



**HOPKINS CENTER
FOR THE ARTS**

presents

HOP Co-Commission

The Shanghai Quartet

Funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Artworks, with additional funding by the Frank L. Harrington 1924 Fund No. 3, the Sidney Stoneman 1933 Fund, and the Roesch Family Fund in Support of the Hopkins Center's Visiting Performing Artists Program.

Tue • Feb 5 • 7 pm

2019 • Spaulding Auditorium • Dartmouth College

Program

Weingang Li, violin
Yi-Wen Jiang, violin
Honggang Li, viola
Nicholas Tzavaras, cello

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4 Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Allegro di molto
Un poco Adagio affettuoso (Variations)
Menuetto (Allegretto alla Zingarese)
Presto (Scherzando)

Feng Ya Song (String Quartet No. 1, revised 2018) Tan Dun (1957–)
premiere performance

The 2018 Revised Edition of *Feng Ya Song* (String Quartet No. 1)
was made possible with the generous support of the
Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College for the Shanghai Quartet.

Intermission

String Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2 (“Razumovsky”) Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Allegro
Molto Adagio
Allegretto
Presto

Approximate duration: 100 minutes with 15-minute intermission

Program Notes

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4

Joseph Haydn

Composed in 1772, at the height of the *Sturm und Drang* period of Western European music and literature, the six string quartets that make up Haydn's opus 20 are a landmark of the genre and of music history. It was these quartets that gave Haydn the nickname "Father of the String Quartet." The vestiges of the old Baroque were long gone and the Galant style was the prevalent style among composers of the time—a style which focused on simplicity and clarity. Such intricate techniques as counterpoint fell into disuse in preference to a single melody unobscured by its harmonic accompaniment. Major keys were favored over minor ones as they were more adapted for the lighthearted quality of the Galant style. Finally, music of the period often was divisible into evenly constructed four- and eight-measure phrases.

Haydn's opus 20 changed all this forever. Perhaps taking his cue from the great philosophical and artistic trends that were spreading across Europe, Haydn wholly rejected the prim and proper etiquette of the Galant style. He returned to many of the hallmark techniques of the former Baroque era (such as fugue) but at the same time he forged a new method of composition that has influenced composers for the string quartet right up until modern times. Chief among his innovations was an equal balance among the four instruments. It was typical for the first violin or, on some occasions the second as well, to dominate the entire quartet melodically while the lower instruments simply provided harmonic support. Haydn, however, placed equal importance on each member of the quartet. If one part were omitted, it would certainly be missed and the whole would suffer. A corollary to the added importance of each part is a reinstatement of a contrapuntal form of writing. Whereas each of

the quartets displays a contrapuntal mindset in nearly every measure, it was Haydn's inclusion of such seemingly "dead" idioms as canon, melodic inversion and even fugue that solidified his wholesale rejection of Galant simplicity. Lastly, the structural innovations of Haydn's opus 20 cannot go unmentioned. In addition to the use of uneven phrases, the six quartets also show the first fruits of the modern sonata form.

Among the six quartets of opus 20, the fourth in D major is the best-known and has met with greater public admiration than its five siblings. Actually the fifth by composition order, the Quartet in D major opens with a pastoral first movement. The opening is reverent, yet imbued with fervent energy which manifests itself as the movement progresses. The first movement is also a wonderful example of Haydn's "false reprises." Multiple times through the course of the development section, Haydn alludes to a return of the sonata form's first theme, each time only to carry the development onward. When the recapitulation finally does make its appearance, it begins deceptively, not in the key of the tonic, but in that of the subdominant! The following movement, a theme and variations in D minor, is one of Haydn's most profound pieces. No doubt, it is surely a piece of supreme genius. One finds within its compass the intricacies of the Baroque era, the clearness of the Classical and a fascinating foreshadowing of the Romantic. Four variations follow the theme. Each instrument receives its turn in leading the ensemble—the second violin and viola together in the first variation, the cello in the second, and the first violin in the third.

Though titled "Menuetto," the third movement's only visible connection to the court dance is its triple meter. Marked "alla zingarese," the movement is actually a gypsy air. High and low instruments

Program Notes *continued*

play alternating accents, greatly confusing the location of the downbeat. In total contrast, the trio section, led by the cello, could not be more straightforward—as if the music was somehow immovably fixed to the bar lines. The fiery *Presto scherzando* finale continues in the gypsy spirit of the Menuetto. Flashy melodic lines and chromatic harmonies abound. The ending, however, is not as one might expect, though we should expect nothing less from Haydn.

*Courtesy of Joseph DuBose
www.classicalconnect.com*

Feng Ya Song Tan Dun

One of Tan Dun's first major works, the string quartet *Feng Ya Song* (String Quartet No. 1) was written while he was studying at Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music. It was awarded Second Prize at Dresden's Weber Awards, making him the first Chinese composer to win an international prize since 1949. The three words in the title represent folksongs, art songs/court music and ritual songs respectively, and are rooted in the Confucius Book of Songs. Weaving in a Yao folksong, Tan Dun takes on various folksong characteristics, interlacing in their microtonal inflections and linear construction, reorganizing them into a modern configuration. This type of blend, of Eastern and Western musical elements, would soon be declared a trait of the "New Wave" of Chinese composers. In 2018 Tan Dun was approached by the Shanghai Quartet to revisit the early work, previously unpublished internationally. The work has its US premier on February 5 at the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College. The 2018 Revised Edition of *Feng Ya Song* (String Quartet No. 1) was made possible with the generous support of the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College for the Shanghai Quartet.

Parnassus Productions, Inc.

String Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2 ("Razumovsky")

Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven's friend and student Carl Czerny reported that the second movement of the master's E minor string quartet, Op. 59 No. 2, was inspired by contemplation of the starry firmament and the music of the spheres. Increasingly alienated from quotidian society, hermetically trapped by his increasing deafness, Beethoven by 1808 considered that his artistic mission would be fulfilled only in conscious transcendence of the physical and the mundane. One can easily imagine how thoughts of the supernal music would feed his sense of awe, beauty and possibility in contrast with the earthly woes of mankind. A symbol of looking beyond, the *Molto adagio* evokes wonderment and songful rapture in its long, spun-out melodic arches and the radiance of its E major tonality. Alongside the sustained singing is an evocation of the rotating celestial spheres as a sort of musical clock, a mechanical ticking away underlying the pulchritudinous harmonies. This trochaic rhythm appears in multiple guises, both machine-like and human, ranging from objective to hyper-expressive and vulnerable. It is as if Beethoven cannot help being in awe at once of the infinite grandeur of it all and of the clockmaker himself, of the power and precision of creation.

The quartets of Op. 59 belong to the period of Beethoven's expanding forms, his experimentation with the creation of universes of his own. These are structured so as to cohere not organically but rather by design, labyrinthine explorations steered by conscious reasoning, a human counterpart to the music of the spheres. This quartet starts with a "Big Bang" of sorts, an abrupt starting of Time. The chords are as if to introduce a recitative, the entrance of a narrator, but instead open onto an

Program Notes *continued*

expectant silence. Twice into the vacuum come quantum fluctuations that self-annihilate almost as quickly as they appear. Silences sizzle with energy. There is little to hold on to, and yet the listener is captured. The attention-grabbing first two chords permeate the first movement, underpinning, punctuating and interrupting. The fleet main theme is as well an elaboration of this arresting motif. We hear it once, and then, after an intervening silence, once again, lifted up to a pitch level just above where we heard it first. In Op. 59 No. 2 he visits tangential worlds atop the tonic and the dominant, the two harmonic pillars of any key. The sense is often of escape, of being lifted out of the mortal sphere, stolen away from the weight of reality, perhaps in recognition of a presence beyond the material. The feeling of a complex narrative, with multiple rhetorical framings, digressions and suspenseful delays, flavors the first movement throughout. It is never in doubt that Beethoven is in control of how this story will be told, and the message is as much about the inherent power the narration has to liberate us as anything.

The Op. 59 group of quartets was commissioned by Beethoven's patron Count Razumovsky, and in honor of the Count's Russian heritage Beethoven included a Russian tune both in this quartet and in No. 1 of the group. Here the tune shows up in the trio section of the third movement, the central musical paragraph that is flanked by repetitions of the opening paragraph. As such it needs to be led into, and so Beethoven is put in the position of being a *Jeopardy!* champion; he must concoct the question whose answer is the already-given tune. He begins the scherzo with the same notes that stop the listener in his tracks at the opening of the whole piece, but now they launch into a precarious, teetering dance. In preparation for the revelation of the tune, Beethoven creates music

paradoxically both regular and terribly unstable. The only hint of stability in the main section comes where the music comes to harmonic stasis, and this is on the lifted harmony that we hear just at the start of the first movement, a suspended moment temporarily defying the gravity of the tonic. Most often classical quartets feature a contrasting key for the inner movements, a change of color palette. Here Beethoven works in monochrome, with each movement in the same key (or with the same tonic, whether major or minor) and thus there is a particularly potent sense of home. When the trio section is revealed it comes at first playfully, a gleeful release introduced by the inversion, or mirror image, of the first notes of the movement (and the piece). It eventually builds to clangorous cacophony.

The last movement announces itself abruptly and in the wrong key. Because we have never left E as a tonic it is clearly felt that the catapult of the C-major chord that propels us forward is at some distance from our destination. The main theme is introduced with a three-note motif rocketing upward—the same three notes found in the Russian tune we have just heard. The underlying rhythm of the movement may be recognized as the trochaic clock-maker rhythm from the slow movement, now energized and elevated to a gallop. The music is driven forward with fiery intensity and the possibility of transformation. At times only the three-note launching idea remains, thrown from part to part in opposition to the downward tug of the tonic. When the movement races forward into its coda the three-note rocket is abandoned, the reckoning reached. The music brutally plunges back into the singularity from which it was born. There is enormous strength in the return to minor, great dignity in the refusal to escape into contemplation of the beyond.

Mark Steinberg

About the Artists

The Shanghai Quartet, renowned for its passionate musicality, impressive technique and multicultural innovations, has become one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles. Its elegant style melds the delicacy of Eastern music with the emotional breadth of Western repertoire, allowing it to traverse musical genres including traditional Chinese folk music, masterpieces of Western music and cutting-edge contemporary works.

Formed at the Shanghai Conservatory in 1983, the Quartet has worked with the world's most distinguished artists and regularly tours the major music centers of Europe, North America and Asia. Recent festival performances range from the International Music Festivals of Seoul and Beijing to the Festival Pablo Casals in France and the Beethoven Festival in Poland, as well as numerous concerts in all regions of North America. The Quartet has appeared at Carnegie Hall in chamber performances and with orchestra; in 2006 they gave the premiere of Takuma Itoh's *Concerto for Quartet and Orchestra* in Isaac Stern Auditorium. Among innumerable collaborations with noted artists, they have performed with the Tokyo, Juilliard and Guarneri Quartets, cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Lynn Harrell, pianists Menahem Pressler, Peter Serkin, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Yuja Wang, pipa virtuoso Wu Man and the vocal ensemble Chanticleer. The Shanghai Quartet has been a regular performer at many of North America's leading chamber music festivals, including Maverick Concerts where they recently made their 28th consecutive annual appearance.

The Quartet has a long history of championing new music and juxtaposing traditions of Eastern and Western music. With more than 30 commissioned works, their recent premieres include Du Yun's *Tattooed in Snow* (2015), Zhao Lin's *Red Lantern*

(2015) for pipa and string quartet, and String Quartet No. 12, *Fantasia notturna*, by William Bolcom (2017). The Quartet's 30th-anniversary season in 2013 brought five new commissions: *Bullycide* by David Del Tredici; *Fantasia* by Australian composer Carl Vine; a concerto for string quartet and symphony orchestra by Jeajoon Ryu; *Verge Quartet* by Lei Liang; and *Scherzo* by Robert Aldridge, commissioned by Yu Long and the Beijing Music Festival. The Quartet's 25th-anniversary season featured commission works by Penderecki (*String Quartet No. 3: Leaves From an Unwritten Diary*), Chen Yi (*From the Path of Beauty*), Vivian Fung and jazz pianist Dick Hyman. The Penderecki quartet was premiered at the composer's 75th-birthday concert, followed by numerous performances worldwide. They performed it again at the composer's 80th-birthday celebration and for his 85th-birthday concert in November 2018 where the Shanghai Quartet performed String Quartets Nos. 2, 3 and 4 at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Chen Yi's *From the Path of Beauty*, co-commissioned with Chanticleer, premiered in San Francisco, with performances at Tanglewood and Ravinia, Beijing and Shanghai. Other important commissions and premieres include works by Bright Sheng, Lowell Lieberman, Sebastian Currier, Marc Neikrug and Zhou Long. The tradition continues during the Quartet's 35th-anniversary season with Tan Dun's revised *Feng Ya Song* (String Quartet No. 1) and a forthcoming work by Wang Lei.

The Shanghai Quartet has an extensive discography of more than 30 recordings, ranging from the Schumann and Dvorak piano quintets with Rudolf Buchbinder to Zhou Long's *Poems from Tang* for string quartet and orchestra with the Singapore Symphony (BIS). Delos released the Quartet's most popular disc, *Chinasong*, a collection of Chinese folk songs arranged by Yi-Wen Jiang reflecting on

About the Artists *continued*

his childhood memories of the Cultural Revolution in China. The complete Beethoven String Quartets, a highly praised, seven-disc project, can be heard on an acclaimed Camerata set, released in 2009.

A diverse and interesting array of media projects include a cameo appearance playing Bartok's String Quartet No. 4 in Woody Allen's film *Melinda and Melinda* and PBS television's *Great Performances* series. Violinist Weigang Li appeared in the documentary *From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China*, and the family of cellist Nicholas Tzavaras was the subject of the film *Music of the Heart*, starring Meryl Streep. The Shanghai Quartet is the subject of a documentary film, *Behind the Strings*, currently in production, to be released in 2019.

The Shanghai Quartet perform on four exceptional instruments by Goffriller, Guarneri and Stradivari, generously loaned through the Beare's International Violin Society to honor the quartet's 35th anniversary. The instruments will be featured in eight cycles of the complete Beethoven String Quartets throughout the world. The Shanghai Quartet currently serves as Quartet-in-Residence at the John J. Cali School of Music, Montclair State University in New Jersey, Ensemble-in-Residence with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and visiting guest professors of the Shanghai Conservatory and the Central Conservatory in Beijing. They are proudly sponsored by Thomastik-Infeld Strings and BAM Cases.

Connecting Artists to the Community

While at Dartmouth, the Shanghai Quartet visited a class in Dartmouth's Department of Music, taught master classes at the Upper Valley Music Center, and will participate in a post-performance discussion. For more information about Hop Outreach and Arts Education programs, call 603-646-2010 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach.

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Upcoming Events



Deirdre Brenner, piano & Sarah Nelson Craft, mezzo-soprano

Wed • Mar 6 • 7 pm

Celebrated Dartmouth alum performers collaborate on a program of German *lieder*, American art songs and other works reflecting on the beauty and abundance of the natural landscape.



The English Concert Handel's *Semele*

Wed • Apr 10 • 7 pm

Handel's sparkling opera of divine lust and rage, by a premiere Baroque orchestra joined by stellar soloists.



Mitsuko Uchida, piano

Thu • Apr 25 • 7 pm

A great Schubert interpreter reveals the composer's unforced lyricism, emotional depth and technical brilliance, playing three of his piano sonatas.



For tickets or more info, call the Box Office at 603.646.2422 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu. Share your experiences! #HopkinsCenter



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