



# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

*in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music presents*

## TESLA QUARTET

ROSS SNYDER, violin

MICHELLE LIE, violin

EDWIN KAPLAN, viola

SERAFIM SMIGELSKIY, cello

2:30 PM, Sunday, November 15, 2015

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

University of the Pacific

### PERSPECTIVES ON FOUR STRINGS

JOHANN FRIEDRICH FASCH SONATA A QUATTRO IN D MINOR  
(1688–1758) Largo

Allegro

Largo

Allegro

CAROLINE SHAW PUNCTUM (2009/REV. 2013)  
(b. 1983)

SHAW ENTR'ACTE (2011)

JOSEPH HAYDN QUARTET IN F MINOR, OP. 20, NO. 5 (1772)  
(1732–1809) Allegro moderato

Minuetto

Adagio

Finale: Fuga a due Soggetti

— INTERMISSION —

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN QUARTET IN C-SHARP MINOR, OP. 131 (1826)  
(1770–1827) Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo—

Allegro molto vivace—

Allegro moderato— Adagio—

Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile— Più mosso—

Andante moderato e lusinghiero— Adagio— Allegretto—

Adagio, ma non troppo e semplice— Allegretto—

Presto—

Adagio quasi un poco andante—

Allegro

The TESLA QUINTET is represented by Ariel Artists  
For booking, contact Nina Moe at [nina@arielartists.com](mailto:nina@arielartists.com)  
392 Belmont Street, Quincy, MA 02170-4011 917-496-1414  
<http://www.teslaquartet.com>

*Season Sponsor: C. A. Webster Foundation*

### ARTIST PROFILE



Dubbed “technically superb” by *The Strad*, the **Tesla Quartet** has garnered top prizes at numerous international competitions, including the Gold Medal at the 2012 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, Third Prize and the Best Interpretation of the Commissioned Work at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Joseph Haydn Chamber Music Competition in Vienna, Third Prize at the 2012 London International String Quartet Competition, and the Prize for the International Summer Academy for Chamber Music Niedersachsen at the 2013 Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition.

The Tesla Quartet was formed at The Juilliard School in 2008 and quickly established itself as one of the most promising young ensembles in New York, winning Second Prize at the J.C. Arriaga Chamber Music Competition only a few months after its inception. The *London Evening Standard* called their rendition of the Debussy Quartet “a subtly coloured performance that balanced confidently between intimacy and extraversion.” From 2009 to 2012 the quartet held a fellowship as the Graduate String Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Colorado-Boulder, where they studied with the world-renowned Takács Quartet.

The quartet has enjoyed a busy performing schedule, both in the States and abroad, with appearances in Austria, England and France. Highlights of the 2014-15 season included a tour of Oregon, performances in Chicago, and the quartet's return to the UK for performances at Wigmore Hall and the University of Birmingham. Recent engagements include the Fischhoff Gold Medal Winner's Tour of the Midwest and performances as the Quartet-in-Residence at the Strings Music Festival in Steamboat Springs, CO. Other engagements in recent seasons include concerts in Chicago, Long Island, Salt Lake City, Lake Tahoe, Tennessee, Tulsa, and the quartet's French debut in Provence through the ProQuartet European Chamber Music Center.

"It will soon be possible to transmit wireless messages around the world so simply that any individual can carry and operate his own apparatus."

Nikola Tesla, 1909 (the ultimate geek?)

## Fasch: Sonata a Quattro

While the string quartet as we know it today was a product of the Classical era, it wasn't the first genre for two violins, viola, and cello. Johann Friedrich Fasch, a Baroque composer and contemporary of J.S. Bach, scored some sonatas for this instrumentation, and here we hear his *Sonata a quattro in D minor* as a precursor to the genre.

Only a small portion of Fasch's work, particularly his vocal work, has survived intact. He achieved repute mostly because of his overtures, works that in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries referred to a series of dance movements preceded by a broad introduction of disproportionately self-important enormity. But he also wrote many sonatas for woodwinds. His chamber music is a rich, multifaceted field, with none of his works sounding alike.

But celebrity is fickle. Johann Friedrich Fasch was highly respected by his contemporary colleagues and generations of musicians who followed him, but in today's performance repertoire he is clustered with minor composers who wrote mostly forlornly noncommunicative, semi-forgotten works. Nonetheless music scholar Johann Adolf Scheibe places Fasch in the same status as Telemann; and J.S. Bach owned copies of several of the composer's works. So listen and decide for yourselves if the genius of Fasch deserves praise for a largely forgotten corpus of skillfully composed, wholly captivating music.

## Shaw: Punctum

Caroline Adelaide Shaw is a New York-based musician appearing in many guises.<sup>1</sup> Trained primarily as a violinist in North Carolina, she is also a Grammy-

winning singer in Roomful of Teeth and in 2013 became, at age 30, the youngest ever winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music beating out Charles Wuorinen by one year. This was for her enigmatic composition *Partita for 8 Voices*, which was also nominated for a Grammy in the Best Classical Composition category.

She is currently a doctoral candidate in composition at Princeton; and she has been a Rice Goliard Fellow (busking and fiddling in Sweden) and a Yale Baroque Ensemble fellow. She was also a recipient of the infamous Thomas J. Watson Fellowship to study historical formal gardens and live out of a backpack for a year.

Caroline Shaw creates music that looks simultaneously forward and backward, and the result is both whimsical and emotionally powerful. *Punctum*, inspired by a passage from Roland Barthes' 1980 book *Camera Lucida*, is an experiment in expectation and fulfillment. Through modular sequences strung together out of context, the piece explores saturating the palette with classicism while denying it form, and of disturbing the legibility of a harmonic progression in order to reinforce it later. One could also say the piece is about the sensation of a particular secondary dominant in a chorale from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.

## Shaw: Entr'acte

A modern take on a traditional quartet movement, *Entr'acte* is Shaw's "Tim Burton-inspired warped version of a Haydn Minuet & Trio." It was written in 2011 after hearing the Brentano Quartet play Haydn's Op. 77 No. 2 — with their spare and soulful shift to the D-flat major trio in the minuet. It is structured like a minuet and trio, riffing on that classical form but taking it a little further. The music (like the minuets of Op. 77) suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, Technicolor® transition.

## Haydn: Quartet, Op. 20, #5

Haydn is credited with "inventing" the string quartet form. If this be true, then his creation truly commences with this set of six, dubbed the 'Sun' because of the solar motif included on the title page. Based on his earlier quartets, one would not be remiss to expect works more integrated, more subtle, more teasing in form, and less anxiously dramatic. But Op. 20 is none of these things.

Haydn managed to imbue each of his string quartets with some degree of inventiveness and creativity, despite writing 68 of them over the course of his career, at least 45 of which are profound and profoundly different, absolutely flawless, and consistently original. His *String Quartet in F minor*, his most personal key, clearly falls into the gang of 45, drawing on inspirations from the past, simultaneously reimagining them in a new context, and positively reveling in contrast and diversity.

This quartet begins immediately with a tone of tempest and tension with pulsating, throbbing chords of the other three instruments supporting the first violin's passionate song. The intensity wanes slightly in the second theme where all four instruments move from dark minor to warm major mode. A typical Haydn development precedes a recapitulation of some inventiveness, but the consummation arrives in the powerful, fervent climax of the coda.

There are none of the usual good spirits that typically characterize a *Menuetto*; rather we find a mood of disquiet and restiveness introduced in the first movement. There is scant relief from this in the contrasting trio, and a return of the opening ends the movement.

The alternating pattern of long and short notes that forms the background

<sup>1</sup> You may have noted her incognito appearance as a backup singer on SNL with Paul McCartney

of the *Adagio* is derived from an Italian *Siciliano* dance. The first violin states an unpretentious, rocking melody in the foreground that is shared with the second violin and the two instruments cast it with enhanced development.

The finale is a fugue on two short subjects easily recognized by individual melodic structures. The first is slow-moving with large interval leaps; the second is composed of faster notes moving stepwise. Haydn manipulates these two melodies through continuously morphing relationships and keys in a quiet undercurrent that leads to a strong climax. Following a quiet resumption of the music, there are two more forceful outbursts, the second closing the quartet.

### **Beethoven: Quartet, Op. 131**

Beethoven's creative work comprises three periods of composition: the first an interval of imitation, the second a phase where traditional forms are recreated within a progressive freedom of style, and the third where new forms are created and formed by the artist's imaginative vitality.

Development of his quartets evolved through a series of sixteen works, composed during the years 1800 and 1826 in the second half of his life and in the latter two compositional periods. Creation of the final five quartets and great Fugue occupied the last three years of his life and were completed four months before his death. The number "14" traditionally assigned to Op. 131 is based on the order of its publication; it is actually his 15<sup>th</sup> quartet by composition.

This quartet blooms with the qualities of innovation and independence of form, but also following an exactly logical and flexible technique. It is an intelligent and creative work that rises above the tribulations of human misery to spiritual strength, vitality and triumph over the bitterness of destiny finally realizing inner peace and resolution.

Beethoven composed the quartet in seven movements and six distinct key areas. It is played without break and has

been described as a monumental feat of integration. The finale directly quotes the opening fugue theme in the first movement in its second thematic area. This type of cyclical composition was avant-garde for a work of the period. Joseph Kerman wrote that it was a "blatant functional reference to the theme of another movement: this *never* happens."

We must regress 25 years from the 1826 composition date of Op. 131 to the C# minor Piano Sonata (Moonlight) to find a precedent Beethoven composition beginning with a slow movement, and for him to begin with a fugue is without precedent. Yet the *Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo* is a slow, close fugue in C# minor. Richard Wagner said of this movement that it "reveals the most melancholy sentiment expressed in music." It is a lamentation at once passionate and resigned in expression of defiant grief.

The *Allegro molto vivace* is a delicate dance in compound duple meter (6/8) in the key of D major that dissipates the somber despair of the *Adagio*. There is a continuous impetus of increasing ardor and fire through various keys depicting heroic inspiration until, abruptly, the first violin instills pensiveness.

Without actual break, two energetic chords open the *Allegro moderato—Adagio* in common time in the spirit of recitativo obbligato following the key of B minor. The modulation from B minor to E major functions as a short introduction to the long, slow central movement of the quartet.

The *Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile—Più mosso—Andante moderato e lusinghiero—Adagio—Allegretto—Adagio, ma non troppo e semplice—Allegretto* opens in A major in 2/4 meter. This is a set of 7 variations (6 complete and 1 incomplete, with coda) on a simple theme based on pairs of semitones introduced in the second movement and shared between the first and second violins. These variations are much more than a composer's method for development where a single idea

finds more complete expression. Listen for the continual changing of the idea as Beethoven's fantasy changes. These are new thoughts, not just technical variations of the same thought, and each articulates the most subtle shades of meaning. There is a spiritual and formal unity on a grand scale that is extraordinary. There is also an atmosphere of shining clarity juxtaposed against a depth of heartbreaking introspection and poignant anguish. This is the quintessence of the 'Grand Variation' form from Beethoven's late period.

The *Presto* in E major, is a brilliant scherzo, though in duple rather than triple time. The entire movement is filled with riotous life. Its design and form are of crystal clarity and it flows with an unbroken stream of the divinest music conceivable. And it is all based on a simple motif that you might hum as you depart the concert.

The *Adagio quasi un poco andante* is in G# minor and is in bar form with a coda, which serves as a slow, sombre introduction to the *Allegro* finale in sonata form that returns, finally, to the home key of C# minor.

This string quartet is a visionary work in which Beethoven explores the struggles of the human spirit. This quartet grew to maturity in the midst of all the sufferings of mind and body of one of the greatest and most desolate figures in history during the saddest period of his life. His last three years were one long agony during which he found composition to be an outlet for his misery and anguish. This piece, nonetheless, is generally recognized by critics (and accounted by the composer himself) to be musically the finest and most powerful of all his chamber music work and to have achieved the highest point ever attained in the string quartet literature.

—notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

# 60<sup>TH</sup> SEASON 2015-2016

*Presented in Cooperation with  
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## **Akropolis Reed Quintet**

2:30 PM Sunday, September 27, 2015

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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2:30 PM Sunday, October 25, 2015

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2:30 PM Sunday, November 15, 2015

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2:30 PM Sunday, February 14, 2016

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2:30 PM Sunday, April 17, 2016

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- There is no smoking in the building.
- Please turn off cellular telephones and disengage audible signals on digital devices during concert.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the 2015-16 Season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Adult: Single \$25, Season \$100  
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