

#### **AIZURI QUARTET: THE ART OF TRANSLATION**

Sunday, February 19, 2023, at 3:00pm Foellinger Great Hall

## PROGRAM

#### **AIZURI QUARTET: THE ART OF TRANSLATION**

Juxtaposing works by Franz Schubert and pieces by some of today's most compelling new voices, *The Art of Translation* explores the highly personal and expressive ways in which composers transform visual art and poetry into music and consider the dynamic nature of art.

Emma Frucht and Miho Saegusa, violins Ayane Kozasa, viola Karen Ouzounian, cello

Lembit Beecher (b. 1980)	These Are Not Estonian Flowers (2021)
Franz Schubert (1797–1828) (arr. Jannina Norpoth)	An Die Musik
Hannah Kendall (b. 1984)	Glances / I Don't Belong Here: (2019)
Franz Schubert (arr. Jannina Norpoth)	Nacht und Träume
Paul Wiancko (b. 1983)	Purple Antelope Sound Squeeze (2021)
20-minute intermission	
Franz Schubert	<ul> <li>String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor, Death and the Maiden</li> <li>I. Allegro</li> <li>II. Andante con moto</li> <li>III. Scherzo. Allegro molto</li> <li>IV. Presto</li> </ul>

The Aizuri Quartet is the recipient of Chamber Music America's 2022 Cleveland Quartet Award. The quartet's performance has been made possible by the Cleveland Quartet Award Endowment Fund.

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## **PROGRAM NOTES**

The Art of Translation is a program born from our curiosity of how composers respond to different artistic mediums and how varied these responses can be. Music by living composers Hannah Kendall, Lembit Beecher, and Paul Wiancko stands next to Franz Schubert's art songs and string quartet, and each piece takes us on a personal journey of how the composer reacts through the creation of music.

The program opens with Lembit Beecher's These Are Not Estonian Flowers, a piece in response to American artist Alma Thomas's 1968 work Breeze Rustling Through Fall Flowers. At the time of its composition, Beecher's health prevented him from sitting and composing at his desk for long periods of time. He took his state of being not as an inhibiting factor, but wove it into his composition process. For six weeks, he would look at Thomas's painting once a day and write a short musical response—sometimes a deep reflection into the art itself and other times a guick glance at the colors before diving right into the music. Beecher then stitched together a final piece that jumps from one response to the next, in a manner reminiscent of the varied textures and layered brushstrokes of Thomas's painting. The title of Beecher's quartet comes from his first viewing of the painting, when he saw it as a thumbnail on his computer and thought the artwork resembled an Estonian woven belt pattern from his childhood. Subsequent viewings each led to very different responses, and he began to think about how personal, varied, and dependent on the moment our experiences of art are. When the music finally settles at the end of the piece, what emerges is an Estonian folk song, initially heard as a fragment at the opening of the piece, but now played in a new way: slowly

lyrical and thoughtful. Beecher describes that the process of responding to Alma Thomas's artwork had given him a different perspective, "as if the painting had encouraged [him] to look at [his] own world with new eyes."

The first half of this program includes two Schubert songs, An die Musik and Nacht und *Träume*, both arranged by PubliQuartet violinist Jannina Norpoth, and both sandwiched between living composers. Schubert's music beautifully toggles between realism and the abstract; sometimes it is directly inspired by another piece of art, like how Death and the Maiden draws from Matthias Claudius's poem Der Tod und das Mädchen, and at other times it welcomes the listener to be transported through their own interpretation and imagination. The two art songs on this program were placed in their exact spots in hopes that the listener can take a moment to reflect on the three incredible living composers while also basking in the beauty of Schubert-ian melodies, and take the opportunity to absorb and cherish their own response to the concert experience.

Though Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* is an expansion of his lied of the same name which in turn takes inspiration from Claudius' poem, it is also a look into Schubert's state of being at the time: he was suffering from syphilis and struggling with the grave realization that he would not recover. Dynamics within the first movement are suppressed as if Schubert is unable to fully accept his fate, and yet the music is full of violent anguish. The second movement (which includes the melody of his lied) opens with a somber chorale, and the variations that follow struggle to decide between minor and major.

The final movement feels like a total departure from what came before, a whirlwind of unhinged energy that gallops into eternity. Perhaps this quartet is Schubert's method of processing death, and, as a listener, we are taken on that processing journey in real time, a roller coaster of emotions. With the final maniacal gesture of the last movement, one can imagine that Schubert is throwing tomatoes at the life that had given him so much difficulty, and hopefully writing this quartet provided a form of brief catharsis.

Returning to the first half, in her piece Glances / I Don't Belong Here, Hannah Kendall takes British-Guyanese artist Ingrid Pollard's photo series Pastoral Interlude and draws parallels to her own experiences. Kendall writes that Ingrid's artwork is "a series of photographs in which her Black British subjects are posed in the Lake District, the epitome of rural Britain; exploring the notion of alienation and 'otherness' in such spaces. In a similar way, this collection of seven miniatures are musical snapshots of my most cherished non-urban settings, and the experiences that can accompany each visit." Within the first couple seconds of each movement, Kendall immediately transports the listener into her world and her musical language, and the brevity of each movement evokes the snapshot of Hannah's memories, as well as that feeling of not totally being rooted or belonging.

Paul Wiancko's Purple Antelope Sound Squeeze is a companion piece to Sam Gilliam's work Purple Antelope Space Squeeze. Gilliam's artwork is a collage of uniquely shaped paper (the shapes were made out of molds cast specifically for this work), prints using welded objects, and handpainted patterns, folded and layered on top of

each other. "Purple Antelope Space Squeeze feels to me like a three-dimensional object that has been forced into a two-dimensional space," writes Wiancko. Thirteen musical materials were connected, then "ripped apart, reconfigured, and smashed back together." The result is a hodgepodge of fantastic sounds and aural textures, with a melody that overlays the craggy terrain. Wiancko breaks apart this melody and has each member of the guartet take turns playing fragments, reminiscent of the vibrant and colorful prints that Gilliam specially designed for Purple Antelope Space Squeeze. Wiancko writes, "Listening to Sound Squeeze now, I find myself attempting to cobble together some semblance of some unseen original narrative-the same impulse I had when encountering Sam Gilliam's Space Squeeze for the first time." Perhaps that is the point of art . . . to follow the impulse to make your own story and connection through a work, which ultimately makes you feel and be human.

Gilliam's thought on experimentation and improvisation is particularly poignant as it best describes the nature of our *The Art of Translation* program, and why we do what we do as artists: "... the surface is no longer the final plane of the work. It is instead the beginning of an advance into the theater of life." (Sam Gilliam and Annie Gawlak, *Solids and Veils, Art Journal 50*, no. 1).

Purple Antelope Sound Squeeze and These Are Not Estonian Flowers commissioned by The Phillips Collection, where the Sam Gilliam and Alma Thomas works that inspired the compositions are currently on display.

Notes by Aizuri Quartet

## PROFILES

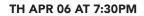
#### AIZURI QUARTET

The Aizuri Quartet has established a unique position within today's musical landscape, infusing its music-making with infectious energy, joy, and warmth. The ensemble cultivates curiosity in listeners and invites audiences into the concert experience through its innovative programming and the depth and fire of its performances.

Praised by The Washington Post for "astounding" and "captivating" performances that draw from its notable "meld of intellect, technique, and emotions," the Aizuri Quartet was named the recipient of the 2022 Cleveland Quartet Award by Chamber Music America, and was awarded the Grand Prize at the 2018 M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition. The Quartet's debut album, Blueprinting, featuring new works written for the Aizuri Quartet by five American composers, was released by New Amsterdam Records to critical acclaim ("In a word, stunning"—I Care If You Listen), nominated for a 2019 GRAMMY Award, and named one of NPR Music's Best Classical Albums of 2018. Aizuri Quartet's follow-up to Blueprinting will be released in 2023 on Azica Records.

The Aizuri Quartet continues its innovative approach to programming into the 2022–23 season, with programs creatively juxtaposing the old and the new: such as *Sunrise*, which pairs Tanya Tagaq's *Sivunittinni* with *Haydn*; or *Song Emerging*, pairing Schumann's first quartet with The Aizuri Songbook; or The Art of Translation, featuring art-inspired works by Paul Wiancko, Lembit Beecher, and Hannah Kendall to set the stage for Schubert's Death and the Maiden.

The Aizuris believe in an integrative approach to music-making, in which teaching, performing, writing, arranging, curation, and role in the community are all connected. In 2020, the ensemble launched *AizuriKids*, a free online series of educational videos for children that uses the string quartet as a catalyst for creative learning and features themes such as astronomy, American history, and cooking. These vibrant, whimsical, and interactive videos are lovingly produced by the Aizuris and are paired with activity sheets to inspire further exploration.





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Krannert Center affirms the commitment by the university to move beyond these statements, toward building deeper relationships and taking actions that uphold and preserve Indigenous rights and cultural equity.

As we gather to experience this performance, we have an opportunity to reflect on the ways that systems of oppression have shaped our society. We can work together to create systems that support human dignity, establish equity, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and draw upon the creative capacity of all people that make up this community, state, nation, and world.

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## WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE AT THE CENTER

We work to create the best possible setting for the experiences you seek and find here.

#### NECESSARIES

Restrooms are located in the foyers of Foellinger Great Hall, Tryon Festival Theatre, and Colwell Playhouse; the east entrances on the Lobby level; and in each elevator lobby on Level 1 and Level 3. Lobby restrooms and one restroom in each elevator lobby are fully accessible and contain baby-changing stations.

Ushers will be happy to provide you cough drops courtesy of St. Joseph Apothecary, or disposable foam earplugs if the place starts rockin'.

If you or a companion needs medical assistance, contact an usher or other staff member.

Please take a moment before the performance to note the theatre exits nearest to you. If it becomes necessary to evacuate the theatre, please remain calm, follow the instructions of the house staff, and exit in an orderly fashion to the appropriate safe meeting location, which will be announced to you.

#### SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

The use of cell phones, cameras, and recording devices during performances is prohibited unless otherwise announced from the stage.

#### LATE ARRIVALS

As a courtesy to performers and audience members, latecomers will be seated only at times selected in advance by the artist. Should you find that you've arrived late to a performance, our Patron Services staff will keep you informed about the earliest seating opportunity.

#### LOST ITEMS

If you are in need of Lost and Found, please visit the Patron Services counter. We will do our best to reunite object and owner!

#### TICKET RETURNS

If you find you can't attend a performance, please contact the Ticket Office in advance, preferably by 6pm the day before the performance (kran-tix@illinois.edu or 217.333.6280). We never charge a handling fee on ticket transactions.

#### SERVICES

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts is committed to making experiences accessible for all patrons, and we are delighted to provide a number of services to assist you. Krannert Center is equipped with an assisted listening system, wheelchair-accessible and no-step/few-step seating, and large-print programs, Braille programs, and American Sign Language interpreters are available with three weeks' advance notice.

For assistance regarding your visit, please email: Para ayuda en relación con su visita, favor de enviar un email a:

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