

ArtPower
University of California San Diego

HARLEM QUARTET

April 13, 2018 at 8 pm

Department of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall





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UC San Diego

ArtPower presents
Harlem Quartet
April 13, 2018 at 8 pm
Department of Music's
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Ilmar Gavilan, *violin*
Melissa White, *violin*
Jaime Amador, *viola*
Felix Umansky, *cello*

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)
String Quartet in B-flat Major, K. 458 "The Hunt" (1784)
Allegro vivace assai
Menuetto: Moderato
Adagio
Allegro assai

Antônio Carlos Jobim (1927–94)
(arr. Dave Glenn and Harlem Quartet)
The Girl from Ipanema (1962)

Guido López Gavilán (1944)
Cuarteto en Guaguancó

INTERMISSION

Anton Webern (1883–1945)
Langsamer Satz (1905)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
String Quartet no. 11 in F Minor,
op. 95 "Serioso" (1810–11)
Allegro con brio
Allegretto ma non troppo
Allegro assai vivace ma serioso
Larghetto espressivo; Allegretto agitato

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About the Program

String Quartet in B-flat Major, K. 458 “Hunt”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg
Died December 5, 1791, Vienna

Nicknames sometimes get attached to pieces of music for the thinnest of reasons. Audiences like to have a handle, a way of identifying or distinguishing a particular piece (and publishers see nicknames as good selling points). Some nicknames are appropriate. Mozart’s Symphony no. 41 truly does sound so Olympian that the nickname Jupiter strikes exactly the right note to identify that great music. But many nicknames are less felicitous, mere convenient tags that—by dwelling on a detail—mislead rather than illuminate the music they name.

Mozart’s String Quartet in B-flat Major, K. 458 falls into the latter category. The nickname “Hunt” (not original with the composer) comes from the 6/8 theme at the very beginning, which some listeners have identified with the sound of hunting horns. The identification of this quartet with hunting is unfortunate, since the music has not the faintest connection with hunting and such a nickname draws one away from the many distinctive merits of this quartet. The Quartet in B-flat Major is the fourth of the cycle of six quartets written between 1782 and 1785 that Mozart dedicated to Haydn. He completed this quartet on November 9, 1784, and it has been admired for the wonderfully graceful writing for strings, for the easy partnership of four equal voices, and for its many original touches.

Though the *Allegro vivace assai* begins amiably with the so-called “hunting” theme, the development brings a surprise, for it seems based on entirely new themes—only fragments of the exposition material appear here. But the recapitulation brings back the first theme in all its glory, and Mozart pulls all his material together easily at the close. Distinctive as the first movement is, it almost functions as prelude to the middle two movements, the most striking in the quartet. Mozart reverses the expected order, so that the minuet precedes the slow movement. Minuets can sometimes serve as pleasing interludes between more serious movements, but Mozart suffuses this one with rare expressive power. Trills and off-the-beat accents mark its outer sections, while the trio itself—which begins over a cheerfully-ticking accompaniment in the middle voices—grows suddenly expressive in its second strains, with dark shadings and plangent falls. The stunning *Adagio* begins simply, but soon the first violin spins a long, disconsolate melodic line that turns complex and darkly-shaded as it proceeds. Though the movement belongs largely to the first violin, one should not overlook the consummate skill with which the secondary voices shade and merge with the leading voice, sometimes murmuring in the background, sometimes deftly trading parts of the melodic line. After the subdued close of the *Adagio*, the sonata-form finale comes as a burst of sunlight, its eight-bar phrases flowing seamlessly between the four voices.

Haydn heard this quartet performed at a garden concert in Vienna on February 10, 1785. Stunned by the music, he pulled Mozart’s father Leopold aside and offered the most sincere compliment any composer ever gave another. This remark has been quoted

many times, but Haydn’s evaluation of Mozart is worth hearing again: “Before God and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition.”

The Girl from Ipanema

Antônio Carlos Jobim
Born January 25, 1927, Rio de Janeiro
Died December 8, 1994, New York City

Antônio Carlos Jobim was born in Rio de Janeiro, but grew up in Ipanema, a fashionable beach community in Rio de Janeiro. He studied music as a young man and achieved fame as a songwriter whose style fused bossa nova, jazz, samba and other influences. In 1962, inspired by the image of a blond 17-year-old girl walking across the beach like a vision, Jobim composed his song *Menina que Passa*. The song became an international sensation two years later when, working with Stan Getz, Jobim made an English-language version that was recorded by Astrud Gilberto. With its catchy beat and haunting vision of the girl, *The Girl from Ipanema* went on to become one of the most-recorded songs in history. It is heard on this concert in an arrangement for string quartet by Dave Glenn and the members of the Harlem Quartet.

Cuarteto en Guaguancó

Guido López Gavilán
Born 1944

Guido Gavilán received his early training in his native Cuba and graduated in 1966 from the choral conducting program at the Amadeo Roldan Conservatory. He went on to further training in the orchestral conducting program at the Tchaikovsky Festival in Moscow and has made his career as both a composer and conductor—Gavilán conducted the National Symphony of Cuba on its tour of the United States in 2012. As composer, Gavilán has written works for orchestral, chorus, and chamber ensembles. He is the father of Ilmar Gavilán, first violinist of the Harlem Quartet.

A *guaguancó* is the five-stroke ostinato pattern that underlines much of Afro-Cuban music. The pattern is slightly asymmetric, which gives the music much of its energy and forward impetus, and Gavilán has composed a number of works based on this rhythmic pattern. The present piece was originally composed for chamber orchestra in 2005; Gavilán himself arranged it for string quartet in 2016.

Langsamer Satz

Anton Webern
Born December 3, 1883, Vienna
Died September 15, 1945, Mittersil

Webern entered the University of Vienna to study musicology in the fall of 1902, when he was 19, and two years later he began composition lessons with Schoenberg; these private studies would continue until 1908. Early in his work with Schoenberg—in 1905—Webern wrote a movement for string quartet as a composition exercise, and this is called today simply *Langsamer Satz*: “slow movement.”

Listeners who usually flee at the thought of Webern may be surprised by this music. Composed before Webern had abandoned tonality, the *Langsamer Satz* makes clear just how deeply rooted he was in the music of late 19-century Vienna. In fact, hearing this music without knowing its composer, one might well guess either Brahms or Mahler. The influence of Brahms (dead only eight years when the *Langsamer Satz* was written) can be felt in the lush sound and the romantic theme-shapes; the influence of Mahler (then director of the Vienna Opera and composing his Seventh Symphony) appears in the scrupulous attention to sound and the intensity of the development. The harmonic language is quite traditional (this music begins in C minor and progresses to the relative major, E-flat), as is the form. This eleven-minute movement is based on two themes; both of these develop, and the music moves to a climax, resolving quietly on fragments of the opening idea.

Particularly striking is the expressiveness of this music. We have so much come to think of Webern as the supremely intelligent and detached manipulator of tone rows and complex canons that it may surprise some to hear the romantic arc of these themes and to sense the intensity of feeling in the music. The score is littered with such performance markings as “very warm,” “with deep feeling,” “expressive,” and “very calm.”

Webern probably never heard this music. He wrote it as an exercise, and doubtless he and Schoenberg went over it in some detail, revising and refining. But the *Langsamer Satz* remained unpublished, and the manuscript was eventually discovered in the Webern archives that musicologist Hans Moldenhauer established at the University of Washington. The first known performance took place in Seattle on May 27, 1962, over half a century after the music was written and seventeen years after the composer’s death.

String Quartet in F Minor, opus 95 “Serioso”

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1779, Bonn

Died March 26, 1827, Vienna

Beethoven’s manuscript for the Quartet in F Minor is dated October 1810, but almost certainly he continued to work on this quartet for some years after that, and it was not published until 1816. This quartet has a nickname, “Quartetto Serioso,” that—unusually for a musical nickname—came from the composer himself. Well aware of the music’s extraordinary character, Beethoven described the quartet as having been “written for a small circle of connoisseurs and . . . never to be performed in public.” Joseph Kerman has described it as “an involved, impassioned, highly idiosyncratic piece, problematic in every one of its movements, advanced in a hundred ways” and “unmatched in Beethoven’s output for compression, exaggerated articulation, and a corresponding sense of extreme tension.” Yet this same quartet—virtually the shortest of Beethoven’s string quartets—comes from the same period as the easily accessible “Archduke” Trio, the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, and the incidental music to Goethe’s *Egmont*, and this music’s extraordinary focus and tension seem sharply at odds with those scores. In fact, this quartet in many ways prefigures Beethoven’s late style and the great cycle of quartets written during his final years.

The first movement is extraordinarily compressed (it lasts barely four minutes), and it catapults listeners through an unexpected series of key relationships. The unison opening figure is almost spit out, passing through and ending in a “wrong” key and then followed by complete silence. Octave leaps and furious restatements of the opening figure lead to the swaying second subject, announced in flowing triplets by the viola. The development section of this (highly modified) sonata-form movement is quite short, treating only the opening theme, before the movement exhausts itself on fragments of that theme.

The marking of the second movement, *Allegretto ma non troppo*, might seem to suggest some relief, but this movement is even more closely argued than the first. The cello’s strange descending line introduces a lovely opening melody, but this quickly gives way to a long and complex fugue, its sinuous subject announced by the viola and then taken up and developed by the other voices. A quiet close (derived from the cello’s introduction) links this movement to the third, a violent fast movement marked *Allegro assai vivace ma serioso*. The movement is in ABABA form, the explosive opening section alternating with a chorale-like subject for the lower three voices which the first violin decorates. Once again, Beethoven takes each section into unexpected keys. The last movement has a slow introduction—*Larghetto espressivo*—full of the darkness that has marked the first three movements, and this leads to a blistering finale that does much to dispel the tension. In an oft-quoted remark about the arrival of this theme, American composer Randall Thompson is reported to have said: “No bottle of champagne was ever uncorked at a better moment.” In contrast, for example, to the near-contemporary Seventh Symphony, which ends in wild celebration, this quartet has an almost consciously anti-heroic close, concluding with a very fast coda that Beethoven marks simply *Allegro*.

Some have felt that the Quartet in F Minor is composed with the same technique as the late quartets but without their sense of spiritual elevation, and in this sense they see the present quartet as looking ahead toward Beethoven’s late style. But it is unfair to this music to regard it simply as a forerunner of another style. This quartet may well be dark, explosive, and extremely concentrated. But it should be valued for just those qualities.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger

About the Artists

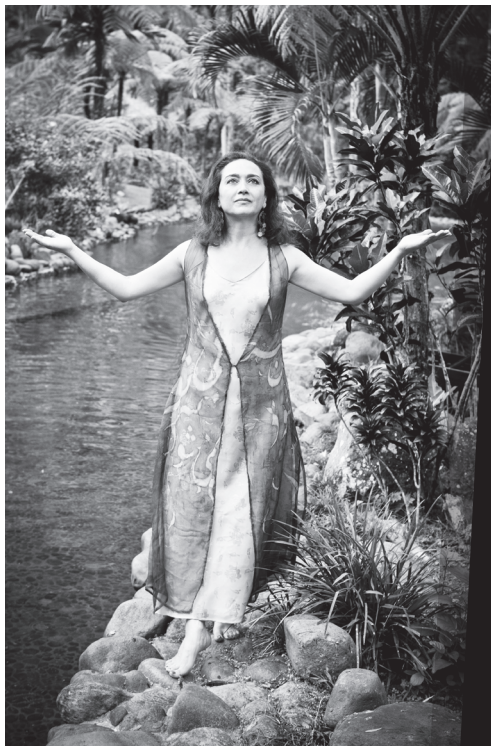
Harlem Quartet

New York-based Harlem Quartet, currently serving a three-year residency at London’s Royal College of Music, has been praised for its “panache” by the *New York Times* and hailed in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* for “bringing a new attitude to classical music, one that is fresh, bracing and intelligent.” Since its public debut at Carnegie Hall in 2006, the quartet has thrilled audiences in 47 states as well as in the U.K., France, Belgium, Brazil, Panama, Canada, Venezuela, and South Africa. Harlem Quartet’s mission is to advance diversity in classical music, engaging young and new audiences through the discovery and presentation of varied repertoire that includes works by minority composers. Passion for this work has made the quartet a leading ensemble in both educational and community engagement performances. In addition to performing a varied menu of

string quartet literature around the world, Harlem Quartet has collaborated with such distinguished artists as violinist Itzhak Perlman; cellist Carter Brey; and clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera.

The quartet's recording career began in 2007 with *Take the "A" Train*, a release featuring the string quartet version of that jazz standard by Billy Strayhorn. A second CD, featuring three string quartets by Walter Piston, was released in 2010 by Naxos. The quartet's third recording, released in early 2011, is a collaboration with pianist Awadagin Pratt and showcases works by American composer Judith Lang Zaimont. More recently the quartet collaborated with jazz pianist Chick Corea in two recording projects, including a Grammy-winning *Hot House* album that included Corea's *Mozart Goes Dancing*, which won a separate Grammy as Best Instrumental Composition.

Harlem Quartet was founded in 2006 by The Sphinx Organization, a national nonprofit dedicated to building diversity in classical music and providing access to music education in underserved communities. The quartet is represented worldwide by Sciolino Artist Management www.samnyc.us.



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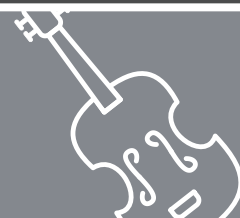


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