

**Pacifica Quartet**

Simin Ganatra, violin  
Austin Hartman, violin  
Mark Holloway, viola  
Brandon Vamos, cello

Quartet No. 7 in F-sharp minor, Op. 108

Dmitri Shostakovich  
(1906-75)

Allegretto  
Lento  
Allegro

Quartet No. 3, "Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory"

Shulamit Ran  
(b. 1949)

That which happened  
Menace  
"If I must perish – do not let my paintings die," Felix Nussbaum (1904-1944)  
Shards, Memory

- INTERMISSION -

Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 130, with *Große Fuge*, Op. 133

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

Adagio ma non troppo  
Presto  
Andante con moto ma non troppo  
Alla danza tedesca. Allegro assai  
Cavatina. Adagio molto espressivo  
Große Fuge

Pacifica Quartet is represented by MKI Artists; One Lawson Lane, Suite 320, Burlington, VT 05401.

Recordings: Cedille Records, Naxos Records, and Hyperion Records

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

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Quartet No. 7 in F-sharp minor, Op. 108**

Dmitri Shostakovich

By 1960 Shostakovich no longer had to fear persecution by the Soviet state. His main problem now, beyond bouts of poor health, was the regime's fond embrace and attendant obligations. As the country's star composer, he felt smothered by his honors and official duties. He told a friend, "I am frightened that I will choke in an ocean of awards." Appointed to government posts, he was put forward as a cultural figurehead and expected to attend plenary sessions, congresses, and peace conferences. He gave speeches and published articles using officially prepared texts. He was also requested to compose a steady stream of patriotic songs and film scores. In 1960 he was elected First Secretary of the Russian Composers' Union, and later that year he was pressured to join the Communist Party.

The Seventh Quartet was composed in memory of Nina Vazar, the mother of his children whom he married twice and who died in 1954. As music historian Judith Kuhn has observed, in addition to the formal dedication to her, the first and third movements of Seventh Quartet end in the key of F sharp major, the key of the 'love theme' in the composer's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, which is also dedicated to Nina Vazar. The shortest of Shostakovich's fifteen string quartets, the Seventh is written without pause between movements. Its brevity and the reappearance in the last movement of musical motifs from the first and second movements suggest a view of the entire quartet as a single movement in sonata form, with the first movement Allegretto as primary theme; the second movement Lento as contrasting theme; and the last movement as development of the themes followed by recapitulation. This view is supported by the gradually increasing presence of Shostakovich's personal four-note "DSCH" pattern across the three movements as a unifying element. (The up-down pattern of the notes D E-flat C B spell DSCH for Dmitri SChostakowitsch in German musical notation.)

Two themes alternate in the first-movement Allegretto, a short, twisting three-note gallop and a contrasting rhythmic line in the cello. Unusually for Shostakovich, both themes are harmonically resolved when they reappear later in the movement. The grieving second-movement Lento is unsettled by a restless, weaving accompaniment and a startling *glissando* slide in the viola and cello. The third movement explodes with a violent fugue based on the DSCH note pattern. The music builds to a frantic climax, and the quartet's opening theme returns, forcefully at first, then in the grieving voice of the second movement. The music gradually fades to a quiet *pizzicato*, and the quartet ends with a gentle cadence.

--note by Robert Strong

### **Quartet No. 3, "Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory"**

Shulamit Ran

My third string quartet was composed at the invitation of the Pacifica Quartet, whose music-making I have come to know closely and admire hugely as resident artists at the University of Chicago. Already in our early conversations Pacifica proposed that this quartet might, in some manner, refer to the visual arts as a point of germination. Probing further, I found out that the quartet members had special interest in art created during the earlier part of the 20th century, perhaps between the two world wars.

It was my good fortune to have met, a short while later, while in residence at the American Academy in Rome in the fall of 2011, art conservationist Albert Albano who steered me to the work of Felix Nussbaum

(1904-1944), a German-Jewish painter who, like so many others, perished in the Holocaust at a young age, and who left some powerful, deeply moving art that spoke to the life that was unraveling around him.

The title of my string quartet takes its inspiration from a major exhibit devoted to art by German artists of the period of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) titled "Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s", first shown at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2006-07. Nussbaum would have been a bit too young to be included in this exhibit. His most noteworthy art was created in the last very few years of his short life. The exhibit's evocative title, however, suggested to me the idea of "Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory" as a way of framing a possible musical composition that would be an homage to his life and art, and to that of so many others like him during that era. Knowing that their days were numbered, yet intent on leaving a mark, a legacy, a memory, their art is triumph of the human spirit over annihilation.

Parallel to my wish to compose a string quartet that, typically for this genre, would exist as "pure music", independent of a narrative, was my desire to effect an awareness in my listener of matters which are, to me, of great human concern. To my mind there is no contradiction between the two goals. As in several other works composed since 1969, this is my way of saying 'do not forget', something that, I believe, can be done through music with special power and poignancy.

The individual titles of the quartet's four movements give an indication of some of the emotional strands this work explores.

1) "That which happened" (*das was geschah*) – is how the poet Paul Celan referred to the Shoah – the Holocaust. These simple words served for me, in the first movement, as a metaphor for the way in which an "ordinary" life, with its daily flow and its sense of sweet normalcy, was shockingly, inhumanely, inexplicably shattered.

2) "Menace" is a shorter movement, mimicking a Scherzo. It is also machine-like, incessant, with an occasional, recurring, waltz-like little tune – perhaps the chilling grimace we recognize from the executioner's guillotine mask. Like the death machine it alludes to, it gathers momentum as it goes, and is unstoppable.

3) "If I perish - do not let my paintings die"; these words are by Felix Nussbaum who, knowing what was ahead, nonetheless continued painting till his death in Auschwitz in 1944. If the heart of the first movement is the shuddering interruption of life as we know it, the third movement tries to capture something of what I can only imagine to be the conflicting states of mind that would have made it possible, and essential, to continue to live and practice one's art – bearing witness to the events. Creating must have been, for Nussbaum and for so many others, a way of maintaining sanity, both a struggle and a catharsis – an act of defiance and salvation all at the same time.

4) "Shards, Memory" is a direct reference to my quartet's title. Only shards are left. And memory. The memory is of things large and small, of unspeakable tragedy, but also of the song and the dance, the smile, the hopes. All things human. As we remember, in the face of death's silence, we restore dignity to those who are gone.

*--note by Shulamit Ran*

**Shulamit Ran's String Quartet No. 3 – GLITTER, DOOM, SHARDS, MEMORY commissioned in partnership between the Music Accord consortium, Wigmore Hall, and Suntory Hall.**

## **Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 130, with *Große Fuge*, Op. 133**

Ludwig van Beethoven

In 1812 Beethoven stood at a pinnacle of career success, but in his private life it was a year of mounting problems—chronic poor health, the isolation of increasing deafness, and distressing family conflicts. His creative energies diminished in 1813, and through 1817 he produced few major works. These are Beethoven's "lost" years, but they were also, in the words of biographer Lewis Lockwood, "a period of self-reconstruction, a necessary questioning of previous approaches and the gestation of new ones." The new direction of Beethoven's late style emerged in his forceful Op. 106 Piano Sonata ("*Hammerklavier*") completed in 1818. He continued to struggle forward, and in 1822 he wrote to his publisher, "I feel I am on the threshold of great things." From 1823 until his death he underwent an astonishing creative renewal and composed some of his greatest masterpieces, including the *Missa Solemnis*, Ninth Symphony, and five "late" string quartets.

The late quartets radically expand Classical forms and proportions and reach back to older techniques of counterpoint and recitative. To contemporary listeners, Beethoven had entered a new and uncharted musical realm of his own. As professor Robert Winter has observed, there is still a sense that while some of the music is intended to please or engage the audience, much of it turns inward and the audience is forgotten while Beethoven wrestles alone with musical ideas.

The Op. 130 String Quartet is one of three composed to fulfill a commission from Prince Nikolai Galitzin, a Russian nobleman. Beethoven completed the quartet in late 1825 with the Great Fugue (*Grosse Fuge*) as its finale. It is written in six movements, with extra scherzo and slow movements added to the usual Classical sequence. Beethoven's first consideration was how the quartet would begin and end, and he sketched a weighty first movement and a fugue as the quartet's last movement. The four inner movements differ widely in character and are seemingly unrelated. Lockwood observes that they appear as "a string of pearls of different colors and facets of light" to provide points of contrast to the giant Great Fugue.

The first movement is serious and complex. Its slow introduction gives way to a scurrying Allegro passage. These alternate enigmatically as the movement unfolds through a series of abrupt changes. The second movement is a brusque and unsettling two-minute scherzo. It is followed by a slow third movement, the graceful Andante, the quartet's only movement that is not extreme in some way. The fourth movement is an innocent dance tune knocked off-kilter by elaborate rhythms and dynamics. Beethoven's famous Cavatina is the last inner movement before the Great Fugue. Nothing in the preceding movements prepares the listener for the depth of the Cavatina's heartfelt sentiment and sobbing seven-bar emotional climax.

After the Cavatina, the Great Fugue is extremely shocking. Immense, forceful to the point of brutality, and at times frenzied, it towers above the other movements. Most who attended the March 1826 premiere of Op. 130 in Vienna were bewildered or horrified. After the performance, Beethoven's friend Karl Holz told him that the audience had demanded repetition of both the Presto and Cavatina. "Yes, these delicacies," Beethoven replied. "And why didn't they encore the Great Fugue? That alone should have been repeated! Cattle! Asses!" With some difficulty, Beethoven was persuaded by his publisher and friends to replace the Great Fugue with a more agreeable finale, and the Great Fugue was published separately as Op. 133.

--note by Robert Strong