

PROGRAM

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 76, No. 5, Hob. III:79

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1807)

Allegretto - Allegro

Largo cantabile e mesto

Menuetto: Allegro

Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

Three Rags for String Quartet (arr. 1989)

William Bolcom (b. 1938)

Poltergeist (1971)

The Graceful Ghost Rag (1970)

Incineratorag (1967)

Snapshot: Circa 1909 (2003)

John Corigliano (b. 1938)

A Black November Turkey (1973, arr. 2003)

- Intermission -

String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Assai sostenuto - Allegro

Allegro ma non tanto

Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der

lydischen Tonart: Molto adagio - Andante

Alla Marcia, assai vivace

Allegro appassionato

Linden String Quartet is a winner of the Concert Artists Guild International Competition.

Linden String Quartet is represented by:

Concert Artists Guild--850 Seventh Ave, PH-A, New York, NY 10019

www.concertartists.org

Linden String Quartet

Sarah McElravy & Catherine Cosbey, violins;
Eric Wong, viola; Felix Umansky, cello

Winner, 2010 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition
Gold Medal, 2009 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition
Yale School of Music Graduate Quartet in Residence, 2010-2012

Described as "...polished, radiant and incisive..." by *The Strad*, the Linden String Quartet is a winner of the 2010 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition. Founded in spring 2008 at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Quartet has enjoyed remarkable success in four short years, also winning the Gold Medal and Grand Prize of the 2009 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the Coleman-Barstow Prize at the 2009 Coleman National Chamber Ensemble Competition, First Prize at the 2010 Hugo Kauder Competition, and most recently, the ProQuartet Prize at the 9th Borciani International String Quartet Competition. Praised for "...performances of consummate artistry and near-flawless execution" (*Classical Voice of North Carolina*), the Linden Quartet was also selected recently for the prestigious 2011 A.N. and Pearl G. Barnett Fellowship (including a \$25,000 award.)

Featured engagements for the 2012-13 season include the season-opening concert on New York's renowned Schneider Concerts Series at the New School and a weeklong residency for the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, culminating in a performance with Grammy award-winning clarinetist Richard Stoltzman. Other season highlights include: Market Square Concerts, the Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival (NC,) Acadiana Symphony Chamber Music Series (LA;) and in Canada: the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, Toronto's Lindsay Concert Foundation, and the third annual week-long summer residency at the Music at Port Milford Chamber Music Festival in Ontario. In fall 2013, the Quartet also reunites with CAG First Prize-winning pianist Michael Brown in joint recitals at the Reston Community Center, the Brooklyn Public Library and the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College.

Dedicated to sharing their passion for chamber music with students, the foursome is quite active with educational residencies in 2012-13, including the University of Iowa School of Music, the Auditorium Chamber Music Series (Moscow, ID,) Sheldon Friends of Music (Lincoln, NE) and the Chamber Music Society of Logan, UT. The Linden Quartet was the 2011-12 Ernst Steifel Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, leading a series of educational workshops in the school districts surrounding the Center. That residency culminated in a performance at the Caramoor Festival in July 2012, featuring the world premiere of Gabriel Kahane's *Line Up!* for String Quartet, commissioned by Caramoor.

Now based in Cleveland, the Linden Quartet recently completed the two-year Graduate String-Quartet-in-Residence program at Yale University School of Music, where the ensemble was mentored by

the Tokyo String Quartet. Previous mentors have included the Cavani String Quartet, Peter Salaff and Paul Kantor. The Quartet has also worked with Donald Weilerstein and William Preucil of the Cleveland Quartet, Joel Smirnoff and Robert Mann of the Juilliard String Quartet and members of the Guarneri and St. Lawrence Quartets. The Quartet has collaborated with pianist Peter Frankl, guitarist Jason Vieaux, mezzo-soprano Jana Baty, violinist Geoff Nuttall, as well as acclaimed accordion and bandonéon player Julian Labro.

In summer 2010, the Linden String Quartet was resident ensemble at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, as well as chamber music festivals in Banff, Alberta and Stanford, California. As winners of the Fischhoff Grand Prize, the Quartet toured the Midwest in fall 2009, and the 2009-10 season included appearances at Italy's Emilia Romagna Festival, and a week-long tour throughout the state of Kentucky. The group also served previously as the Canton Symphony Orchestra's Quartet-in-Residence, featuring a series of presentations in elementary schools throughout Northeastern Ohio designed to promote Classical music.

www.lindenquartet.com

August 2012

Program Notes

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 76, No. 5, in D Major, Hob. III:79

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Haydn's voluminous output alone does not explain his powerful musical and cultural influence. His 83 string quartets and some 45 piano trios, though daunting in number, are also overwhelming in their stylistic breadth and ingenuity. They move across the boundaries of the Baroque and the Classical and, in the later quartets, lick the edges of Romanticism.

The move to a freer, more emotional expression was occasioned by the end of Haydn's 29-year tenure as Kapellmeister in the court of the Hungarian aristocrat, Prince Paul Anton Esterházy. That, coupled with two highly successful visits to London, gave Haydn a wider musical exposure. Freed from musical and financial obligations, Haydn went to London where, under the direction of the German violinist and impresario Johann Peter Salomon, he became an international celebrity. Fame did not ruin Haydn, however, for the London years proved to be some of the richest in his compositional life. For the first time he heard music played in public halls by professional musicians for a general public. This more democratic approach to music freed him from the decorative style demanded by the aristocratic amateur players and audiences. Prior to this, however, Haydn's music had already taken on new emotional depths as a result of a philosophical influence (the Sturm und Drang movement) that stressed the importance of faith and the senses as opposed to the logic and reason of the Enlightenment.

If Haydn's paternity of the piano trio is ever overlooked, his fatherhood of the string quartet is honored universally. The number—some 83—is itself astonishing, but the depth and breadth of his string quartets bespeak his genius even more clearly. Beethoven brought the string quartet to new

dimensions with his sixteen quartets, but we must question if he would have done so had Haydn not given birth to the form.

Haydn wrote his first quartet somewhere between 1755 and 1757 for an amateur ensemble that by chance consisted of two violinists, a violist, and a cellist. He abandoned the form for some years but returned to it with seriousness as early as 1769 with the six quartets of his Op. 9, the six of Op. 17, and, in 1772, the six of his well-known Op. 20 “Sun Quartets.” From that point on, the string quartet became a highly-respected form that served as a challenging test of a composer’s skill. Haydn continued the challenge with his “Russian” quartets (1781,) Op. 42 (1785,) the “Prussian” quartets and Op. 51 (1787), the two sets of “Tost” Quartets (1788 and 1790,) the Ops. 71 and 74 “Apponyi” quartets (1793,) the Op. 76 “Erdödy” quartets (1796-1797,) the Op. 77 “Lobkowitz” quartets (1790,) and finally the incomplete Op. 103 of 1803. We should not omit from this distinguished list his Op. 51 masterpiece of 1787, The Seven Last Words of Christ, a transcription for string quartet of an earlier orchestral work.

The six “Erdödy” Quartets” of Op. 76 are so named after Count Joseph Erdödy who asked Haydn for the set in 1796 shortly after his return to Vienna from his second visit to London. To the set, Haydn brought his mature understanding of the string quartet form as well as his enlightened emotional sense of music. The result of this was a new profundity reflected especially in his slow movements. At the same time, the fast movements were more powerful and technically challenging, and even the minuets took on a more serious nature. Yet, as Leon Botstein points out in his brilliant essay, “The Demise of Philosophical Listening,” in *Haydn and His World* (Princeton University Press,) Haydn was written off in the 19th century as what might be described as a congenial innocent. Botstein argues that those perceptions must be “scraped away” and that we should realize, for listeners in the 18th century, Haydn’s music carried “gravity, philosophical depth, passion, and complex beauty.” So does it for the serious listener today, as made readily clear in the Op. 76 quartets and, specifically, No. 5 of that group.

The first movement, *Allegretto*, despite its gracious opening, has some serious underpinnings in its quick shifts to the minor as only Haydn can do. A development section gives new attention to the cello but not at the expense of the other instruments. Things heat up and then, typical of Haydn, he gives a surprise moment of silence before a return to the spirit of the gracious opening—but with variations and a brief but splendid cadenza for the first violin. Interestingly, the second movement, *Largo cantabile e mesto*, is the longest of the four movements, understandably so because of its profoundly touching qualities. Here we have lyricism edged with sadness and a certain strength. This not the “Happy Haydn” he is often misrepresented to be. He does, however, offer us a gentle conclusion to this pensive movement. The third movement, *Minuetto*, with its elegant dance theme, offers a relief to the intensity of the *Largo*. A trio section, however, goes well beyond the spirit of dancing with its complex counterpoint. If you must force Haydn into the 18th century, it might be in this movement but, even then, it is a tight squeeze. The *Finale*, with its lively *Presto*, brings something of the merriness we often erroneously associate with Haydn. This merriness, however, carries a strong edge of the colorful Gypsy spirit that Haydn has so famously caught in his work.

Three Rags for String Quartet

William Bolcom (b. 1938)

The Three Rags for String Quartet by William Bolcom began as solo piano pieces composed separately and in the style of a modern-day Scott Joplin. Each rag seemingly more charming and witty than the last, it is no wonder they have become some of Bolcom's most popular works, resulting in a slew of arrangements for various combinations of instruments, among them the 1989 string quartet version. The first movement, Poltergeist, was originally composed in 1971 and describes an evil-yet-wacky sprit, first expressed by the violin in a sort of caricature of a rag-tune, peppered with "wrong notes." The viola soon takes over with an impetuous melody that waffles between sarcastically pompous and sweetly sentimental. Bolcom, never short on delightful tunes, continues the movement with several humorous twists and a rollicking coda.

The second rag, The Graceful Ghost, was composed in 1970 as a tribute to the composer's father. It reimagines the usually jazzy and jubilant ragtime genre as something earnest, melancholy, and profound. Presented first by the viola, the heartfelt opening theme undergoes several transformations throughout, played alternately in double-stops, pizzicato, and artificial harmonics, perhaps in the name of achieving an increasingly "ghostly" effect. The cello presents a lonely melody, based on a chromatic, five-note motive that, frustratingly, seems to be constantly pulled back to the place it began. The second violin next creates an emotional counterpoint with a hopeful and lighthearted rag theme that seamlessly segues into the haunting melody heard at the opening.

Incineratorrag (1967) is the boisterous finale and varies capriciously between rowdy and playful. Bolcom again displays his penchant for melody with plentiful themes and countermelodies. Toward the end of the piece, the quartet seems to portray a ragtime band approaching from far in the distance, coming ever closer before finishing the movement as raucously it began.

- Eric Wong, Linden String Quartet

Snapshot: Circa 1909 (2003)

John Corigliano (b. 1938)

A Black November Turkey (1973, arr. 2003)

Notes by the Composer:

When the Elements Quartet asked me to write a piece inspired by a photograph, I immediately thought of one I have had since I was a child. It was taken in Greenwich Village in my grandparents' Sullivan Street apartment, which I have only seen in photos. The photographer came to do a group shot of my grandparents, whom I never met, and their six children. After taking that picture, the photographer was coaxed into doing a shot of my father and his brother Peter performing on violin and guitar.

The picture has never ceased to move me. My father looked about eight years old, wearing knickers and earnestly bowing his violin, while my uncle, then a teenager, held a guitar in an aristocratic

position and stared at the camera. In the short quartet inspired by the photo, the second violin plays a nostalgic melody, while the other strings pluck their instruments in a guitar-like manner. This solo is obviously the boy violinist singing through his instrument.

After the melody is completed, however, the first violin enters, muted, in the very highest register. In my mind, he was playing the dream that my eight-year-old father must have had — of performing roulades and high, virtuosic, musing passages that were still impossible for him to master. This young violinist grew into a great soloist — my father, John Corigliano, concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for over a quarter century. He, as an adult, performed the concerti and solos that as a child he could only imagine.

The two violins, boy and dream, join together at the end as the guitar sounds play on.

- John Corigliano

In 1973, John Corigliano published two settings of poems by the American poet Richard Wilbur for a cappella choir; one was *L'Invitation au Voyage*, a translation of Baudelaire, and the other was *A Black November Turkey*, which was later transcribed for string quartet by the composer. Corigliano calls the latter a “savage barnyard allegory [...] set against an inane patter of clucking chickens, and [portraying] a sad and endless futility, a celebrated and unnoticed death.” Indeed, the poem describes a both macabre and ironically regal black “turkey-cock” wistfully gazing upon nine blithely innocent chickens that will, unlike him, survive the night.

Corigliano’s setting parallels the poem and presents three distinct parts, the first describing absurd “chicken” music created, in the string quartet version, by erratic staccato patterns and, in the original, by quite literal clucking by chorus members. The middle section of the work takes on a mysterious and ominous quality that both stylistically and tonally recalls early chant, corresponding to the part of the quickly darkening poem that describes the turkey.

“The Vast black body floats
Above the crossing knees
As a cloud over thrashed branches, a calm ship
Over choppy seas,

Shuddering its fan and feathers
In fine soft clashes
With the cold sound that the wind makes, fondling
Paper-ashes.”

The final section is an abrupt return to the music of the opening that brings the piece to a hasty end in a humorous, galline flourish.

- Eric Wong, Linden String Quartet

String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 13.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1710-1827)

While categories will never fully explain Beethoven, they remain a way of dealing with his greatness and his elusiveness. The sixteen string quartets of Beethoven's monumental canon span thirty-six of his fifty-seven years and represent, perhaps better than any other of his works, the revered Early, Middle and Late periods of his compositional life. These so-called "periods" are not mere academic divisions but rather a painful and glorious arc of Beethoven's work. So, too, do they encompass his encroaching deafness from its first awareness to its final and awful silence.

Opp. 127, 130, 131, 132, 135, plus the *Grosse Fuga*, comprise the Late Period quartets. They were all composed between May of 1824 and November of 1826, just four months before Beethoven's death. Opp. 127, 130, and 132 were commissioned by Prince Nikolai Galitzin, a Russian nobleman and amateur cellist. Opp. 131 and 135 were written without commission. This same period brought the *Missa Solemnis* and the *Ninth Symphony*, although it is the late quartets that are considered Beethoven's crowning achievement. How this music emerged from a time so fraught with illness and despair is one of its ultimate mysteries, explained only by the sheer force of genius—a genius that itself remains inexplicable. These quartets represent a culmination of greatness that defies definition, an endless source of wonder for performer, scholar, and listener.

The late quartets so stretched the early nineteenth century imagination that it would be years before they came into their own. Even with that, the French critic Pierre Scudo in 1862 called them: "the polluted source from which have sprung the evil musicians of modern Germany, the Liszts, Wagners, Schumanns, not to mention Mendelssohn in certain equivocal details of his style." Fortunately the accused composers, along with others such as Schoenberg, Bartók, Stravinsky, and Shostakovich, felt otherwise. Even more importantly, listeners have come to terms with the late quartets as the most complex and inspiring music ever written. That they culminate Classicism but move beyond it, that they are inherently Romantic in their deeply personal expression, and that they define Modernism is only a statement of their transcendence and timelessness.

Musicologist Joseph Kerman, sometimes coolly objective on Beethoven, does not hold back on Op. 132. "No other piece by Beethoven," says Kerman, "carries a sense of suffering so close to the skin and treats the experience so deeply and so objectively, at least to my apprehension. One can speak of objectivity, I think because for once Beethoven seems to be dealing with pain itself, rather than with attitudes or responses to pain." Though the pain of which Kerman speaks is a universal one, so was it sharp reality in the grave illness Beethoven suffered during the winter of 1824 and spring of 1825 while he was working on Op. 132.

The grim intensity of the first movement is mitigated only by the occasional flourishes of the violin. Flourishes though they may be, they are also downward swirls into darkness. We are pulled back and forth between darkness and light, and the pulling itself is ominous. The tempo quickens after the painfully slow opening *assai sostenuto*, but the mood remains serious despite the occasional shots of sunlight. With all its seriousness, however, the movement is not without its lyricism.

Indeed, Beethoven has not deserted song—or dance—as illustrated in the second movement *Allegro ma non tanto*. Relief comes in this second movement, but it is short-lived. As Joseph Kerman says, it is simply a “way station on the total journey.” Yet one thing we must not miss on that “way station” is the incredible use of counterpoint. Perhaps the so-called “relief” of the movement lies more in its abstractness than in its so-called rustic charm.

Now we are thrust into the heart of the quartet, the third movement *Molto adagio* over which Beethoven wrote the phrase, “Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Divinity by a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode.” The thanksgiving is one for a temporary return of good health. The Lydian mode is a reference to the Medieval church scale, used in Gregorian chant, which corresponds to the scale of F Major without the B flat. A more vigorous section follows which Beethoven marked *Neue Kraft fülend* or “feeling of new strength.” The movement ends with a return to the slow hymn of thanksgiving, which Beethoven marked to be played *Mit innigster Empfindung* (with the most intimate emotions). Kerman’s interesting comment here refers to the challenge the movement offers to a string quartet. “The image is orchestral: forty strings could sustain the hymn at this speed with comfort, but four can bear it only with a sense of strain, tenuousness, and a certain *gaucherie*.” In terms of the “*gaucherie*,” it would not be the only intentionally awkward moment in Beethoven’s music. He used them everywhere, notably in his final Op. 111 Piano Sonata.

Another relief of tension comes with the fourth movement march, a technique Brahms would later use. This movement and the second Kerman sees as a kind of “sealing off” of the central *Adagio* with its magnificent hymn. The march is left unfinished, and we are thrust, without pause, back into a minor key and into the powerful finale. Odd strains of what modern ears might identify as a Russian Christmas carol are heard over a restless rocking motion that pervades this disturbing movement with its pastiche of musical ideas to which Beethoven somehow brings a powerful unity.