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in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music present

Ying Quartet

ROBIN SCOTT, violin

JANET YING, violin

PHILLIP YING, viola

DAVID YING, cello

2:30 PM, Sunday, February 11, 2019

Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific

JOSEPH HAYDN **QUARTET IN A MAJOR, OP. 20, NO. 6, HOBIII/36** (c.1772)

(1732–1809) Allegro di molto e scherzando
Adagio, Cantabile
Menuetto: Alegretto
Finale: Fuga a tre Soggetti—Allegro

CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS **THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS** (2017)

(b. 1967) The Valley of Quest
The Valley of Love
The Valley of Unity
The Valley of Knowledge
The Valley of Detachment
The Valley of Wonderment
The Valley of Poverty and Annihilation

— *INTERMISSION* —

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY **QUARTET NO. 1 IN D MAJOR, OP. 11**, (1871)

(1840–1893) Moderato e semplice
Andante cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro non tanto
Finale: Allegro giusto

MKI Artists, One Lawson Lane, Suite 320, Burlington, VT 05401
Please contact Kate Barnes at (802) 658-2592 kate@mkiartists.com

Ying4.com/

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ARTIST PROFILE



The Ying Quartet occupies a position of unique prominence in the classical music world, combining brilliantly communicative performances with a fearlessly imaginative view of chamber music in today's world.

Now in its third decade, the Quartet has established itself as an ensemble of the highest musical qualifications. Their performances regularly take place in many of the world's most important concert halls; at the same time, the Quartet's belief that concert music can also be a meaningful part of everyday life has also drawn the foursome to perform in settings as diverse as the workplace, schools, juvenile prisons, and the White House.

The Ying's ongoing *LifeMusic* commissioning project, created in response to their commitment to expanding the rich string quartet repertoire, has already achieved an impressive history. Supported by the Institute for American Music, the Ying Quartet commissions both established and emerging composers to create music that reflects contemporary American life.

The Ying Quartet's many recordings reflect many of the group's wide-ranging musical interests and have generated consistent, enthusiastic acclaim. The group's CD "American Anthem", heralding the music of Randall Thompson, Samuel Barber, and Howard Hanson, was released in 2013 to rave reviews; their 2007 Telarc release of the 3 Tchaikovsky Quartets and the *Souvenir de Florence* (with James Dunham and Paul Katz) was nominated for a Grammy Award.

As quartet-in-residence at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, the Ying Quartet teaches in the string department and leads a rigorous, sequentially designed chamber music program. One cornerstone of chamber music activity at Eastman is the noted "Music for All" program, in which all students have the opportunity to perform in community settings beyond the concert hall. The Quartet is the ensemble-in-residence at the Bowdoin International Music Festival and at Arizona State University, and from 2001-2008, the members of the Ying Quartet were the Blodgett Artists-in-Residence at Harvard University.

Haydn: *Quartet in A Major*

The six string quartets of Op. 20 by Joseph Haydn are among the works that earned him the moniker "the father of the string quartet." The quartets are considered a milestone in the history of composition: in them Haydn develops compositional techniques that were to distinguish the form for more than 200 years. Op. 20 was composed in 1772 at a time of tensions in his life and when he was influenced by new political and philosophical ideas sweeping Europe, probably impacting the quartets.

Haydn was 40 when he composed the Op. 20 quartets and was already well-established as one of the leading composers of Europe. He was Kapellmeister to the Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, a great lover of music, and he presided over the busy musical life of the court, producing operas, oratorios, and symphonic and chamber concerts, and writing a steady stream of new music for the prince's amusement.

In this set of six, Haydn characterized the nature of the string quartet – the special relationship of instruments that Goethe called "four rational people conversing." Many of the techniques used by composers of string quartets even to the present day were tried out and perfected in these works.

Here are some of the innovations:

EQUALITY OF VOICES: Prior to opus 20, the first violin dominated the quartet, with the other voices accompanying. Haydn gives each instrument its own voice.

STRUCTURAL INNOVATIONS: Haydn advances the development of the sonata form using the recapitulation to further develop the material of the exposition. He also experiments with reuse of thematic and rhythmic materials in different movements to give an overall unity to the piece.

DEPTH OF EXPRESSION: Haydn plays with expressive techniques in the quartets. For example, he defies the standard practice of ending each movement with a cadence played forte, instead ending movements piano or pianissimo.

LENGTH AND SYMMETRY OF PHRASES: He experiments with asymmetrical phrases and syncopations, not writing melodies divided neatly into four- and eight-measure chunks.

USE OF COUNTERPOINT: The fugal finales are his rejection of the light and elegant style

of 18th century music. Clothing them in a dramatic structure, he hints of what is to come in Beethoven's fugues.

This is the last quartet as published but the second written in the series; it is the most conservative of the set and the least frequently performed. The quartet has the bright, optimistic character often associated with Haydn's music. The key is A major, a key that highlights the highest and brightest tones of the lead violin.

In the first movement, Haydn is trying out new ideas. Traditionally, the exposition proceeds from a first theme in the tonic key to a second theme in the dominant. But listen to how he proceeds to the dominant key of E major, but then shifts to E minor for the second theme but stays in that key for only half a measure, then modulates to C major, then to D major, shifting keys relentlessly until he comes back to the dominant.

The second movement, marked *Adagio*, is a variant of sonata form, fashioned after a form developed by C. P. E. Bach, Haydn's contemporary. The violins rule, with the first violin playing the melody over rippling sixteenth notes in the second. Alternatively, the second carries the melody, with the first playing embellishments.

The *Menuetto* is in strict danceable form. The theme of the minuet is a variation of the first theme of the first movement – one of the most explicit examples of cyclic structure in Haydn's work. The resemblance of the themes of the opening movement and the minuet gives a unity to the whole quartet.

The last movement is a fugue with three subjects (*Fuga a tre Soggetti*). Like the other fugal finales in the set, this progresses *sempre sotto voce* (softly) until the end, when it bursts into *forte*. Unlike the other Op. 20 fugues, however, this has none of the rousing action and high emotional drama but is mostly major and upbeat in character.

Theofanidis: *Conference of the Birds*

Christopher Theofanidis has had performances by many leading orchestras from around the world, including the London Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony, the Moscow Soloists, the National, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Detroit Symphonies, among many others. He has also served as Composer of the Year for the

Pittsburgh Symphony during their 2006-7 season, for which he wrote a violin concerto for Sarah Chang.

Mr. Theofanidis holds degrees from Yale, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Houston, and has been the recipient of the International Masterprize, the Rome Prize, a Guggenheim fellowship, a Fulbright fellowship to France to study with Tristan Mural at IRCAM, a Tanglewood fellowship, and two fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2007 he was nominated for a Grammy award for best composition for his chorus and orchestra work, *The Here and Now*, based on the poetry of Rumi, and in 2017 for his bassoon concerto. His orchestral work, *Rainbow Body*, has been one of the most performed new orchestral works of the new millennium, having been performed by over 150 orchestras.

Mr. Theofanidis has written a ballet for the American Ballet Theatre, a work for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra as part of their 'New Brandenburg' series, and two operas for the San Francisco and Houston Grand Opera companies. Thomas Hampson sang the lead role in the San Francisco opera. His work for Houston, *The Refuge*, features six sets of international non-Western musicians alongside the opera musicians. He has a long-standing relationship with the Atlanta Symphony and Maestro Robert Spano, and has just four recordings with them, including his concert length oratorio, *Creation/Creator*, which was featured at the SHIFT festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. this year with the ASO, chorus, and soloists. His work, *Dreamtime Ancestors*, for the orchestral consortium, New Music for America, has been played by over fifty orchestras over the past two seasons.

He has served as a delegate to the US-Japan Foundation's Leadership Program, and he is a former faculty member of the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University as well as the Juilliard School. Mr. Theofanidis is currently a professor at Yale University, and composer-in-residence and co-director of the composition program at the Aspen Music Festival.

Christopher Theofanidis has provided the following program note to accompany The Conference of the Birds:

"*The Conference of the Birds* is a 12th Century Sufi allegorical poem by the Persian poet, Attar of Nishapur, and tells the story of the seeker's journey toward God. In the allegory, all the birds of the world convene and determine that they need a ruler. Such a leader is known in the form of the mythic and divine bird, Simorgh, who resides in a distant land, and the journey to it is through seven valleys of understanding, the first of which requires the birds to cast off all their preconceived ideas and dogma in their thinking, and the final of which requires annihilation of the self in order to attain complete communion with the divine. The valleys are:

- The Valley of Quest
- The Valley of Love
- The Valley of Unity
- The Valley of Knowledge
- The Valley of Detachment
- The Valley of Wonderment
- The Valley of Poverty and Annihilation

My 15-minute work piece traces this metaphoric journey in seven short character pieces, each lasting between 1 and 3 minutes, and each focusing on a highly defined musical personality evoked by the corresponding valley. Much of the string writing is inspired by the flocking movement of birds; that is, there is a 'group logic'- a kind of unity of movement and purpose in which all the parts are highly interdependent."

The Conference of the Birds was commissioned by the Howard Hanson Institute for American Music of the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester for the Ying Quartet.

Tchaikovsky: *Quartet in D Major*

In his short 53-year lifetime, Tchaikovsky excelled at all the established musical genres of the 19th century: opera, concerto, symphony, tone poem, ballet, and chamber music. Yet there is much that we rarely get to hear. The story is much the same with his piano music, choral works, and songs.

The Tchaikovsky chamber works heard most often are his Piano Trio in A Minor and the sextet subtitled "Souvenir de Florence." Noticeably less familiar are the three works he wrote for the string quartet.

The young Tchaikovsky, scarcely subsisting on his paltry salary from the Moscow Conservatory, resolved to promote a little money and call awareness of his work in early 1871 by presenting a concert of some of his recent compositions. The plan was a great success; it consisted of several songs and piano pieces, and, written especially for the occasion, the String Quartet No. 1. Tchaikovsky would write two further string quartets, but for most music lovers this Opus 11 work is *the* Tchaikovsky quartet, as melodious and affecting as the composer's popular orchestral scores. Its first performance was in Moscow on March 28, 1871. When the work was performed there again at the end of 1876, Tchaikovsky wrote in his diary, "Probably never in my life have I been so moved by the pride of authorship as when Lev Tolstoy, sitting by me and listening to the Andante of my Quartet, burst into tears."¹

The first movement, *Moderato e semplice*, is slower than most Classical-Romantic opening movements. It is crafted as a traditional sonata and is one his finer examples of the form, featuring an expansive and thrilling development section. Juxtaposing two lyrical themes, the second announced by the viola, in a relaxed compound meter, the movement overflows in tunefulness and emotional power heightened by the same syncopated rhythms one would count on hearing in the composer's orchestral music.

The second movement is an exception to the common observation that Tchaikovsky's chamber music is not too well recognized. Following the lyrical first movement is the beautiful *Andante cantabile* in B-flat major. A penetratingly emotional movement, it is one of this composer's most treasured conceptions and is often heard arranged for string orchestra as well as for a wide number of instrumental combinations. The movement's main tune is a folksong

Tchaikovsky heard as whistled by a house painter in Kamenka, the home of his family's extensive estates. The main theme comes from a tune called "Vanya sat on the divan and smoked a pipe of tobacco."² The movement's second theme, on the other hand, is wholly original, yet preserves the folk-like character. Tchaikovsky was usually not inclined toward direct quotations of folksongs; he preferred instead to compose new melodies that recall folk music without precisely emulating it. It is very much a ballad sung by the first violin over the cello's descending, chromatic pizzicato notes.

The shortest movement of the D major Quartet is an intense and lively Scherzo (*Allegro non tanto e con fuoco*). It launches in minor key with a forceful theme that nevertheless transitions rapidly to an almost dancelike rhythm. This movement's trio section is more frolicsome but listen for a harmonic tension that keeps it coordinated with the earlier material, bestowing a spirited tune over puckish half step undulations in the cello.

Lastly, the *Allegro giusto* Finale starts by unscrambling and re-blending two themes with a carefree and jubilant melody in D major responded to by a lyrical second subject. As with the first movement, Tchaikovsky highlights the viola by having it announce this second theme. The Finale again reveals Tchaikovsky's love for folk music: each of its two main themes is reminiscent of folksong melodies. The first is much sunnier and more festive than anything that has come before; the second is romantic and Russian. Also in sonata form, the movement pushes through an animated development to a restatement of its two themes, the latter of which returns surprisingly in the tonic minor. Accelerating into an *Allegro vivace*, Tchaikovsky ends the quartet in a conclusive flurry of notes and triumphal tonic chords.

—notes © Michael Spencer

¹ This music must not have had a "feeling unsuited both to the time and the place" like Janáček's seemed to Tolstoy

² Or, in another translation, "Vanya one night sat sadly on the divan, a glass of rum in his hand, to drown his sorrow and forget tomorrow."

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