The Juilliard School

presents

Juilliard String Quartet

Areta Zhulla and Ronald Copes, Violins Roger Tapping, Viola Astrid Schween, Cello

Part of the Daniel Saidenberg Faculty Recital Series

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) **String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op. 18, No. 3**

Allegro Andante con moto Allegro Presto

LEMBIT BEECHER (b. 1980) One Hundred Years Grows Shorter Over Time

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Intermission

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904) String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96 ("American")

Allegro ma non troppo Lento Molto vivace

Finale: Vivace ma non troppo

Performance time: approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes, including an intermission

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not permitted in this auditorium.

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Notes on the Program

by James M. Keller

String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op. 18, No. 3

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born probably on December 16, 1770 (he was baptized on the 17th), in Bonn, then an independent electorate of Germany Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

When, in 1792, Beethoven left his native Bonn to seek his fortune as a pianist and a composer in the heady cultural capital of Vienna, he was entering a world dominated by the spirit of the late lamented Mozart and the still-living and universally revered Haydn. Beethoven's early string quartets are clearly born of the tradition those composers defined, yet they already strain in new directions. Succinct themes capable of extensive development; imaginative melodic manipulation; startling dynamic contrasts; complete, sometimes radical, formal mastery: these are all evident in Beethoven's first set of six quartets. Op. 18, which he composed from the summer or autumn of 1798 to the summer of 1800. They were introduced at a series of private house concerts given on Friday mornings at the Vienna home of Prince Karl Lobkowitz, the Austrian aristocrat to whom the set is dedicated. These performances were regularly attended by the city's cultural and philanthropic elite, and it comes as no surprise that, shortly after these Beethoven quartets were unveiled, patrons showed an increasing interest in commissioning works from this intractable but inescapable genius.

The sketch books Beethoven employed for recording and working out his ideas for these quartets reveal that the pieces were composed in a different order from how they were positioned when published, in 1801. The D-major Quartet (Op. 18, No. 3)

was the first to be written, begun in the summer or fall of 1798 and finished late that year or early the next. It therefore represents the beginning of the remarkable journey that would culminate in 1824–27, when Beethoven composed the extraordinary five quartets of his final years. In fact, he effected revisions to Op. 18, No. 3 after he provisionally completed it, drawing on his experience working out some of his other early quartets.

This is the most gentle and least obviously innovative quartet of the set, a piece that, in a sense, picks up where Mozart left off. That said, it is a work of terrific appeal and not short on character. The opening theme of its first movement evolves out of the interval of a rising minor seventh—flirtatious or enigmatic depending on the interpretation—and reaches a ferocious climax in its development section before eliding into the expository material that launches the recapitulation. The genial slow movement—not very slow, at Andante con moto-charms especially through a tick-tock figure that accompanies the ornate second theme. Was Beethoven thinking of Haydn's "Clock" Symphony, which was not yet five years old? A spirited third movement, a syncopated proto-scherzo, includes a scurrying trio of flying scales passed between the violins; and the finale gallops along vivaciously in 6/8 time, passes through studious patches of counterpoint, and ends by just disappearing into the distance off yonder.

One Hundred Years Grows Shorter Over Time

LEMBIT BEECHER

Born November 23, 1980, in Santa Cruz, California

Currently residing in New York City

Lembit Beecher is now in his third season as composer-in-residence at the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, having previously spent three years as the inaugural composer-in-residence for Opera Philadelphia, in collaboration with Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group. His chamber opera *Sky on Swings*, centering on two women grappling with Alzheimer's disease, was premiered by Opera Philadelphia in September, in a production starring mezzosopranos Frederica von Stade and Marietta Simpson; and his opera *I Have No Stories to Tell You* was premiered by Gotham Chamber Opera in 2014.

Beecher has been strongly drawn to interdisciplinary work, as in his *Sophia's Forest*, a 2017 chamber opera for soprano Kiera Duffy, the Aizuri Quartet, and a multi-piece sound sculpture built in collaboration with architects and engineers at the University' of Pennsylvania and Drexel University's ExCITe Center. Born to mixed Estonian and American heritage, Beecher has often turned his attention to compositions that involve place, ecology, memory, and the multitude of ways in which people tell stories sometimes drawing on tales and reminiscences from his own family.

One Hundred Years Grows Shorter Over Time was commissioned by South Mountain Association for the Juilliard String Quartet and written in honor of the 100th anniversary of South Mountain Concerts (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), where the Juilliard foursome premiered it on September 23. Beecher provides this comment about the piece:

As I began writing I thought about the span of 100 years: how, over time, our lives turn into stories told by our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, the complications and subtleties of life crystalizing into anecdotes as actual memories fade. The three movements of this quartet are like successive generations retelling the same story. Musical material is passed from movement to

movement, but along the way it is reinterpreted and reshaped into something quite different. The movements all share a similar obsessiveness of character. moments of exuberance, and a tendency for long lines to emerge out of faster, restless music, but each movement is shorter, slower, and more focused than the previous one. As I wrote a melody kept coming into my mind: a waltz written by my Estonian granduncle Ilmar Kiiss, now in his mid-90s. He had written the waltz in the 1950s, after the Soviet occupation of Estonia, and I had first played this music with my violinist brother when we were teenagers. Over the years we have kept returning to it and it felt right to let this little bit of my granduncle's life that had meant so much to me into my piece. The waltz is hidden or just hinted at in the first two movements but in the third it appears fully realized if a bit scratchy, as if an old recording, a piece of the past both beautiful and out-of-context, was rediscovered by a future generation.

String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96 ("American")

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Bohemia

Died May 1, 1904, in Prague, Bohemia

Antonín Dvořák composed his "American" string quartet while living in the United States, where he served as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York from 1892–95. He had some exposure to Native American music during his time in the United States. In the spring of 1893 he attended one of Buffalo Bill Cody's "Wild West" shows in New York, which would have included a fair amount of more-or-less authentic singing and dancing from a group of Oglala Sioux who belonged to Cody's troupe. A few months

later, during his summer vacation in Spillville, lowa, he encountered performers of a different tradition at a performance given by the Kickapoo Medicine Company.

It is widely held that some of the sounds Dvořák heard at those performances worked their way into several pieces he wrote during his American years, although debate swirls around how deep his indebtedness was. The Op. 96 quartet (premiered in Boston in 1894) is full of pentatonic melodies, including the two principal themes of the first movement—the first announced staunchly by viola against a shimmering accompaniment, the second offered more hesitatingly by second violin. These may sound somehow "Indian" but, in truth, five-note scales are redolent of any number of folk musics. One might argue that such melodies may be considered every bit as much Czech as they may be specifically American, and one is tempted to wonder whether a specifically Native American connection would occur to most listeners were it not for the work's nickname.

Having spent many years as an orchestral violist, Dvořák left a thoughtful legacy to the viola players of posterity: it is remarkable how often he gives that instrument the honor of announcing themes. A fine example comes at the outset of this quartet, where the violins and cello ease the

piece into existence by defining nothing more than a chord, with the viola entering last, enunciating the principal melody with husky richness. Following the classically worked-out first movement, the second (Lento) is a hyper-Romantic reverie with touches of harmonic suspension adding to its yearning quality; the French musicologist Pierre Barbier has cunningly referred to this movement as a sort of "Bohemian blues." The third movement is a dance-like scherzo (again with a pentatonic theme), with the principal section alternating with a variant on itself to create an A-B-A-B-A form. Dvořák reported that some violin figuration in the middle of the A sections represents a transcription of the song of the scarlet tanager, which he heard at Spillville. Good humor reigns over the Finale, although halfway through the music slows down and assumes a pious attitude, presumably echoing the singing of a hymn—perhaps at the Church of St. Wenceslaus in Spillville, where Dvořák sometimes played the organ during his summer vacation.

James M. Keller is the longtime program annotator of the New York Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony and serves as critic-at-large for the Santa Fe New Mexican, the oldest newspaper west of the Mississippi. His book Chamber Music: A Listener's Guide is published by Oxford University Press.

About the Artists



Juilliard String Quartet

With unparalleled artistry and enduring vigor, the Juilliard String Quartet (JSQ) continues to inspire audiences around the world. Founded in 1946 and hailed by the Boston Globe as "the most important American quartet in history," the JSQ draws on a deep and vital engagement to the classics while embracing the mission of championing new works, a vibrant combination of the familiar and the daring. Each performance is a unique experience, bringing together the four members' profound understanding, total commitment, and unceasing curiosity in sharing the wonders of the string quartet literature. Areta Zhulla ioins the Juilliard String Quartet as first violinist for the 2018–19 season, which includes concerts in Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, London, Oslo, Athens, Vancouver, Toronto, and New York, with return engagements all over the U.S. The season will also see some piano quintet collaborations with Marc-André Hamelin

Having recently celebrated its 70th anniversary, the JSQ marked its 2017–18 season with return appearances in Seattle, Santa Barbara, Pasadena, Memphis, Raleigh, Houston, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen. It continued its acclaimed annual performances

in Detroit and Philadelphia, along with numerous concerts at home in New York, including appearances at Lincoln Center and Town Hall. Highlights of last season included other visionary works by Beethoven, Bartók, and Dvorák, as well as James MacMillan's haunting and evocative Quartet No. 2, Why Is This Night Different? (1998).

Adding to its celebrated discography, the JSQ's newest release—featuring the world premiere recording of Mario Davidovsky's Fragments (2016), together with Beethoven's Quartet, Op. 95, and Bartók's Quartet No. 1—was recently issued by Sony Classical. Celebrating one of the great collaborative relationships in American music, Sony Classical's reissue of the quartet's landmark recordings of the first four Elliott Carter string quartets together with the 2013 recording of Carter's Quartet No. 5 traces a remarkable period in the evolution of both the composer and the ensemble. The quartet's recordings of the Bartók and Schoenberg quartets, as well as those of Debussy, Ravel, and Beethoven, have won Grammy Awards, and in 2011 the JSQ became the first classical music ensemble to receive a lifetime achievement award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences

Devoted master teachers, the members of the Juilliard String Quartet offer classes and open rehearsals when on tour. The JSQ is string quartet in residence at Juilliard and its members are sought-after teachers on the string and chamber music faculties. Each May the JSQ hosts the five-day internationally recognized Juilliard String Quartet Seminar. Each summer the JSQ works closely on string quartet repertoire with students at the Tanglewood Music Center.

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