



Ulysses Quartet

Juilliard



Photo by Claudio Papapietro

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The Juilliard School
presents

Lisa Arnhold Memorial Recital

Ulysses Quartet

Christina Bouey and Rhiannon Banerdt, Violins

Colin Brookes, Viola

Grace Ho, Cello

Wednesday, May 11, 2022, 7:30pm
Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

This concert is dedicated to the memory of Roger Tapping.

JOSEPH SUMMER
(b. 1956)

Sycorax (World premiere)

FRANGHIZ ALI-ZADEH
(b. 1947)

Ræqs (Dance)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862–1918)

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10
Animé et très décidé
Assez vif et bien rythmé
Andantino, doucement expressif
Très modéré—En animant peu à peu—
Très mouvementé et avec passion

Intermission

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 131
Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo
Allegro molto vivace
Allegro moderato
Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile
Presto
Adagio quasi un poco andante
Allegro

Performance time: approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, with an intermission

Sycorax JOSEPH SUMMER

Joseph Summer

Born:

February 16, 1956,
in Pittsburgh

This evening, we begin with a world premiere and a “bare island” in the midst of the Mediterranean, where the events of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare’s last play, unfold. The title of Joseph Summer’s *Sycorax*, his new work for string quartet, refers to the mother of the character Caliban, who is described as both a “damn’d” and “foul” witch. Although she is named in the play, Sycorax never actually appears, though her charms, including toads, bats, and beetles, are everywhere apparent.

Claims against Shakespeare’s authorship of his extraordinary output should probably be consigned to the realms of conspiracy theory, though there is no doubt that the playwright’s colleagues and contemporaries aided his work. Shakespeare’s apprentice, John Fletcher, for example, would go on to be his successor as a writer for the King’s Men and Summer himself has suggested that *The Tempest* “was written by at least two authors.” Contributions by Fletcher, who later formed a celebrated partnership with Francis Beaumont, are “evident in his preferred use of a meter based on paired lines of seven syllables.” Shakespeare, on the other hand, favoured iambic meter (with 10 syllables).

These elements are taken into musical form at the beginning of Summer’s ever-expanding score, which begins with seven beats in the bar though featuring 10 notes. In turn, this music reveals a motivic kernel that will provide the basis for a composition echoing, though not entirely rooted in serial praxis; this in homage to Summer’s teacher, Richard Hoffmann, who was Schoenberg’s one-time amanuensis. Summer explains:

Sycorax begins with a lone viola, restricted to five pitches (C, D, E flat, F, and G) in a fairly repetitious ordering. The cello enters and is also restricted to five pitches played above and below the viola, simultaneously. The viola bows, which stresses the C string. The cellist plucks, which technique causes the pitch to sound once the string is released, unstressed. Together, the viola and cello represent the stressed and unstressed alternation of Shakespeare’s iambic pentameter. They play their five apiece pitches in paired measures of 7/4; the 7/4 meter representing Fletcher’s metric *modus operandi* of paired seven syllable lines. The first measures then, are a discussion about the relative contributions of Shakespeare and Fletcher to *The Tempest*, in the form of a character description of Sycorax.

Rəqs (Dance)

FRANGHIZ ALI-ZADEH

We now journey east for the next piece on tonight's program: the 2015 *Rəqs* by the Azerbaijani-born and Berlin-based composer Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, originally written for the Kronos Quartet. Ali-Zadeh's work reflects her roots, more specifically the compound methods and modes of *mugam*, as well as the work of Schoenberg and others.

Named a "masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity" by UNESCO, *mugam* is prevalent in the northern part of a region that embraces modern-day Azerbaijan, including the Karabakh mountains, but which has also, at times, included Armenia. The music of the *ashyg*, on the other hand, is a southern phenomenon, though both traditions can coexist, with *ashyg* a rural music and *mugam* more readily associated with the urban. Nonetheless, festivities often provide opportunities for performances of music from both genres, as well as inspiring certain musical tropes, as in the context evoked by Ali-Zadeh in this 2015 work for string quartet. The composer says:

Rəqs means "dance" in Azerbaijani as well as in all other Turkic languages. In Azerbaijan, many different dances have existed since time immemorial: for men and women, heroic and lyric, fast and slow. And the tradition of accompanying all important life events with all kinds of dances has been preserved to the present day: engagements and weddings, harvest and farewells, birthdays and even dates of death. There are also burial dances that accompany the farewell to the deceased person. In this respect, the dance tradition remains very strong and current in Azerbaijan today, especially in rural areas. In my new piece, I have attempted to reflect some of the rhythms and configurations of Azerbaijani dances.

String Quartet in G Minor

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

A slightly less authentic "East" is one of many points of inspiration for Debussy's sole string quartet, written and first performed in 1893 and telling of the composer's richly multifaceted apprenticeship. Fascinated and appalled by Wagner in equal measure, he was also drawn to the polyphony of Palestrina as well as the sounds of the Javanese gamelan, which Debussy experienced at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. It was a music, like that of the Iberian Peninsula—itself hugely popular in *belle époque* Paris—that was full of the "gifts of evocation, colour, rhythm" that Debussy thought essential. There was, however, to be no slavish copying of these facets, but a sublimation of their contrasting means. To trace these points of influence in Debussy's early scores is therefore futile; for as soon

**Franghiz
Ali-Zadeh**

Born:
May 29, 1947,
in Baku, Azerbaijan

Claude Debussy

Born:
August 22, 1862,
in Saint-Germain-
en-Laye, France

Died:
March 25, 1918,
in Paris

as he found his model, the composer turned it on its head, making the music entirely his own.

The 1893 String Quartet is a case in point. Rooted in the kind of cyclical practice manifest Franck's D Minor symphony of 1888–89, Debussy's first chamber music masterpiece nonetheless rejects what he saw as its traditional harmonic schemes and phrasing. Debussy's music speaks of a tenacity writ large, which plays out over four intense movements, all bound by the strident motif stated at the outset. Yet for all its formal credentials, the work breaks decidedly from the genre's Austro-German past, instead providing a new model that would be taken up by Ravel and others in turn.

The pizzicato second movement proves even more playful in its use of the principal material. A singing second section offers further contrast and is accompanied by shimmers, albeit with that familiar strut. At times, the buoyancy becomes overwrought, as the palette darkens and the viola delivers a series of petulant cross-rhythms in this gutsy-cum-gossamer version of the Classical minuet and trio. The lush Andantino is rather less fixated on the central idée and similarly distances itself from the chromaticism of what has gone before. Duly soothed, the Finale begins drowsily, before souvenirs of the troubled second movement clash with the modality of the third, and, eventually, more pizzicato snaps and tremolandos build to a final statement of the motto, bringing us full circle.

String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp Minor LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

**Ludwig van
Beethoven**

Born:

December 16
or 17, 1770,
in Bonn, Germany

Died:

March 26, 1827,
in Vienna

Debussy would have been bemused to find his sole quartet preceding the very last of Beethoven's contributions to the genre, even though both works are characterized by cyclical procedures. Unfortunately, Debussy's opinions on the great composer's music could be robustly offhand, describing "a man who was so ill-bred that he decided to become deaf so that he could better annoy his contemporaries with his last quartets." And yet, having "escaped" from a concert of Beethoven's chamber music, Debussy was to become fascinated by the repertoire, not least the String Quartet No. 14.

By the time Beethoven began work on this quartet, which was written with no specific commission in mind, around the end of 1825 or the beginning of 1826, poor health prevented him from continuing composition until the spring. By summer 1826, however, the work was complete, after some 600 pages of sketches. Beethoven promptly wrote to the Mainz-based publisher Maurice Schlesinger and demanded a fee of 80 ducats. Schlesinger agreed and released the quartet in 1827, the year the composer died.

The quartet's structure inverts that of one of Beethoven's other late masterpieces, his String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Major, Op. 130, which had originally concluded with the *Grosse Fuge* (Op. 133), before Beethoven wrote another finale, in the style of a *contredanse*, during autumn 1826. Here, in the Op. 131 Quartet, Beethoven begins with a contrapuntal movement, the mood of which suggests kinship with the *Missa solemnis*, specifically that great choral work's Benedictus and *Dona nobis pacem*, prompting Wagner to describe it as "the saddest thing ever said in notes." Much brighter is the folksy second movement, its home key of D Major already prepared in the initial fugue, which constantly sounds the "wrong" note of D. That sense of disruption is now continued by means of a series of aggressive dynamic contrasts.

The third movement, assuming the guise of a recitative, prepares for the central pillar of the whole quartet: a set of variations on a theme that begins offbeat and, in turn, spurs a structure that resembles a complete string quartet within the larger form. There are even hints of a Scherzo, as well as moments of pensive pause, before a rousing coda. Then, after a brief but heartfelt Adagio, comes the Finale, in which Beethoven both mirrors his initial fugue and draws together the motivic hallmarks and tonal excursions of the entire structure. It provides an incredible sense of catharsis, not unlike the dizzying conclusions to Shakespeare's final dramas. During Beethoven's time, its music left the composer's admirer Schubert quite breathless: "after this," he asked, "what is left for us to write?"

Gavin Plumley specializes in the music and culture of Central Europe and appears frequently on BBC radio, as well as writing for newspapers, magazines, opera houses, and concert halls around the world. He is the commissioning editor of English-language program notes for the Salzburg Festival.

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About the Ulysses Quartet



• Lisa Arnhold
Fellows

Founded in 2015, the Ulysses Quartet won the grand prize and gold medal in the senior string division of the 2016 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and first prize in the 2018 Schoenfeld International String Competition. In 2017, the quartet finished first in the American Prize and won second prize at the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition. The quartet, which was the winner of the Vietnam International Music Competition in 2019, garnered a career development grant in the 2016 Banff International String Quartet Competition. At Juilliard, the quartet's members are Lisa Arnhold Fellows, serving as the school's graduate resident string quartet through May. From 2016 to 2019, Ulysses was in residence at the Louis Moreau Institute in New Orleans, working with composer Morris Rosenzweig.

Consisting of Christina Bouey (Artist Diploma '21) and Rhiannon Banerdt (Artist Diploma '21) on violin, Colin Brookes (BA '11) on viola, and Grace Ho (Artist Diploma '21) on cello, the quartet's members hail from Canada, the U.S., and Taiwan. They have performed in such venues as the Harbin Grand Theatre, Jordan Hall, and the Taiwan National Recital Hall. Recent performance highlights include the quartet's debut at Alice Tully Hall and appearances at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Naumburg Orchestral Concerts. Other notable engagements include the Buffalo Chamber Music Society; Cecilia Concerts (Halifax); South Orange Performing Arts Center (New Jersey); Sprague Hall at Yale University; Mostly Music (New Jersey); Rhode Island Chamber Music Concerts; Chamber Music Society of Bethlehem (Pennsylvania); Premiere Performances Hong Kong; National Arts Centre (Ottawa); Bargemusic; Eastman School of Music; and Vietnam Connection Music Festival. The quartet's 2021–22 season included an appearance with the Emerson String Quartet at the Naumburg Orchestral Concerts as well as performances for Virtuosi Concerts and Death of Classical in New York City, the Westchester Chamber Music Society, Syracuse Friends of Chamber Music, Dumbarton Concerts, Kelowna Community Concert Association, Elon University, Chamber Music Wilmington, and American Music Festival. The season also features performances at Sociedad Filarmónica de Bilbao, Ciclo de Cámara y Solistas in Salamanca, the Picasso Museum in Málaga, Teatro Mayor Julio Santo Domingo in Bogotá, and Cernat Resit Rey Concert Hall in Istanbul.

Ulysses recently completed work on its debut album, to be released later this year, and four more albums are coming in the near future, including collaborations with flutist Ransom Wilson and guitarist Ben Verdery as well as albums of quartet works. As a special project, the group will record the quartets of composer Joseph Summer at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts, over the next several years. The group's name pays homage to Homer's hero Odysseus and his 10-year voyage home; additionally, the quartet's members live in close proximity to the resting place of Ulysses S. Grant in upper Manhattan. The Ulysses String Quartet believes intensely in the power of music to inspire, enlighten, and bring people together.

This is the guiding principle of the Ulysses Quartet Foundation, dedicated to the performance and promotion of classical music of the past and present day to benefit the broadest possible audience of music lovers and potential music lovers by expanding their understanding and appreciation of the musical arts. The quartet also offers interactive programs and workshops for all ages that serve to demystify the traditional repertoire while introducing audiences to diverse programming. These programs enable participants to learn about the inner workings of a string quartet and to explore the connections between classical music and our world today.

The members of Ulysses hold degrees from Juilliard, Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, and Yale University. The musicians perform on instruments and bows graciously on loan from Juilliard and the Maestro Foundation. Ulysses is grateful for the support of Shar Music and Connolly Music.

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