

ArtPower  
University of California San Diego

**ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET**  
May 5, 2017 at 8 pm  
Department of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall



ArtPower presents  
**St. Lawrence  
String Quartet**  
May 5, 2017 at 8 pm  
Department of Music's  
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Geoff Nuttall, *violin*  
Owen Dalby, *violin*  
Lesley Robertson, *viola*  
Christopher Costanza, *cello*

## Program

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**  
String Quartet in F Major, Opus 135 (1826)  
Allegretto  
Vivace  
Lento assai, cantanto e tranquillo  
Grave, ma non troppo tratto - Allegro

**John Adams (b. 1947)**  
Second Quartet (2014)  
Allegro molto  
Andantino-Energico

INTERMISSION

**Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)**  
String Quartet No. 1 in E Minor, Opus 112  
Allegro  
Molto Allegro quasi Presto  
Molto Adagio  
Allegro non troppo

The St. Lawrence String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists. [www.davidroweartists.com](http://www.davidroweartists.com)

St. Lawrence String recordings can be heard on EMI Classics and ArtistShare ([www.artistshare.com](http://www.artistshare.com)).

The St. Lawrence String Quartet is Ensemble-in-Residence at Stanford University.

[www.slsq.com](http://www.slsq.com)

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ArtPower at UC San Diego builds creative experiences in music, dance, film, and food for our collective pleasure and inspiration. We engage diverse audiences through vibrant, challenging, multi-disciplinary performances by emerging and renowned international artists. Through extensive partnerships, ArtPower provides exciting opportunities for research, participation, and creation of new work, igniting powerful dialogue between artists, students, scholars, and the community.

## About the Program

### String Quartet in F Major, Opus 135

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn

Died March 26, 1827, Vienna

This quartet—Beethoven’s last complete composition—comes from the fall of 1826, one of the blackest moments in his life. During the previous two years, he had written three string quartets on commission from Prince Nikolas Galitzin, and another, the Quartet in C-sharp Minor, Opus 131, composed between January and June 1826. Even then Beethoven was not done with the possibilities of the string quartet: he pressed on with yet another, making sketches for the Quartet in F Major during the summer of 1826.

At that point his world collapsed. His twenty-year-old nephew Karl, who had become Beethoven’s ward after a bitter court fight with the boy’s mother, attempted suicide on July 30. The composer was shattered—friends reported that he suddenly looked seventy years old. At the end of September, when the young man had recovered enough to travel, Beethoven took him—and the sketches for the new quartet—to the country home of Beethoven’s brother Johann in Gneixendorf, a village about thirty miles west of Vienna. There, as he nursed Karl back to health, Beethoven’s own health began to fail. He would get up and compose at dawn, spend his days walking through the fields, and then resume composing in the evening. In Gneixendorf he completed the Quartet in F Major in October and wrote a new finale to his earlier Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 130. These were his final works. When Beethoven returned to Vienna in December, he went almost immediately to bed and died the following March.

One would expect music composed under such turbulent circumstances to be anguished, but the Quartet in F Major is radiant music, full of sunlight—it is as if Beethoven achieved in this quartet the peace unavailable to him in life. This is the shortest of the late quartets, and while this music remains very much in Beethoven’s late style, it returns to the classical proportions (and mood) of the Haydn quartets.

The opening movement, significantly marked *Allegretto* rather than the expected *Allegro*, is the one most often cited as Haydnesque. It is in sonata form—though a sonata form without overt conflict—and Beethoven builds it on brief thematic fragments rather than long melodies. This is poised, relaxed music, and the final cadence—on the falling figure that has run throughout the movement—is remarkable for its understatement. By contrast, the *Vivace* bristles with energy. Its outer sections rocket along on a sharply-syncopated main idea, while the vigorous trio sends the first violin sailing high above the other voices. The very ending is impressive: the music grows quiet, comes to a moment of stasis, and then Beethoven wrenches it to a stop with a sudden, stinging surprise.

The slow movement—Beethoven marks it *Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo*—is built on the first violin’s heartfelt opening melody. This opening is in D-flat major, but for the central episode Beethoven slows down even further (the marking is *Più lento*), moves to C-sharp minor, and writes music of a prayer-like simplicity. This section, full of halting rhythms, spans only ten measures before the return of the opening material, now elaborately decorated. The final movement has occasioned the most comment.

In the manuscript, Beethoven noted two three-note mottoes at its beginning under the heading *Der schwer gefasste Entschluss*: “The Difficult Resolution.” The first, solemnly intoned by viola and cello, asks the question: “Muss es sein?” (“Must it be?”). The violins’ inverted answer, which comes at the *Allegro*, is set to the words “Es muss sein!” (“It must be!”). Coupled with the fact that this quartet is virtually Beethoven’s final composition, these mottoes have given rise to a great deal of pretentious nonsense from certain commentators, mainly to the effect that they must represent Beethoven’s last thoughts, a stirring philosophical affirmation of life’s possibilities. The actual origins of this motto are a great deal less imposing, for they arose from a dispute over an unpaid bill, and as a private joke for friends Beethoven wrote a humorous canon on the dispute, the theme of which he later adapted for this quartet movement. In any case, the mottoes furnish the opening material for what turns out to be a powerful but essentially cheerful movement—the second theme radiates a childlike simplicity. The coda, which begins pizzicato, gradually gives way to bowed notes and a cadence on the “Es muss sein!” motto.

### Second Quartet

John Adams

Born February 15, 1947, Worcester, Massachusetts

*This work was commissioned by Stanford Live, Carnegie Hall, the Julliard School, the Library of Congress’s Dina Koston and Roger Shapiro Fund for New Music, and Wigmore Hall with the support of André Hoffmann, president of the Fondation Hoffmann, a Swiss grant-making foundation.*

*The world premiere was given by the St. Lawrence String Quartet at Bing Concert Hall, Stanford University on January 18, 2015.*

The publisher of John Adams’ String Quartet No. 2 has made available this program note:

Both of John Adams’ string quartets were composed with the St. Lawrence String Quartet in mind. But this latest work is actually the third he has composed for them. The original String Quartet (now likely to be known as the First Quartet) was written in 2008 and premiered January of 2009 at the Juilliard School, the work’s principal commissioner. The St. Lawrence Quartet went on to perform that work many times throughout the world and made the first recording of it for Nonesuch Records.

Adams followed several years later with a grander idea: *Absolute Jest*, a 25-minute work for solo quartet and orchestra based on fragments from Beethoven, primarily from the Opus 131 and 135 string quartets. Commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony to celebrate its centennial season, *Absolute Jest* was given its first performance in March of that year under that orchestra’s music director, Michael Tilson Thomas with the St. Lawrence String Quartet performing the solo parts. The orchestra has twice toured with *Absolute Jest* and has also recorded it for a forthcoming CD release. Adams and the SLSQ have performed the work together in London, Toronto, and with the New World Symphony in Florida.

The Second Quartet is thus the third piece to result from this exceptionally fruitful relationship between a composer and his favorite chamber group. Speaking of their working relationship, Adams says, “String quartet writing is one of the most difficult challenges a composer can take on. Unless one is an accomplished string player and

writes in that medium all the time—and I don't know many these days who do—the demands of handling this extremely volatile and transparent instrumental medium can easily be humbling, if not downright humiliating. What I appreciate about my friends in the St. Lawrence is their willingness to let me literally 'improvise' on them as if they were a piano or a drum and I a crazy man beating away with only the roughest outlines of what I want. They will go the distance with me, allow me to try and fail, and they will indulge my seizures of doubt, frustration and indecision, all the while providing intuitions and frequently brilliant suggestions of their own. It is no surprise then for me to reveal that both the First Quartet and *Absolute Jest* went through radical revision stages both before and after each piece's premiere. Quartet writing for me seems to be a matter of very long-term 'work in progress.'"

Although not a string player himself, Adams admits to a lifelong absorption in the literature, having discovered the Beethoven, Mozart and Bartók quartets as a teenager. While still a teenager he often played clarinet in the great quintets by Mozart and Brahms, and during that formative time he attended what he called "life-changing" performances by both the Juilliard and the Budapest Quartets.

The new quartet uses the same tropes as *Absolute Jest* in that it too is based on tiny fragments—"fractals," in the composer's words—from Beethoven. But the economy here is much stricter. The first movement, for example, is entirely based on two short phrases from the scherzo to the late Opus 110 piano sonata in Ab major. The transformations of harmony, cadential patterns and rhythmic profile that occur in this movement go way beyond the types of manipulations favored in *Absolute Jest*.

Like the First Quartet, this new work is organized in two parts. The first movement has scherzo impetus, and moves at the fastest pace possible for the performers to play it. The familiar Beethoven cadences and half cadences reappear throughout the movement like a homing mechanism and each apparition is followed by a departure to an increasingly remote key and textural region.

The second part begins *Andantino* with a gentle melody that is drawn from the opening movement of the same Opus 111 piano sonata. Here the original Beethoven harmonic and melodic ideas go off in unexpected directions, almost as they were suggestions for a kind of compositional "free association."

The *Andantino* grows in range and complexity until it finally leads into the *Energico* final part of the piece, a treatment of one of the shortest of the *Diabelli Variations*. This particular variation of Beethoven's features a sequence of neighbor-key appoggiaturas, each a half step away from each main chord. Adams amplifies this chromatic relationship without intentionally distorting it. Like its original Beethoven model, the movement is characterized by emphatic gestures, frequent uses of "sforzando" and a busy but convivial mood of hyperactivity among the four instruments.

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## String Quartet No. 1 in E Minor, Opus 112

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born October 9, 1835, Paris

Died December 16, 1921, Algiers

Though he wrote prolifically in almost every musical form—his list of opus numbers stretches to 169—Camille Saint-Saëns appears to have found the string quartet an imposing challenge. He waited until 1899, when he was 64, to write his first (he would write a second, and final, quartet in 1918, when he was 83). There were several reasons for the long delay. Though he was a virtuoso pianist, Saint-Saëns did not play a stringed instrument. And while he wrote magnificently for the violin (Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, *Havanaise*, and the Third Violin Concerto, to name the most impressive of his works for the instrument), Saint-Saëns was keenly aware of the challenge of this most disciplined of forms and of the example of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert before him.

Saint-Saëns' final three decades were restless. He traveled constantly around the globe, even visiting California in 1915, but his productivity remained undiminished, and he composed steadily up to his death at 86 while on a trip to Algiers. It was during one of his travels that Saint-Saëns composed his String Quartet No. 1 in E Minor, completing it in Las Palmas in the Canary Islands in April 1899. Though it was written when its composer was of an age at which many people retire, this quartet almost overflows with energy, offering the first violinist a part of such virtuosity that it can sound at moments like a concerto. Rhythmically, the quartet is marked by a near-obsession with syncopation, which presses this music constantly forward on unexpected beats.

The quartet gets off to an almost icy beginning on quiet muted chords, then leaps ahead at the *Piu Allegro* on jagged attacks, all sharply syncopated. The dotted rhythms of the second theme provide some relief, and much of the fugal development grows out of this theme. Saint-Saëns briefly recalls the quiet introduction before driving the movement to an extroverted close.

The scherzo, marked *Molto allegro quasi presto* begins quietly, but its syncopated pulse presses the music ahead, and Saint-Saëns sets this off with the dancing triplets of his countertheme. The music slows as it nears the end, then the opening syncopations leap up to bring the movement to the sudden close, which winks out before us.

The spirit of Beethoven hovers over the opening of the *Molto adagio*, where the first violin's rapt, heartfelt opening melody is in the manner of the late quartets. Beethoven is quickly left behind, however, as the movement develops, growing more colorful and animated before fading to the quiet conclusion. The brief concluding *Allegro non troppo* is the most vigorous of the movements, and the first violin part here is particularly brilliant. A pulsing second subject recalls the syncopations of earlier movements, but the spirit of the opening theme dominates this movement, and finally the quartet hurtles to a close in G major that is of almost symphonic proportions.

Program notes to the Beethoven and Saint-Saëns by Eric Bromberger

## About the Artists

### St. Lawrence String Quartet

"A sound that has just about everything one wants from a quartet, most notably precision, warmth and an electricity that conveys the excitement of playing whatever is on their stands at the moment."—*New York Times*

"Modern . . . dramatic . . . superb . . . wickedly attentive . . . with a hint of rock 'n roll energy . . ." are just a few ways critics describe the musical phenomenon that is the St Lawrence String Quartet. The SLSQ is renowned for the intensity of its performances, its breadth of repertoire, and its commitment to concert experiences that are at once intellectually exciting and emotionally alive. Highlights in 2016–17 include performances of John Adams' *Absolute Jest* for string quartet and orchestra with Gustavo Dudamel and the L.A. Philharmonic, and with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony, as well as the European premieres of Adams' *Second Quartet*.

Fiercely committed to collaboration with living composers, the SLSQ's fruitful partnership with Adams, Jonathan Berger, Osvaldo Golijov, and many others has yielded some of the finest additions to the quartet literature in recent years. The Quartet is also especially dedicated to the music of Haydn, and are recording his groundbreaking set of six Opus 20 quartets in high-definition video for a free, universal release online in 2017. According to the *New Yorker*, ". . . no other North American quartet plays the music of Haydn with more intelligence, expressivity, and force . . ."

Established in Toronto in 1989, the SLSQ quickly earned acclaim at top international chamber music competitions and was soon playing hundreds of concerts per year worldwide. They established an ongoing residency at Spoleto Festival USA, made prize-winning recordings for EMI of music by Schumann, Tchaikovsky, and Golijov, earning two Grammy nominations, and a host of other prizes before being appointed ensemble-in-residence at Stanford University in 1999.

At Stanford, the SLSQ is at the forefront of intellectual life on campus. The SLSQ directs the music department's chamber music program, and frequently collaborates with other departments including the Schools of Law, Medicine, Business and Education. The Quartet performs regularly at Stanford Live, hosts an annual chamber music seminar, and runs the Emerging String Quartet Program through which they mentor the next generation of young quartets. In the words of Alex Ross of the *New Yorker*: "The St. Lawrence are remarkable not simply for the quality of their music making, exalted as it is, but for the joy they take in the act of connection."



## Colleen

Thursday, May 18, 2017, at 8 pm

The Loft

Tickets: \$23–35

Over the course of five albums, French artist Colleen's (aka Cécile Schott) musical repertoire has featured baroque instruments like the viola de gamba as well as modified music boxes and wind chimes, as she has pushed the boundaries of their playability. Using effects pedals and dub influences, Colleen powerfully blends the mythic, organic, and internal to weave and create intricate music about the human mind and heart.

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# Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company

*Play and Play: An Evening of Movement and Dance*

Thursday, May 25, 2017, at 8 pm

Mandeville Auditorium

Tickets: \$28-46

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company was born out of an 11-year collaboration between Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, who passed away in 1988. During this time, the two dancers redefined the duet form and foreshadowed issues of identity, form, and social commentary that would change the face of American dance.

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company returns to UC San Diego with *Play and Play: An Evening of Movement and Dance*, which includes two works—*Ravel: Landscape or Portrait?* and *Story/*. **Both are accompanied by live music performed by Quartet Nouveau.**