

FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

St. Lawrence String Quartet

Geoff Nuttall, violin
Barry Shiffman, violin
Lesley Robertson, viola
Christopher Costanza, cello

7:30 PM, November 23, 2003

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

In cooperation with the Conservatory of Music
University of Pacific
Stockton California



Program

String Quartet in b Minor, Op. 64, No. 2

Allegro spiritoso
Adagio ma non troppo
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Presto

Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

String Quartet No. 3 (1981)

Slowly, but with great passion
Allegro energico
Slow; calm; mystical

R. Murray Schafer
(b. 1933)

—Intermission—

String Quartet in d Minor, D. 810, "Death and the Maiden"

Allegro
Andante con moto (Variations)
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Presto—Prestissimo

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)



The St. Lawrence String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists
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The St. Lawrence String Quartet records exclusively for EMI/Angel

The St. Lawrence String Quartet is the resident ensemble at Stanford University

St. Lawrence String Quartet

The St. Lawrence String Quartet has established itself among the world-class chamber ensembles of its generation. In 1992, they won both the Banff International String Quartet Competition and Young Concert Artists Auditions, launching them on a career that has brought them across the Americas, Europe, and Asia. They have walked on stage together over 1,500 times in the past 14 years.

Highlights of their 2002-03 season included a 15-city tour of Europe and an 18-city tour of Australia and New Zealand. The quartet continued its New York presence with appearances at Lincoln Center and Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall. They were in recital at the Metropolitan Museum last November and participated in a festival of the music of John Adams presented by Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series in May this year.

The quartet's summer calendar featured their 300th performance in their 9th year as Resident Quartet to the Spoleto USA Festival in Charleston, SC. Other summer festival appearances included Music@Menlo, and the Ottawa and Montreal Chamber Music Festivals.

While the foursome regularly delivers traditional quartet repertoire, it is passionately committed to performing and expanding the works of living composers, including Osvaldo Golijov, Christos Hatzsis, Jonathan Berger, Melissa Hui, Mark Applebaum, and R. Murray Schafer, whose work we hear today.

The players also maintain a strong desire to share the wonders of chamber music with their listeners, a characteristic that has led them to a more informal performance style than one might expect from chamber musicians.

Program Notes

Haydn-Quartet in b

"Making something out of nothing" was an epithet used to describe the growth of a place in the musical world of Vienna and abroad of Joseph

Haydn. He came from a village, Rohrau, in what is now Hungary and received his musical training at the Imperial School for boy choristers at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. His training there, Haydn has remarked, was self-initiated, and the only times the boys were well fed were on the excursions to the Schonbrun palace to sing for the Empress. When his voice changed, he was literally put out on the street, taken in by a kindly man to live in a cold attic with a worm-eaten clavichord to work on. On an excursion to the shrine of Mariazell, he received his first patron, and shortly afterwards became "The Honorable Officer of a Princely Court," that of Prince Esterhazy who kept a sizable orchestra. Here he began his quartet writing, 76 in number, the first composed at age twenty-seven, the last at age seventy-one. It is claimed as clearly evident that the Classical String Quartet was in the final analysis, established by Haydn alone, despite all the paths of development leading to him; no other musical genre rests singularly on the shoulders of one man.

Up to Opus 64, the quartets were created more for the enjoyment of the performers but we can enjoy their enjoyment. After 64, they become more extroverted, more direct in expression with more important and extensive slow movements. The quartets of Opus 64 are normally known as the Tost quartets, dedicated to Johann Tost, a violinist in the Esterhazy orchestra from 1783 to 1788 before he moved to Paris. These quartets reveal a Haydn free of official restraints and obligations, composing simply *con amore*, "drawing on the rich treasure of idiomatic quartet style and inventive power accumulated over the past 30 years" as Larson states. However, they kept their personal, intimate character, which Haydn did not betray in his next set composed for London. Rosen holds that "The mature power and variety of the six quartets of Opus 64... were never surpassed by Haydn."

Quartet No. 2 looks back to Opus 33, No. 1, with its ambiguous opening in D Major and in the shape of the thematic material of the first

movement. The nature of the music is serious; the harmonies are stern and darkly chromatic. The exquisite *Adagio* uses a dark and veiled, slow four-note scale figure, transposing it to the dominant key, inverting and ornamenting it, which seems to convey a feeling of loneliness and regret. It is present in the melody as a *cantus firmus*, on which is draped a florid and expressive decoration. The short, intimate minuet, almost a scherzo, demonstrates Haydn's affection for irregular phrases simultaneously with a sense of folk music. The *Finale* is civilized, urbane, and discursive and concludes a quartet that is more concerned with perpetuating a long and respected tradition than with breaking new ground.

Schafer-Quartet No. 3

Schafer, internationally known Canadian musician, composer, writer, and educator, was born in the industrial town of Sarnia, in Ontario. He suppressed a youthful desire to become a painter; this aspect of his creativity found an outlet in the graphic notation and designs in many of his scores. He studied with eminent teachers at the University of Toronto until dismissed for insubordination; one is tempted to ask if institutional insubordination is a mark of a true innovator, which Schafer certainly was. He found the atmosphere of the University confining and his contact with Marshall McLuhan (*The Medium Is the Message*) was a strong and lasting influence on his intellectual development. An honorary licentiate from the Carlton University dated 1980 remained his only formal diploma.

In Europe, he met Ezra Pound whose writing on music he edited in the book *Ezra Pound and Music* (1977). He resettled in Ontario, and later at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia where he set up the World Soundscape Project dedicated to a study of the relationships between people and their acoustic environment. In the early 1960s, Schafer began to use 20th century musical compositional

techniques and went on to explore the language, literature, and philosophy of ancient cultures and the mythology and symbolism of modern life. His subsequent compositions reflect a searching, wide-ranging social consciousness, which motivates and informs all of Schafer's activities. His work as an educator included his efforts to stimulate creative hearing and sensory awareness into the Canadian classroom. Among his works for Youth Orchestra is *Statement in Blue*, a moving and bitter comment on the bombing of Nagasaki based on comments by survivors.

The most important product of his World Soundscape Project was his work, *The Turning of the World*, in which he summarizes his research, philosophies, and theories. Among the many awards Schafer has received was the Glenn Gould Award, presented by Yehudi Menuhin in 1977, whose comment was: "His is a strong, benevolent and highly original imagination and intellectual dynamic power whose manifold personal expressions and aspirations are in total accord with the urgent needs and dreams of humanity today."

Much of Schafer's music questions the very nature of performance itself as the composer rethinks traditional forms and structures. In 1980, when he began Quartet No. 3, Schafer became increasingly interested in performance situations in which Canadian environment played an integral role in the work. The quartet is in three separate movements and is one of the more elaborately choreographed of his eight quartets for the players (the sixth includes a T'ai Chi dancer!).

The first movement is rhapsodic; it begins with only the cellist on stage, and when the others have all entered from a distance the movement ends. Schafer notes that there should be "almost no convergence among the players, who occupy different points in space and play mostly unrelated material." The intensely physical second movement, where the performers do play together as one quartet, uses vigorous musical gestures and vocalizations. The calm, peaceful, and haunting third movement is a long unison melody, colored by microtones,

in which the players are also in complete unison of bowing, breathing and body swaying. Finally, after some quiet humming, the first violin literally carries the melody off into the distance while the rest conclude with two quiet chords.

Schubert—Quartet in d

The works from the year 1817, the year one of Schubert's most beloved songs, *Der Tod und das Madchen* was composed, show evidence of Schubert establishing his style. Growing harmonic complexity, the exuberant melody, and modulations of a new spontaneity appear along with the expanding of new rhythmic or melodic ideas. *Der Tod* appeared with a song of equal fame, *Die Forelle* (The Trout), and both melodies later served as themes for string quartets. However, fame as a performer in Vienna at this time did not assure publication of a composer as obscure as Schubert. His friends took matters into their own hands and provided publication of a number of works, including *Der Tod*, by private subscription, and the response was overwhelming, so that together with careful dedications Schubert escaped the poverty of his circumstances and became known as the promising composer he was.

The quartet, of which his song was the base for a set of variations for the slow movement, was finished in 1824, though the date 1826 is mistakenly assigned to it. In this year, he composed his first chamber works in over three years. A friend, Schwind, wrote, "Schubert looks much better and is very bright, very comically hungry and writes quartets and German dances and variations without number."

About his songs, a review appeared stating: "Herr Franz Schubert does not write songs properly speaking, and has no wish to do so, some so free they might properly be called fantasies or caprices." One could surmise that "true songs" for the older and more pedantic audience of the early nineteenth century meant that every verse was set to the same melody, "strophic" songs rather than "through-composed" songs. *Der Tod*

und das Madchen, a setting of an 1817 poem by Mathias Claudius, sets a melancholy and fantastic scene. It consists of two verses; in the first, the Maiden addresses Death, and in the second, Death answers her. The musical treatment of each is different and is suitable to the text. The Maiden pleads:

*Go further, go on further,
And take your scythe away.
I'm much too young, go further,
I'm much too young to die.*

The melody rises stepwise from A to E-flat and then descends stepwise. Death answers:

*Give me your hand,
Now all your cares are done.
Your pain and all your cares are over.
I bring you peace, and rest,
Surcease from cares,
Now close your eyes forever.*

Death's melody is largely monotone, on D and F and at the end drops to low A and for those baritones who can do it, low D. The simplicity of the two melodies offers possibilities of variation that Schubert exploits in the d minor quartet.

The quartet is dramatic and some find it gloomy. Powerful tensions are created in the first ten bars by the treatment of the vehement opening and the apparently insignificant triplet accompaniment. Different harmonic colorings develop and the triplets are contrasted with dotted rhythms.

Five variations of the song make up the second movement, whose sound loads the simple melody of the song with emotional intensity.

The *Scherzo* is syncopated and resembles the first two movements in mood, but the naïve, ländler-like Trio moves into the major key for the first time.

The presto *Finale* has a demonic character featuring long unison passages and quasi-orchestral richness. Kramer claimed that the broad expanses of tone herald Schubert as a forerunner of Bruckner.

—Notes by Dr. Catherine Roche

48th SEASON

2003-2004

*Presented in Cooperation with
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The Brahms Trio

7:30 PM Saturday, September 6, 2003
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
NO RECEPTION

Kodály String Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, October 26, 2003
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWING

St. Lawrence String Quartet

7:30 PM Sunday, November 23, 2003
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
NO RECEPTION

Manhattan Brass Quintet

2:30 PM Sunday, February 15, 2004
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RECEPTION FOLLOWING

Da Vinci Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, March 28, 2004
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
DINNER FOLLOWING

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