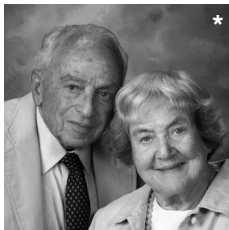
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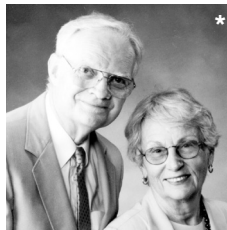
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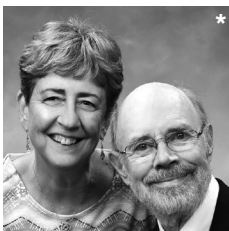
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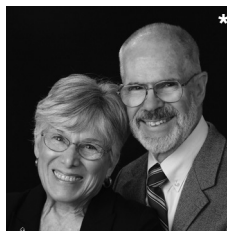
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PROGRAM NOTES

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 1770, in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

String Quartet No. 10 E-flat Major, Op. 74, "Harp"

For the sake of organization, the Op. 74 String Quartet of 1809 and its contrasting companion piece Op. 95 of 1811 might be grouped into Beethoven's Middle Period, but in reality they are transitional works. Much about Op. 74 suggests that it represented a pulling back from the audacities and complexities of Op. 59, which apparently caused Beethoven to lose some fans in conservative Vienna. Yet, it was no compromise in quality, losing nothing in rich technique and beauty, but simply employing a straightforwardness of form. It also served as a hiatus before the jarring Op. 95, "Serioso."

The first movement's Poco adagio introduction gives way to the alarm of an Allegro containing the pizzicatos that give the work its "Harp" nickname—one that was not assigned by Beethoven and less than accurate in its implication. More significant than the pizzicatos are the repeated forzando outcries and motto that mark the movement. Beethoven ends with a blazing passage of great energy before he gives a relatively simple conclusion to this complex movement.

The second movement Adagio, almost of equal length to the first movement, opens with a sweet sadness that gains power with its dramatic pauses. Beethoven sustains the mood throughout the movement, but he does so with great variety. A hint of tragedy invades with his attention to the darker voices of the viola and cello.

The third movement Presto, the briefest of the four movements, is extraordinarily lively, but its intensity competes with its liveliness. Here, Beethoven makes virtuosic play with a dance form that might be better described as a gallop. While that seems contrary to Beethoven's attempt to reestablish himself with conservative Vienna, it is in keeping with his unfailing audacity in matters both musical and social. Unexpectedly, the movement slips away.

The last movement surely brought him accolades with its straightforward energy and even a certain devil-may-care attitude. He opens with a bow to Haydn-like graciousness, but in Beethoven style. There are moments of fury, but they occur within a wonderful exploration of variation form at which Beethoven so excelled and that produced some of his finest works. To this final movement, Beethoven gives a spectacular conclusion.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Born September 25, 1906, in Saint Petersburg, Russia

Died August 9, 1975, in Moscow, Russia
String Quartet No. 11 in F Minor, Op. 122

With more and more certainty, the 15 string quartets of Dmitri Shostakovich are seen as monuments of 20th century music. Such adjectives as "mysterious," "fragmented," "death-haunted," and "confessional" have been applied to them. Much of this is explained by Shostakovich's working and surviving in a totalitarian state where it was necessary to cloud meaning. Behind that complex game, one finds, particularly in the string quartets, a tragic voice in mourning for the victims of tyranny. One also finds a composer determined to write his music under any circumstances.

Shostakovich's string quartets punctuate his tumultuous relationship with the Soviet regime. In 1936, Stalin had stormed out in protest from a performance of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, and this was followed by the famous review in which the opera was described as "muddle instead of music." *Pravda* wrote ominously that *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* "is a leftist bedlam instead of human music." In 1948, the situation came to a head with Shostakovich and Prokofiev being accused of "formalist perversions and anti-democratic tendencies in music, alien to the Soviet people and its artistic tastes." Shostakovich was publicly apologetic, but from that point on turned inward to chamber music and to the completion of his 15 quartets. Prior to the 1948 condemnation, however, he had already begun that monumental task with his first three

string quartets of 1938, 1944, and 1946. The remaining 12 quartets would come between 1949 and 1974, the year before his death.

Shostakovich wrote the Eleventh String Quartet in 1966, the same year he had a serious heart attack. This was 13 years after the death of Stalin when Shostakovich had been restored to public adulation with such prizes as the Royal Philharmonic Gold Medal, the Order of Lenin, and Hero of Socialist Labor, honors with which he was never quite comfortable. Failing health and universal concerns explain much of the elegiac quality of the work, but so does its dedication "To the Memory of Vasily Petrovich Shirinsky." A professor at the Moscow Conservatory, Shirinsky was also second violinist of the Beethoven String Quartet, which had performed so many of Shostakovich's string quartets.

Shostakovich abandons Classical form in the Eleventh Quartet for what might be considered a set of closely linked variations. The entire Quartet is based on the opening theme, stated by the first violin, which features repeated notes and a short-short-long rhythmic pattern that will reappear in each movement. The raucous Scherzo is followed by the solemn Recitative with its stately chorale. The Etude is Shostakovich's bow to Minimalism with its repeated notes. The Humoresque continues the repetition, this time based on a cuckoo call, a reference to the old Russian superstition that the number of calls one hears represents the remaining years of life. The following Elegy is a culmination of the sad spirit of the whole work. The Finale is a summary of everything that came before.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg, Germany
Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig, Germany
String Quartet in D Major, Op. 44, No. 1

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." 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 rightfully high place in history.

The three quartets of Mendelssohn's Op. 44 are considered his masterpieces in the form, and among them, the D Major is said to have been his favorite. Written between 1837 and 1838, it was third in composition despite its numbering. The graciousness that marks the work suggests the happy period of Mendelssohn's life from which it sprang. His son was born the year before, he had achieved international recognition as a composer, and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, which he had conducted since 1835, was flourishing.

More important than any of these circumstances, however, is the nature of Mendelssohn himself. It is well to remember that he was not only the composer that Schumann compared to Mozart, but also the one Liszt referred to as "Bach reborn." Pablo Casals described him as "a Romantic who felt at ease within the world of Classicism."

The music of Op. 44, No. 1 speaks for itself, but it might be worthwhile to point out the crackling spirit of the opening movement, the contrasting quietness of the two inner movements with the lovely song of the third movement, and the brilliant drive of the final movement written in the form of a *saltarello*, a 16th century dance form with a dotted note-skipping rhythm.

All three quartets of Op. 44 were dedicated to the Crown Prince of Sweden.

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PROFILE

The **JUPITER STRING QUARTET** is a particularly intimate group, consisting of violinists Nelson Lee and Megan Freivogel McDonough, violist Liz Freivogel (Meg older's sister), and cellist Daniel McDonough (Meg's husband, Liz's brother-in-law). Now enjoying their 17th year together, this tight-knit ensemble is firmly established as an important voice in the world of chamber music.

The New Yorker claims, "The Jupiter String Quartet, an ensemble of eloquent intensity, has matured into one of the mainstays of the American chamber music scene."

The quartet has performed in some of the world's finest halls, including New York City's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, London's Wigmore Hall, Boston's Jordan Hall, Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes, Washington, DC's Kennedy Center and Library of Congress, Austria's Esterhazy Palace, and Seoul's Sejong Chamber Hall. Their major music festival appearances include the Aspen Music Festival and School, Bowdoin Music Festival, Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, Rockport Music Festival, the Banff Centre, Virginia Arts Festival, Music at Menlo, Maverick Concerts, Caramoor International Music Festival, Lanaudiere Festival, West Cork (Ireland) Chamber Music Festival, Skaneateles Festival, Madeline Island Music Festival, Yellow Barn Festival, Encore

Chamber Music Festival, the inaugural Chamber Music Athens, and the Seoul Spring Festival, among others. In addition to their performing career, they have been artists-in-residence at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign since 2012 where they maintain private studios and direct the chamber music program.

Their chamber music honors and awards include the grand prizes in the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition; the Young Concert Artists International auditions in New York City; the Cleveland Quartet Award from Chamber Music America; an Avery Fisher Career Grant; and a grant from the Fromm Foundation. From 2007 to 2010, they were in residence at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Two.

The Jupiter String Quartet feels a particular connection to the core string quartet repertoire; they have presented the complete Bartók and Beethoven string quartets on numerous occasions. Also strongly committed to new music, they have commissioned works by Syd Hodkinson, Hannah Lash, Dan Visconti, Mark Adamo, Pierre Jalbert, and Kati Agócs.

The quartet's latest album *Alchemy* (Marquis Classics, 2019) with Australian pianist Bernadette Harvey features world premiere recordings by Pierre Jalbert, Steven Stucky, and Carl Vine. *EarRelevant* proclaims, "Performed with great sensitivity and attention to detail, this album marks an important addition to the recorded repertory of new chamber music." The quartet's discography also includes numerous recordings on labels including Azica Records, Marquis Classics, and Deutsche Grammophon.

The Jupiters believe that, because of the intensity of its interplay and communication, chamber music is one of the most effective ways of spreading an enthusiasm for "classical" music to new audiences. The quartet has also held numerous masterclasses for young musicians at Northwestern University, Eastman School of Music, the Aspen Music Festival, Encore Chamber Festival, Madeline Island Music Festival, and Peabody Conservatory.

The quartet chose its name because Jupiter was the most prominent planet in the night sky at the time of its formation, and the astrological symbol for Jupiter resembles the number four. They are also proud to list among their accomplishments in recent years the addition of seven quartet children: Pablo, Lillian, Clara, Dominic, Felix, Oliver, and Joelle. You may spot some of these miniature Jupiters in the audience or tagging along to rehearsals, along with their grandparent babysitters.

For information, visit www.jupiterquartet.com.