



Sunday, February 9, 2025

BROOKLYN RIDER

Johnny Gandelsman, violin

Colin Jacobsen, violin

Nicholas Cords, viola

Michael Nicolas, cello



String Quartet No. 19 in C major, K. 465 "Dissonance" (1785) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

- I. Adagio—Allegro
- II. Andante cantabile
- III. Menuetto. Allegro
- IV. Allegro molto

Fantasia upon One Note, Z. 745 (about 1680)

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

String Quartet No. 3 "9 Etudes" (1973)

Betsy Jolas

- I. Bowing
- II. Vibrato
- III. Aleatory Structures
- IV. Trills and Bowed Tremolo
- V. Harmonics
- VI. Multiple Stops
- VII. Aleatory Structures Around a Held C
- VIII. Pizzicati
- IX. Summing Up

INTERMISSION

Solfeggio (1963)

Arvo Pärt

String Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 51, No. 1 (1865–73)

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

- I. Allegro
- II. Romanze: Poco adagio
- III. Allegretto molto moderato e comodo
- IV. Allegro

Booking direction by David Lieberman - Artist's Representatives.

Fitzpatrick Family Concert



NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

Brooklyn Rider has a reputation both for thoughtful programming and for “rock star” energy. I am delighted to be bringing them to the Gardner for the first time.

Their fascinating concert today takes as its jumping-off point one of Purcell’s late viol quartets. This short piece is built around a single pitch, C, sustained from beginning to end.

Mozart opens his quartet in C (K. 465) with a repeated C in the cello, from which he builds out the strange and glorious prelude to this extraordinary work. Brahms’s first quartet (like his first symphony, in C minor) similarly blossoms out of an agitated repetition of C.

Of course, works that are “in C,” like the Brahms and Mozart quartets, are fundamentally “about C.” The C scale (major or minor) is, after all, a hierarchical arrangement of seven tones that conspire to enthrone C as their sovereign. Works that are “in C” take C as their Alpha and Omega, starting out from C; exploring the implications of the note and the key that grows out of it; and finding their way gloriously home to it at the end. One might call Arvo Pärt’s *Solfeggio* “of C,” given that its entire pitch content is that of the C major scale.

On February 12, 1785—almost exactly 240 years ago today—Mozart invited Haydn to his home to hear the world premiere of the quartet we hear today, the last of six he dedicated to Haydn. In response to this performance, Haydn told Mozart’s father, “I tell you before God, and as an honest man, your son is the greatest composer known to me in person or repute”—a sentiment whose force has not dimmed two and a half centuries later.

—George Steel, *Abrams Curator of Music*

Quotation translated by Otto Erich Deutsch in *Mozart: a Documentary Biography* (1965)

NOTE ON THE PROGRAM

Just as the universe has an underlying vibrating frequency, so too does the string quartet: the note C, corresponding to the lowest notes of the viola and cello. Upon One Note explores a broad group of incredible works revolving around C as the foundational pitch; from Mozart’s ebullient “Dissonance” Quartet to Betsy Jolas’s ingenious musings on the very building blocks of the string quartet, to a quartet adaptation of an otherworldly early Arvo Pärt choral work to Brahms’s swirling masterpiece. You, our beloved audience, will also have a role to play. Be not afraid, all will become clear (hint: it’s in the Purcell)...

—Brooklyn Rider

It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The history of the string quartet is full of examples: Ravel looking to Debussy, a young Dvorak inspired by Brahms, Berg following in his teacher Schoenberg’s footsteps. One might even say that this accounts for the evolution of a coherent tradition. But imitation is really not the best term in the case of these creative giants of our tradition—certainly in the case of **Mozart’s** six quartets dedicated to Haydn, of which K. 465 is the last in the set. His homage to Haydn provided a platform for Mozart’s independent and mature genius to come to the fore. Written following Haydn’s six quartets, Op. 33 (quartets were often released as “six-packs” in the day), Mozart was surely indebted to the work of Haydn who was, after all, considered the father of the string quartet and arguably the greatest innovator of the form. Haydn’s Op. 33 quartets are full of innovation on every level—for one, they replace the customary minuet and trio with zippy scherzos—and it is no wonder that Mozart’s acute ear was drawn to their brilliance. But Mozart was able to imbue his works with a sense of drama and human experience that, according to musicologist Maynard Solomon, was not to be visited again until Beethoven’s “Razumovsky” quartets.



And what of this relationship between Haydn and Mozart? In 1781, Mozart had recently moved to Vienna to seek his fortunes, and Haydn was occasionally able to sneak away from his duties in service of Prince Esterhazy to make visits to the great musical capital. The string quartet is, somewhat by definition, a very sociable form of music-making, and it was the string quartet itself that united the two. A fly on the wall reports an evening of quartets being played by Haydn and Dittersdorf on violin, Vanhal playing cello, and Mozart taking the bird's eye view from the viola. And though the string quartet has since made its way into large concert halls, it is still the informal quartet evening where relationships are forged and creative juices flow. In any case, this was certainly a mutual admiration society as evidenced in Mozart's forward to the published edition:

"To my dear friend Haydn:

A father who had decided to send his sons into the great world, thought in this duty to entrust them to the protection and guidance of a man who was very celebrated at the time and who, moreover, happened to be his best friend.

In like manner I send my six sons to you, most celebrated and very dear friend. They are, indeed, the fruit of a long and laborious toil: but the hope which many friends have given me that this toil will be in some degree rewarded, encourages me and flatters me with the thought that these children may one day prove a source of consolation to me ..."

And Haydn—who was present in the first readings of these quartets, with Mozart again taking up the viola—felt so moved to write to Mozart's father Leopold, "Before God and, as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me, either in person or by name. He has taste and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition."

This quartet, K. 465, is not only a celebration of the thematic invention and development set in motion by Haydn; these quartets are a bold and often surprising statement of artistic maturity in Mozart. Reflecting the social movement from aristocratic society to the Enlightenment, where the values of individual human achievement and

equality were greater valued, the very dedication of these quartets to Mozart's quartet buddy and surrogate musical father is telling (dedications most often coming in the form of a patron or member of the aristocracy). It has also been noted that the autograph of these quartets demonstrate the sort of "laborious toil" that was rather uncharacteristic of Mozart, whose ink normally flowed with a fast-paced sense of perfection.

This work, the last of the group of six, is cast in C major, a sunny key center associated with triumph and radiance in the works of Mozart. The "dissonance" moniker to the work as a whole seems somewhat misplaced, with early observers feeling that there were wrong notes in the opening introduction—Haydn himself was surprised, but said that "If Mozart wrote it, he must have meant it!" The harmonically adventurous and probing introduction seems to doubly affirm the otherwise ebullient first movement. The second movement is Mozart at his lyrical finest, particularly the simplicity of the second theme, a conversation of suspension/resolution among the instruments. The good natured and ribbing menuetto follows, with a dramatic trio section in the relative minor, one of the rare departures from the sunny embrace of the quartet's home key. An effervescent finale brings the work to a rousing finish, with a seemingly limitless supply of motifs.

The fantasia for viol consort (predecessor of the modern violin family, played à la cello and with an underhanded bow hold) was the most elevated form of instrumental chamber music in Elizabethan England, reigning supreme for nearly two centuries—think of it as the string quartet of the day. **Henry Purcell** composed a set of fifteen in 1680 for various numbers of viols in a dizzying range of affectation and display of contrapuntal mastery. Owing to the fact that this genre of music was on its way out the door due to changing tastes (damn that "new-fangled violin!"), Purcell left these in manuscript form, and furthermore incomplete as a set. In this particular fantasia, the fourth of five viol lines simply holds a constant C throughout, the other voices beguilingly weaving through and around the C. Because we are a mere foursome, tonight that C will be intoned by you, our dear audience!

Currently at the tender age of 98, **Betsy Jolas** is one of the most celebrated living composers. With a large catalogue of distinguished works, hers is a highly independent style, claiming no allegiance to any particular school or compositional paradigm. The daughter of American parents, she was born in Paris in 1926 and came to the United States in 1940 to study at the French Lycée in New York and later at Bennington College. After returning to France in 1946, Jolas furthered her musical studies at the Paris Conservatoire under the tutelage of no less than Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen, taking over the latter's analysis classes when he was on tour. She joined the faculty of the Conservatoire in 1975, and also held teaching posts at Yale, Harvard, and Mills College.

"I have attempted in this work to present a contemporary view of some characteristic elements of string technique in the form of nine etudes, each of which, following Debussy's example, deals with one particular aspect of this technique: pizzicato, harmonics, aleatory (No. 7 is in memory of Purcell's *Fantasia upon One Note*), vibrato, etc. Several of the movements are played without pause. Commissioned by the Kindler Foundation, Quatuor III was completed in September 1973. The first performance was given at the Textile Museum in Washington, January 7, 1974, by the Concord Quartet, to whom the work is dedicated."

Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt** is the second of two living legends on this program (currently 89 years young). *Solfeggio* (1963) was one of his very early choral pieces. The musical structure is disarmingly based on a C major scale. Terraced entrances in tones from the scale form vertical harmonies, with the text consisting of the solfège syllables corresponding to the pitches: do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si. Pärt scholar Paul Hillier noted the effect of occasional pure triads resulting amongst the juxtaposing notes, "as if the composer got caught up in a secret garden, but is not yet ready to understand its beauty, which is perfect unto itself."

Though the composer later arranged the piece for saxophone quartet (2008) and cello ensemble (2010), the version for string quartet (2008) is particularly striking, harkening back to the early days of the development of the string instrument

family, where they were used to add ballast to chorale textures in the early Renaissance era. As the original version is essentially wordless, very little is lost in musical translation.

Brahms, by then a celebrated composer, was 40 years old when he was finally ready to publish a string quartet for the first time. Some call this the curse of the string quartet, a sort of hallowed ground for composers—blame Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven! Brahms himself complained, "You don't know what it is like hearing Beethoven's footsteps constantly behind me." I remember one of my chamber music coaches, Joseph Fuchs, recounting stories of his teacher, Franz Kniesel, a friend of Brahms. The two would spend some time together in the summers. Always thirsting for the latest string quartet sketch, Brahms most often wanted Kniesel and his colleagues to play Haydn string quartets. It is said that Brahms destroyed a jaw-dropping 20 previous string quartets! Brahms finally published a set of two quartets as Op. 51 in 1873 (along with the A minor string quartet), and this only after nearly two decades of toil with this C minor string quartet. His first symphony, also in the tumultuous key of C minor, was to follow and also the result of a prolonged gestation period.

The outer movements of this quartet set a highly dramatic and combustible energy, while the inner movements portray a more pensive and glowing character. Perhaps taking a cue from his beloved Haydn (with his love for the composer immortalized by his symphonic "Haydn Variations"), there is a classical rigor to the forms and, as in nearly all Brahms's output, there is a high degree of concision in thematic development, with melodic and rhythmic cells that can be heard to cyclically play out across the entirety of the composition. The first movement is a restless sonata form, brooding with agitative elements and sharp rhythmic interplay. The feeling yields something much more lyrical in the second movement, *Romanze*, a song without words. Its ternary form alternates between a gently yearning theme with wistful episodes. Brahms opts for a decidedly non-scherzo third movement. This aptly named *Intermezzo* begins with a melancholic viola voice, though there is overall a quality of this music that seems to subvert a clear hierarchy of voices and thematic textures, with the instruments often occupying a similar range, and the absence of the kind of clear song-like threads found in the second



movement. The trio section is a charming and lilting dance, reminiscent of a *Ländler*, accompanied by folksy *bariolage* bowing in the inner voices. The abrupt-beginning finale seems to thrust us back to the nervy and tumultuous world of the first movement—there is unresolved business! This movement's somewhat condensed form (sonata-rondo) provides the right foil for the superimposition of its myriad thematic elements. Brahms retains the dramatic key of C minor throughout the work's rousing coda, doing away with the typical major key resolution (for instance, as heard at the end of Purcell's *Fantasia upon One Note*). Throughout this quartet, there is a notable use of the low-C fundamental in the lower strings, a resonance that deeply infuses the actions above with a fateful undertow—keep your ears tuned to this frequency!

—Nicholas Cords

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

"They are four classical musicians performing with the energy of young rock stars jamming on their guitars, a Beethoven-goes-indie foray into making classical music accessible but also celebrating why it was good in the first place."

—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"I don't believe I've ever experienced the radical emotional range of Op. 132's long, slow movement—with its liberating, dancing interjections—more intensely than when listening to the entirety of *Healing Modes*."

—*New York Times*

With their gripping performance style and unquenchable appetite for musical adventure, **Brooklyn Rider** has carved a singular space in the world of string quartets over their fifteen-plus-year history. Defining the string quartet as a medium with deep historic roots and endless possibility for invention, they find equal inspiration in musical languages ranging from late Beethoven to Persian classical music to American roots music to the endlessly varied voices of living composers. Claiming no allegiance to either end of the historical spectrum, Brooklyn Rider most comfortably operates within the long arc of the tradition, seeking to illuminate works of the past with fresh insight, while coaxing the malleable genre into the future through an inclusive programming vision, deep-rooted collaborations with a wide range of global tradition bearers, and the creation of thoughtful and relevant frames for commissioning projects.

The current concert season is strongly illustrative of the intrepid musical appetite of Brooklyn Rider. This fall, they began unveiling a major new commissioning and programmatic venture called *The Four Elements*, an exploration of the four classical elements (earth, air, water, and fire) as metaphor for both the complex inner world of the string quartet and the current health of planet Earth. Featuring new commissions—each based on an element—by Andreia Pinto Correia, Conrad Tao, Dan Trueman, and Akshaya Tucker, this project also features existing works from the repertoire, including Shostakovich's 8th String Quartet,





Dutilleux's *Anisi la Nuit*, Golijov's *Tenebrae*, and American folk music collected by Ruth Crawford and newly arranged by Brooklyn Rider's Colin Jacobsen. This winter, the quartet also released *The Wanderer*, their first ever live concert recording, made in Paliesius Manor in eastern Lithuania while on tour last spring. The album consists of two works written recently for Brooklyn Rider: Gonzalo Grau's *Aroma a Distancia* and Osvaldo Golijov's multi-movement *Um Dia Bom*. Also featured is Brooklyn Rider's signature interpretation of Schubert's iconic "Death and the Maiden" string quartet. This season also sees the quartet reuniting with Magos Herrera across the US for their *Dreamers* project.

Looking further into the future, they will expand work already underway with Syrian clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, including the future release of a collaborative album. The 2021–22 season boasted two unique collaborative ventures: one with Israeli mandolin virtuoso Avi Avital, and the other, a brand-new phase of work with Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, where they explored themes of love and death through the music of Franz Schubert and Rufus Wainwright. Also, 2022's release of *The Stranger* (Avie Records) with tenor Nicholas Phan was nominated for a 2023 GRAMMY® Award and made numerous best-of lists for 2022, including the *New Yorker*.

Prior to the global pandemic, the 2019–20 season saw a veritable explosion of new projects and releases. Shared at the height of the US lockdown, the GRAMMY® Award-nominated recording *Healing Modes* (In a Circle Records) presented Beethoven's towering Opus 132—the composer's late testament on healing and the restorative power of new creation—interwoven with five new commissions powerfully exploring topics as wide-ranging as the US-Mexico border conflict, the Syrian refugee crisis, the mental health epidemic, and physical well-being. Described by the *New Yorker* as a project which "could not possibly be more relevant or necessary than it is currently," the composers include Reena Esmail, Gabriela Lena Frank, Matana Roberts, Caroline Shaw, and Du Yun.

Earlier, the same season saw the release of two projects from vastly different musical spheres: *The Butterfly*, with the master Irish fiddler Martin Hayes (In a Circle Records), an album which the *Irish Times* described as "a masterclass in risk-taking;" and the other, *Sun on Sand* (Nonesuch Records), featuring the music of Patrick Zimmerli with saxophone giant Joshua Redman and fellow collaborators Scott Colley (bass) and Satoshi Takeishi (percussion).

In fall 2018, Brooklyn Rider released *Dreamers* on Sony Music Masterworks with Mexican jazz vocalist Magos Herrera. Celebrating the power of beauty as a political act, *Dreamers* amplifies the visionary artistry of Violeta Parra, Federico Garcia Lorca, Gilberto Gil, Joao Gilberto, Octavio Paz, and others, all who dared to dream under repressive regimes. Featuring gems from the Ibero-American songbook in evocative arrangements by Jaques Morelenbaum, Diego Schissi, Gonzalo Grau, Guillermo Klein, and Brooklyn Rider's own Colin Jacobsen, *Dreamers* topped numerous charts and garnered a GRAMMY® Award nomination for best arrangement (Gonzalo Grau's "Niña"). Touring widely to support the album, they appeared at venues ranging from New York City's Jazz at Lincoln Center to Mexico City's Deco masterpiece, the Palacio de Bellas Artes.

Brooklyn Rider has remained steadfast in their commitment to generate new music for string quartet at nearly every phase of their history. To kick off the 2017–18 season, Brooklyn Rider released *Spontaneous Symbols* (In a Circle Records), featuring new commissions by Tyondai Braxton, Evan Ziporyn, Paula Matthusen, Kyle Sanna, and Colin Jacobsen. In the 2015–16 season, the group celebrated its 10th anniversary with the groundbreaking multi-disciplinary project *Brooklyn Rider Almanac*, for which it recorded and toured 15 specially commissioned works from musicians from the worlds of folk, jazz, and indie rock, each inspired by a different artistic muse. *The Fiction Issue* with singer-songwriter Gabriel Kahane featured his composition which was premiered in 2012 at Carnegie Hall by Kahane, Brooklyn Rider, and Shara Nova. Additionally, Brooklyn Rider has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the music of the iconic American composer Philip Glass,

which began with 2011's much-praised recording *Brooklyn Rider Plays Philip Glass* and continued with two subsequent installments of Glass's works for string quartet, all released on the composer's label, Orange Mountain Music.

Numerous other collaborations have helped give rise to NPR Music's observation that Brooklyn Rider is "recreating the 300-year-old form of string quartet as a vital and creative 21st-century ensemble." During the 2016–17 season, Brooklyn Rider released an album entitled so many things on Naïve Records with Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, comprising music by Colin Jacobsen, Caroline Shaw, John Adams, Nico Muhly, Björk, Sting, Kate Bush, and Elvis Costello, among others. *Some of a Thousand Words*, an evening length program with choreographer Brian Brooks and former New York City Ballet prima ballerina Wendy Whelan, was an intimate series of duets and solos in which the quartet's live onstage music is a dynamic and central creative component. *Some of a Thousand Words* was featured at the 2016 Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, before two U.S. tours, including a week-long run at New York City's Joyce Theater. A collaboration with Dance Heginbotham with music written by Colin Jacobsen resulted in *Chalk and Soot*, an evening-length work presented by Lincoln Center's White Lights Festival in 2014. Brooklyn Rider has also frequently teamed up with banjoist Béla Fleck, with whom they appeared on two different albums: 2017's *Juno Concerto* and 2013's *The Impostor*. And in one of their longest standing musical friendships to date, Brooklyn Rider and Iranian kamancheh player Kayhan Kalhor released the highly praised recording *Silent City* (World Village) in 2008, still touring the project to this day.

Kindly turn off all electronic devices during the concert and refrain from any photography or filming in the hall. Also, please note the location of the emergency exit doors: across the hall from the doors through which you entered.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

YARN/WIRE WITH NICOLETTA BERRY, SOPRANO

Sunday, February 23

SIMONE PORTER, VIOLIN WITH PALLAVI MAHIDHARA, PIANO

Sunday, March 2

ACRONYM WITH REGINALD MOBLEY, COUNTERTENOR

Sunday, March 9

JOHAN DALENE, VIOLIN WITH SAHUN SAM HONG, PIANO

Sunday, March 16

NEVERMIND

Sunday, March 23

MORGENSTERN TRIO

Sunday, March 30

SŌ PERCUSSION

Sunday, April 6

STRING TRIO: GENEVA LEWIS, VIOLIN | YURA LEE, VIOLA | JAY CAMPBELL, CELLO

Sunday, April 13

STERLING ELLIOTT, CELLO WITH WYNONA WANG, PIANO

Sunday, April 27

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum resides on the homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe, who belong to this place and continue to regard these lands and waters as sacred.

Music at the Gardner is supported by Nora McNeely Hurley / Manitou Fund. Hemenway & Barnes LLP is the lead corporate sponsor of the Weekend Concert Series. The Museum thanks its generous concert donors: The Coogan Concert in memory of Peter Weston Coogan; Fitzpatrick Family Concert; James Lawrence Memorial Concert; Alford P. Rudnick Memorial Concert; David Scudder in memory of his wife, Marie Louise Scudder; Wendy Shattuck Young Artist Concert; and Willona Sinclair Memorial Concert. The piano is dedicated as the Alex d'Arbeloff Steinway. The harpsichord was generously donated by Dr. Robert Barstow in memory of Marion Huse, and its care is endowed in memory of Dr. Barstow by The Barstow Fund. Music at the Gardner is also supported in part by New Music USA's Organization Fund, Nicie and Jay Panetta, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is supported by the state of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



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