PROGRAM INFORMATION

Sponsor: Colorado College
Concert Date: April 7, 2015

Artist: St. Lawrence String Quartet

Geoff Nuttall, violin
Lesley Robertson, viola
Mark Fewer, violin
Christopher Costanza, cello

Program credits: The St. Lawrence String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists
www.davidroweartists.com
St. Lawrence String recordings can be heard on EMI Classics and ArtistShare (www.artistshare.com)
The St. Lawrence String Quartet is Ensemble-in-Residence at Stanford University
www.slsq.com

PROGRAM

String Quartet in F minor Op. 20, No. 5 (Hob.III:35)
Franz Josef Haydn 1732-1809

Allegro moderato
Menuetto
Adagio
Finale: Fuga a due soggetti

Second Quartet (2014)
John Adams b. 1947

Allegro molto
Andantino-Energico

*intermission*

“Allaqi,” for string quartet
Marcus Goddard b. 1973

String Quartet in C major, Op. 76, No. 3 "Emperor"
Franz Josef Haydn 1732-1809

Allegro
Poco adagio cantabile
Menuet. Allegro & Trio
Finale. Presto
Established in 1989, the St. Lawrence String Quartet has developed an undisputed reputation as a truly world class chamber ensemble. The quartet performs over 120 concerts annually worldwide and calls Stanford University home, where the group is Ensemble in Residence.

The SLSQ continues to build its reputation for imaginative and spontaneous music-making, through an energetic commitment to the great established quartet literature as well as the championing of new works by such composers as John Adams, Osvaldo Golijov, Ezequiel Vinao, and Jonathan Berger.

SLSQ maintains a busy touring schedule. The quartet’s 2014/15 season includes a three-concert series at the Library of Congress in Washington DC, during which the quartet will play Stradivari instruments from the library’s prized collection. In January, 2015, SLSQ will premiere a string quartet by John Adams—his third work composed for SLSQ—at Stanford University. The quartet will also perform and give master classes around North America, with visits to Houston, Toronto, Philadelphia, Oberlin, Durham, and many other cities. During the summer season, SLSQ is proud to continue its long association with the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC.

Since 1998 the SLSQ has held the position of Ensemble in Residence at Stanford University. This residency includes working with music students as well as extensive collaborations with other faculty and departments using music to explore a myriad of topics. Recent collaborations have involved the School of Medicine, School of Education, and the Law School. In addition to their appointment at Stanford, the SLSQ are visiting artists at the University of Toronto. The foursome’s passion for opening up musical arenas to players and listeners alike is evident in their annual summer chamber music seminar at Stanford and their many forays into the depths of musical meaning with preeminent music educator Robert Kapilow.

Lesley Robertson and Geoff Nuttall are founding members of the group, and hail from Edmonton, Alberta, and London, Ontario, respectively. Christopher Costanza is from Utica, NY, and joined the group in 2003. Mark Fewer, a native of Newfoundland, begins his first season with the quartet in 2014, succeeding violinist Scott St. John. All four members of the quartet live and teach at Stanford, in the Bay Area of California.
Notes on the program

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)
Quartet in F minor, Op. 20 No.5 (Hob.III:35) (1772)

By 1772, the year Haydn composed his six Op. 20 quartets, the composer had spent a decade in the service of the Esterházy family. He was now 40 and had already written over 50 symphonies. He had lived through the sturm und drang ('storm and stress') period in the German arts, then reaching its peak. It left its mark in the increasingly subjective nature of his music. Each of the Op. 20 quartets has a distinctive character. Each instrument speaks with an independent voice as an equal contributor to a seamless four-part texture. One of two quartets in the minor key, the F minor quartet opens with a sustained, emotionally intense theme over a pulsing accompaniment. The mood is serious and purposeful; the tension is only slightly eased with the second theme. The Menuetto, too, is unusually severe, allowing just a glimpse of a folkdance in its central trio section. The slow, third movement, now in a brighter major key yet still maintaining a feeling of poignancy, takes its underlying rhythmic pulse from the siciliano dance. Over it, the first violin weaves improvisation-like passages of great beauty.

Then there’s a surprise. This is one of three Op. 20 quartets to have a fugal finale. While drawing inspiration from a form associated with the past (Bach was in mid-career when Haydn was born), Haydn’s F minor fugue is sprightly and forward-looking in spirit. It is based on two short, independent subjects (due soggetti), the first of which presents a melodic pattern familiar to the Baroque. Melodically, it bears a close resemblance to a fugue in Handel’s Messiah (‘And with His stripes’) and to the A minor Fugue in the Second Book of Bach’s 48. The fugue proceeds in a hushed manner, marked sotto voce. Its tension and contrapuntal complexity increase steadily throughout the movement until the music bursts out in a fortissimo canon in the crowning moment of an exceptional quartet.

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John Adams
Second Quartet (2014)

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.

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 of 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.

**Marcus Goddard**

“Allaqi” (2009)

The Inuit use the term allaqi to refer to a clearing in the sky, or a break in the clouds. I was inspired by the way that the term could refer not only to the light shining through a cloud, but also to clearings and openings in the minds, spirits, and lives of people. I created this work particularly for the shining brilliance of the St. Lawrence Quartet, for its Twentieth Anniversary Commissioning Project. The commission of the piece was made possible through the generous support of Chamber Music Kelowna, and CBC Radio.

Leaping and snarling rhythms bounce from player to player in the opening of the work. The imitative texture and rhythmic drive mimic the katajak style of Inuit throat singing. The swirling energy builds in waves, coaxing the aggressive rhythms into sighing and sliding motifs. The rhythmic bursts finally evaporate and provide a clearing for gentle, lyrical Inuit folk song melodies to shine together with lyrical versions of the opening motifs. As the calm simplicity reaches a close, quiet murmurings of the opening rhythms begin to build. The snarling rhythmic energy grows again but is softened by its combination with the broad melodies from the previous section, in a final push to the work’s climax and conclusion.
JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

*Quartet in C, Op. 76 No. 3 (Hob.III:77) ('Emperor') (1797)*

In 1796, the city of Vienna was under threat of invasion from Napoleon. French troops led by Napoleon were advancing from the Po Valley into Styria. Other troops were advancing from the East and both were closing in on Vienna in a pincer-like move. Vienna was in a state of emergency and a civilian militia had been mobilized to protect the city. Following a state commission, Haydn, a strong nationalist, contributed a beautiful, heartfelt national song to the cause. *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser* (God Protect Emperor Franz) echoes the patriotism of the British *God save the King*. It was a bold challenge to the *Marseillaise* and was instantly adopted as the Austrian national anthem. In fact, so universal was the appeal of Haydn's melody that it was later to be used as the ‘Brotherhood’ anthem of Freemasonry, as the German national anthem *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, and even as the Protestant hymns *Praise the Lord! Ye heavens, adore him and Glorious things of Thee are spoken*.

The slow movement of the Op. 76 No. 3 String Quartet is a set of variations on this celebrated, dignified tune. Hence the quartet's nickname *Emperor, or Kaiser*. Each instrument in turn introduces the solemn melody, while the other three instruments weave an increasingly intricate web around it. In the early 1900s, an English music critic, Cecil Gray, commented: "One cannot imagine the *Marseillaise* or any other anthem serving as the thematic basis of a movement of a string quartet. It inhabits all three worlds – the world of religion, the world of national politics, and the world of pure art. It is perhaps true to say that it is the greatest tune ever written."

Haydn goes further than basing his slow movement on this famous melody. He structures the entire work around the slow movement, making it the focal point of the quartet. The melody also finds its way into the first movement. Its five-note theme derives from the German title of Haydn's patriotic song: G (Gott) – E (erhalte) – F (Franz) – D (den) – C (Kaiser). This cryptic message would have been recognized in Haydn's day as one of the many 'learned' effects he used in his late quartets, complementing such popular elements as the lively country dance he fashions out of the same notes over a viola and cello drone in the central development section. The intensity and dignity of the four slow movement variations is set into relief by the forthright minuet. The finale, an intense, powerful movement, then completes the strong architectural structure that Haydn has built.

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