



ARTPOWER! PRESENTS:



PACIFICA QUARTET

Saturday, January 10, 2015 / 8pm

Department of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Sponsored by: Eric Lasley & Judith Bachner / Amnon & Lee Ben-Yehuda / The Weil Family Foundation

Simin Ganatra, violin
Sibbi Bernhardsson, violin
Masumi Per Rostad, viola
Brandon Vamos, cello

PROGRAM

String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 76, No. 4 "Sunrise"

Franz Joseph Haydn
 (1732 - 1809)

Allegro con spirito
Adagio
Menuetto: Allegro
Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

String Quartet No. 9 in E flat major, Op. 117 (1964)

Dmitri Shostakovich
 (1906 - 1975)

Moderato con moto—
Adagio—
Allegretto—
Adagio—
Allegro

INTERMISSION

String Quartet in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2, "Razumovsky"

Ludwig van Beethoven
 (1770 - 1827)

Allegro
Molto adagio
Allegretto
Finale: Presto

PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 76, No. 4
"Sunrise" (1796)
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

The Esterházy family reduced Haydn's annual salary in 1790 as part of a reduction in the princely court's musical forces, but he was graciously freed to perform elsewhere for additional income. In 1791 he accepted an offer to perform and conduct in London. His concerts there were a great success. English composer Charles Burney reported that Haydn "electrified the audience" and excited more attention than had "ever been caused by instrumental music in England." Haydn's London engagements were also extremely lucrative, and he returned for another extended visit in 1794.

Haydn experienced something new during his London visits—concerts that were open to the public in large halls. The contrast between this and his traditional Viennese setting of intimate aristocratic salons was striking. Haydn's creative response can be heard in the grand Op. 74 and Op. 76 quartets that followed his first and second London visits. They feature attention-catching introductions, accentuated dynamic contrasts, more expressive slow movements, and much virtuoso part writing.

The Quartet Op. 76, no. 4 opens slowly with a rising theme in the first violin that earned the quartet the nickname "Sunrise." After a brief extension of this calm mood, the Allegro con spirito tempo abruptly asserts itself in a cascade of energetic sixteenth notes. The rest of the movement continues as a dramatic back-and-forth between the mood of the quiet opening and that of the following sixteenth-note passage.

The Adagio is one of Haydn's most expressive slow movements, a free fantasia on the opening five notes. After long melodic lines slowly unfold, an underlying pulse is added that heightens the movement's poignant sense of melancholy. Haydn progressively re-shapes the opening motif in a variety of ways as melodic passages swell up and tumble softly down. A single pizzicato note in the

cello alerts the audience to a searching canonic passage. The affecting Adagio is followed somewhat comically by the Menuetto's heavy peasant-dance rhythm. The last note of the Menuetto overlaps with the first note of the trio section, whose sustained drones in the viola and cello continue the folk music effect. The somewhat somber trio falls off quietly, but a return of the bouncy Menuetto restores good feeling.

The unusual finale initially proceeds as a straightforward working of the movement's opening bars. After elaborate harmonization and touches of Haydnesque humor, an emphatic cadence announces what appears to be the quartet's closing. But surprises lie in wait. A rapid cadenza-like musical line opens the coda. After it passes among the instruments, the four voices come together, now marked "even faster." A finale that began as a moderately paced Allegro ends in a virtuoso display at breakneck speed.

String Quartet No. 9 in E flat major, Op. 117 (1964)

Dmitri Shostakovich

By the mid-1960s Shostakovich had settled uncomfortably into his role as the leading Soviet composer and an important member of the Soviet music establishment. His official status imposed duties but also gave him some latitude to take creative risks. Symphony No. 13 ("Babi Yar"), a choral setting of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poetry implicitly condemning government anti-Semitism, was premiered in 1962 despite considerable interference by the cultural authorities. Shostakovich suffered no adverse consequences other than criticism and suppression of the symphony after several performances.

His private life was also more settled, happily so despite a growing list of chronic health problems. His third marriage, to Irina Antonova Supinskaya, a music editor and kindred spirit, was a source of great satisfaction to Shostakovich. Intelligent, industrious, and highly appreciative of his music, she brought stability and order back into his life after the unhappy years following his disastrous second marriage. She was an indispensable companion as



his health gradually deteriorated during their years together and was widely credited for prolonging his life.

His principal creative challenge at this time was in chamber music. He had taken the use of his personal four-note DSCH 'signature' and self-quotation to a radical extreme in the Eighth Quartet (1960), and he struggled to find a path forward. Dissatisfied with a first attempt to compose his Ninth Quartet, he wrote that he "burnt it in the stove." A second version, which he publicly described as "a children's piece, about toys and going out to play," was also discarded. A completely different Ninth Quartet finally appeared in May 1964, four years after the Eighth Quartet. Two months later, he completed his Tenth Quartet.

The ambitious, experimental Ninth Quartet displays much of the musical landscape of Shostakovich's earlier quartets, but it also stands apart from its predecessors by using new stylistic elements that he would carry forward into his last quartets: oscillating lines of close note intervals; clusters of repeated notes; large note intervals in a widely-

spaced musical texture; and sudden passages of recitative and solo pizzicato. These combine to produce an effect of fragmentation and heightened emotional distance.

The Ninth Quartet is played without pause and has many unifying links across its movements. The restless oscillating eighth note pulse with which the first movement opens, an apparent allusion to Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*, runs as an undercurrent throughout the entire movement. It returns as the main theme in the fourth movement, and appears again, much faster, in the last movement's opening theme. A harmonic element introduced in the first movement also reappears throughout the quartet: the note A natural, which acts, in music historian Judith Kuhn's term, as a harmonic 'sore' to disrupt or block harmonic resolution. The movements are stitched together by their closing notes, each of which become the opening notes of the following movement.

The second movement, one of two Adagios in the quartet's arched structure, alludes to music from Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, a favorite of the composer.

The centerpiece third movement scherzo opens with a driving dance that is interrupted at its height by a high, melodic second theme. After the dance resumes, the second theme returns above it as a ghostly whisper with hints of atonality. In the Adagio fourth movement, passages of forceful solo pizzicato and recitative come unexpectedly after pauses in the oscillating main theme. The symphonic final movement, twice as long as any of the earlier four, opens with re-workings of themes from the first and fourth movements, and it closes with restatements and transformations of all the quartet's major themes in reverse order. In between these two sections, after a harsh tremolo, is a return of recitative and pizzicato, first in the cello and then in all instruments together. The quartet ends with an exciting prolonged crescendo. Shostakovich dedicated the Ninth Quartet to his wife Irina Antonova.

String Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2, "Razumovsky" (1806) Ludwig van Beethoven

Count Andrey Razumovsky, Russian ambassador to the Imperial Court at Vienna, was a flamboyant figure who lived in a magnificent Neoclassical mansion filled with art, music, and antiquities. He was widely admired and envied by the cream of Viennese society, but today he remembered only for the three string quartets he commissioned from Beethoven late in 1805.

Composed in 1806, the three Opus 59 "Razumovsky" quartets join other ambitious masterpieces Beethoven completed between 1804 and 1806, most notably his Eroica Symphony, Violin Concerto, and "Appassionata" Piano Sonata. The Opus 59 quartets are composed on an orchestral scale and have many convention-defying features and technical difficulties. Contemporary audiences, critics, and performers were baffled. After perusing the Opus 59 score, Italian violinist Felix Radicati remarked sarcastically to Beethoven, "Surely you do not consider this music." Beethoven replied, "Not for you, but for a later age."

Echoing the Eroica Symphony, Op. 59, No. 2 opens abruptly with two chords. After a measure of tense

silence, short melodic statements follow. From these brusque wisps of thematic material Beethoven creates the first movement's lean structure and imbues it with an unsettled atmosphere. The hymn-like second movement, marked *Molto adagio* ("very slow") bears instructions in the score that it is to be played "with much feeling." Gone are the tensions of the first movement, but a rhythmic pulse and dark harmonic shifts beneath the lyrical beauty of its melodic lines impart a somber character.

The Allegretto's simple, halting scherzo seems mere wrapping for the flamboyant trio section. Marked "Thème russe," the trio's melody is a Russian folk tune reportedly inserted by Beethoven at Razumovsky's request. The lively tune is introduced as a fugue with textbook counterpoint, its long principal theme and countersubjects passing between the four voices. The music grows louder, the melody more compressed, and the fugue breaks down into absurd canonic fragments. As Joseph Kerman has observed, "This does not sound as though the composer inserted the Russian tune as an urbane compliment to his Russian patron... [but as though] Beethoven is pile-driving it into the ground by way of revenge."

The high-spirited, cantering Finale is symphonic in scope and begins in the 'wrong' key of C major, rather than the quartet's home key of E minor, sounding at first as though it has been dropped in from a different quartet. The rondo melody continues to return in C major, and Beethoven achieves the harmonic transition from E minor by comically tossing a short musical fragment around the instruments. Beethoven also defies conventional expectations by introducing an extended development section and other sonata form elements into the rondo. But the Finale's rhythmic energy conquers all these complexities, and the quartet drives forward to an exciting conclusion.

- Program notes by Robert Strong

BIOGRAPHY

Recognized for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and often-daring repertory choices, over the past two decades the Pacifica Quartet has gained

international stature as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. The Pacifica tours extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia, performing regularly in the world's major concert halls. Named the quartet-in-residence at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in March 2012, the Pacifica was also the quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2009 – 2012) – a position that has otherwise been held only by the Guarneri String Quartet – and received the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance.

Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly won chamber music's top competitions, including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002 the ensemble was honored with Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and the appointment to Lincoln Center's CMS Two, and in 2006 was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, becoming only the second chamber ensemble so honored in the Grant's long history. Also in 2006 the Quartet was featured on the cover of Gramophone and heralded as one of "five new quartets you should know about," the only American quartet to make the list. And in 2009, the Quartet was named "Ensemble of the Year" by Musical America.

During the 2014-15 season, the Pacifica will record and perform the Brahms piano quintet with the legendary pianist Menahem Pressler, and will participate in weeklong residencies at the University of Iowa and at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. In addition, the Quartet will return twice to Europe for four weeks of performances; in addition, the group will make its debut tour of South America.

The Pacifica Quartet has carved a niche for itself as the preeminent interpreter of string quartet cycles, harnessing the group's singular focus and incredible stamina to portray each composer's evolution, often over the course of just a few days. Having given highly acclaimed performances of the complete Carter cycle in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and Houston; the Mendelssohn cycle in Napa, Australia, New York, and Pittsburgh; and the Beethoven cycle in New York, Denver, St. Paul, Chicago, Napa, and Tokyo (in an unprecedented

presentation of five concerts in three days at Suntory Hall), the Quartet presented the monumental Shostakovich cycle in Chicago and New York during the 2010-2011 season and in Montreal and at London's Wigmore Hall in the 2011-2012 season. The Quartet has been widely praised for these cycles, with critics calling the concerts "brilliant," "astonishing," "gripping," and "breathtaking."

An ardent advocate of contemporary music, the Pacifica Quartet commissions and performs many new works, including those by Keeril Makan, in partnership with the Celebrity Series of Boston and the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, during the 2012-13 season, and Shulamit Ran, in partnership with the Music Accord consortium, London's Wigmore Hall, and Tokyo's Suntory Hall, during the 2014-15 seasons. The work – entitled *Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory* – will have its New York debut as part of the Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center series.

In 2008 the Quartet released its Grammy Award-winning recording of Carter's quartets Nos. 1 and 5 on the Naxos label; the 2009 release of quartets Nos. 2, 3, and 4 completed the two-CD set. Cedille Records recently released the third of four volumes comprising the entire Shostakovich cycle, along with other contemporary Soviet works, to rave reviews: "The playing is nothing short of phenomenal." (Daily Telegraph, London) Recent projects include recording Leo Ornstein's rarely-heard piano quintet with Marc-André Hamelin, with an accompanying tour, and the Brahms and Mozart clarinet quintets with the Metropolitan Opera's principal clarinetist Anthony McGill.

The members of the Pacifica Quartet live in Bloomington, IN, where they serve as quartet-in-residence and full-time faculty members at the Jacobs School of Music. Prior to their appointment, the Quartet was on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana from 2003 to 2012. The Pacifica Quartet also serves as resident performing artist at the University of Chicago.

The Pacifica Quartet is endorsed by D'Addario and proudly uses their strings. For more information on the Quartet, please visit www.pacificaquartet.com.

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3. To add to the artistic and cultural life of the La Jolla and San Diego communities.

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