



# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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

## PACIFICA STRING QUARTET

**SIMIN GANATRA**, violin  
**SIBBI BERNHARDSSON**, violin  
**MASUMI PER ROSTAD**, viola  
**BRANDON VAMOS**, cello

2:30 PM, Sunday, February 8, 2015  
Faye Spanos Concert Hall  
University of the Pacific

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**FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN** **QUARTET IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 76, NO. 4, "SUNRISE"** (c1797)  
(1732–1809) Allegro con spirito  
Adagio  
Minuetto: Allegro  
Finale: Allegro, ma non troppo

**DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH** **QUARTET NO. 9 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 117** (c1964)  
(1906–1975) Moderato con moto—  
Adagio—  
Allegretto—  
Adagio—  
Allegro

### INTERMISSION

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** **QUARTET IN E MINOR, OP. 59, NO. 2, "RAZUMOVSKY"** (1805-6)  
(1770–1827) Allegro  
Adagio molto  
Allegretto  
Finale: Presto

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### ARTIST PROFILE



Recognized for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and often-daring repertory choices, over the past two decades the Pacifica Quartet has gained international stature as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. The Pacifica tours extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia, performing regularly in the world's major concert halls. Named the quartet-in-residence at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in March 2012, the Pacifica was also the quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2009 – 2012) – a position that has otherwise been held only by the Guarneri String Quartet – and received the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance.

Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly won chamber music's top competitions, including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002 the ensemble was honored with Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and the appointment to Lincoln Center's CMS Two, and in 2006 was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, becoming only the second chamber ensemble so honored in the Grant's long history. Also in 2006 the Quartet was featured on the cover of Gramophone and heralded as one of "five new quartets you should know about," the only American quartet to make the list. And in 2009, the Quartet was named "Ensemble of the Year" by Musical America.

The members of the Pacifica Quartet live in Bloomington, IN, where they serve as quartet-in-residence and full-time faculty members at the Jacobs School of Music. Prior to their appointment, the Quartet was on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana from 2003 to 2012. The Pacifica Quartet also serves as resident performing artist at the University of Chicago.

## Haydn: Quartet Op. 76, No. 4

Haydn's dominance in this form is not better confirmed than in the last completed set of six quartets of Op. 76. And in the view of many, No. 4, the "Sunrise" of 1797, is certainly among the greatest of the great, and perhaps the finest among all of Haydn's 83 Quartets. It is the last of the five great B-flat quartets, and none of them is greater. The nickname is at once self-explanatory and completely meaningless, but quite practical as a short means of identification in America and England but seldom used elsewhere. It comes from the very opening of the quartet where the first violin traces a tender rising curve ascending above a soft, sustained chord, much as the sun resplendently rises to wash the earth in its warmth.

Listen, then, as the piece begins with that sustained, accompaniment-like tonic chord entering from nowhere. Listen also to the gradual evolution that contradicts the tempo marking, *Allegro con spirito*, which only becomes relevant at the movement's first forte and shows us what this structure is really about: contrasting tempo characters asserting in a cascade of energetic sixteenth notes. The rest of the movement continues as a dramatic back-and-forth between the mood of the quiet opening and that of the following sixteenth-note passage.

The second movement, *Adagio*, is one of Haydn's most expressive slow movements. The opening five notes form the basis of a free fantasia. There is a poignant sense of melancholy heightened by long, slowly unfolding melodic lines to which an underlying pulse is added. Can you hear how Haydn progressively restructures the opening motif in a diversity of

ways as melodic passages rise up and spill gently down? A single pizzicato note in the cello signals a probing canonic section.

The touching *Adagio* is amusingly followed by the heavy peasant-dance rhythm in the *Menuetto*. The last note of the *Menuetto* overlaps with the first note of the trio section, where continuous drones in the viola and cello prolong the impression of folk music. The fairly subdued trio softly declines, then a reappearance of the lively *Menuetto* restores good feeling.

The unusual *Finale* at first impresses as a forthright working of the opening bars of the movement, and after some intricate harmonization and touches of Haydn's humor, we hear what appears to be the quartet's closing in an emphatic cadence. But wonders lurk: the coda opens with a swift cadenza-like musical line. After being passed among the instruments, the four strings unite for an even faster finale, and what began as a moderately paced *Allegro* ends in a virtuoso display at breakneck speed.

Commissioned by a Viennese-Hungarian, Count Joseph Erdödy (who kept the set of six for his exclusive use until they were published two years after completion), this quartet was ostensibly not written for public concerts but for distinguished salons. Nevertheless, the contrast between this and Haydn's compositions for the traditional Viennese setting of intimate aristocratic venues was striking. These quartets feature attention-catching introductions, accentuated dynamic contrasts, more expressive slow movements, and much virtuoso part writing that occurred in his work following his first and

second London visits. Perhaps Haydn also intended this quartet, with its prominent viola part, for his own use, since he was an avid quartet violist.

## Shostakovich: Quartet No. 9

Shostakovich's cycle of fifteen quartets, generally traces a development that mirrors the outward-looking, classically orientated works of his middle period to the intensely personal and rarefied music of his final years. But, No. 9 is difficult to catalog as it does not fit quite so accessibly into this pattern. In the face of such delightful music, categorization seems an unambiguous, inapt pursuit; yet in this case the work's communication appears rather equivocal and uncertain. Rather than a shortcoming, it is completely invigorating to be able openly to appreciate this essentially straightforward music.

Like No. 10, which was completed later the same year (1964), No. 9 bears a superficial resemblance to the large-scale symphonic quartets of the post-war decade (Nos. 3 and 5), but is separated from them chronologically by Nos. 7 and 8, in which Shostakovich originated the introverted style of later years. Inevitably this style influenced the two immediate successor quartets, but to a far lesser extent in the work we hear today.

The capricious nature of the opening bars continues through the first movement, rarely rising above a *mezzo-piano*, and simply intensifies for the ensuing entirely homophonic textured *Adagio*. It opens with a fleeting but touching viola solo; see if you recall the sixth movement of

Beethoven's C sharp minor quartet. There follows a speedy *scherzo*, initially muted, characterized by droll humor so typical of Shostakovich. Listen in the *Adagio* fourth movement for an odd realm of gloomy intoning and communicative recitative, with malicious-sounding pizzicato chords portending a passion to be heard in the Quartet No. 12. These properties recur in the finale, but in a wholly changed mood and the quartet ends with a high-spirited *Allegro* of a type which we might like to see more often in Shostakovich's later compositions.

The work is played without a break, and further unification is provided by an intricate system of thematic relationships which contradict the apparent simple attractiveness of the piece. For example, listen for the figure of a falling semitone which links all the movements together (physically and thematically), with the exception of the first to the second. Shostakovich dedicated the Ninth Quartet to wife Irina, whom he married in 1962.

### **Beethoven: Op. 59, No. 2**

The E minor quartet is one of a trio of middle-works of the same period as the Violin Concerto, the Third and Fourth Symphonies, and "Leonore" Overture No. 3. The quartets were commissioned by the colorful count Rasumovsky, a nobleman of Cossack descent, and twice Russian ambassador to Austria. He was a good musician, a connoisseur of the quartet form, and connected by marriage to the Lichnowsky family, who were patrons of Beethoven.

Whereas the first of this series, the F major, is predominantly lyrical, the E minor is more efficient, more strict in its sonata-form, and more austere in spirit. As with the contemporaneous Eroica Symphony, Op. 59, No. 2 begins curtly with two chords, and short melodic statements follow a measure of apprehensive silence. From these rough scraps of thematic material Beethoven fashions the *Allegro's* trim construction and permeates it with an uneasy ambiance.

The profoundly felt slow movement was reported by Czerny as being motivated by the composer's contemplation of the stars over Baden, his summer haunt near Vienna. The instructions in the score of the hymn-like *Adagio molto* direct that it is to be played "with much feeling." Consequently, we hear the *Adagio* soar above the tensions of the first movement with a fundamental rhythmic pulsation and somber harmonic shifts imparting a subdued atmosphere beneath its expressive beauty.

The *Allegretto's* modest, hesitant *scherzo* gives the impression of simple packaging for the flamboyant trio section. Notated "Thème Russe," the Russian theme is one also heard in Mussorgsky's "Boris Godounov" as well as in various works by Rimsky-Korsakoff. Beethoven's inclusion of Russian folk tunes in the music in the score for both this quartet, and in the first quartet of this series, the F major, was probably at Rasumovsky's suggestion, but Beethoven's harmonizations remain typically Viennese. The animated tune is announced as a fugue with

textbook counterpoint. You will hear its long melody line and countersubjects passing among the four voices. As the music swells louder and the melody becomes more compacted, the fugue collapses into absurd canonic fragments. As Joseph Kerman has observed, "This does not sound as though the composer inserted the Russian tune as an urbane compliment to his Russian patron... [but as though] Beethoven is pile-driving it into the ground by way of revenge." No doubt Beethoven saw in the idea a unifying sequence for the series, as a motto theme was to inform his final essays in quartet form.

The exuberant, high-spirited *Finale* is symphonic in scale and begins in the 'wrong' key of C major, rather than the expected home key of E minor. This makes it sound initially as though Beethoven might have dropped it in from a different quartet. Listen for how he resolves this "mistake" by comically tossing a short musical fragment around the instruments achieving the harmonic transition as the rondo melody continues to return in C major. You will hear Beethoven also defy predictable anticipations by launching a lengthy development section and other elements of sonata form into the rondo. But the *Finale's* rhythmic vigor surmounts all these complexities, and the Quartet presses forward to a rousing conclusion.

—notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

# 59<sup>TH</sup> SEASON

## 2014-2015

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