

# **Hopkins Center for the Arts**

at Dartmouth

presents

## **Chamberworks Arka Quartet**

Letitia Quante, violin

Brooke Quiggins Saulnier, violin

Stefanie Taylor, viola

John Dunlop, cello

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*ChamberWorks is a series of free concerts presented by the Hop and the Dartmouth Department of Music, showcasing the talent of faculty and special guests, and is made possible by support from the Griffith Fund.*

**Sun, Nov 3, 1 pm**

2019 • Top of the Hop • Dartmouth College

# Program

## Dark Horses

String Quartet in C Major “The Bird,” Op. 33, No. 3

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

I. Allegro moderato

II. Scherzando

III. Adagio

IV. Rondo: Presto

Spider Dreams

David Balakrishnan (1954– )

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

I. Animé et très décidé

II. Assez vif et bien rythmé

III. Andantino, doucement expressif

IV. Très modéré – Très mouvementé et avec passion

# Program Notes

**Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)**

**Quartet in C major, op. 33, no. 3 “The Bird”**

For almost a decade the usually prolific Haydn produced no string quartets, a medium, along with the symphony, to which his paternity is ascribed, with 83 quartets to his credit. In 1781, when he returned to composing in this medium, he produced a six-pack of quartets. (Both Mozart and Haydn were given to writing string quartets in groups of six. In fact, these quartets would be the inspiration for Mozart’s “Haydn” quartets.) These works, Op. 33, Nos. 1–6, have become collectively known as the “Russian Quartets” as they were dedicated to the then Grand Duke Paul of Russia, the future Tsar Paul II.

They were also known as “Gli scherzi” or “the scherzos” due to their replacing with the scherzo the minuet movement typical to earlier quartets. However, the scherzo in the work to be heard today hardly fits the profile. It is also possible that the nickname might refer to the light-hearted quality of the quartets as a whole. It should also be noted that during the nine years in which he composed no string quartets, Haydn was chiefly concerned with composing comic operas for the Esterhazy court. Could this have influenced the writing of these quartets named “Gli scherzi”?

Haydn scholar Karl Geiringer in his book *Haydn: A Creative Life in Music* writes: “The string quartet had been abandoned temporarily, probably because Haydn felt that further progress along the lines established in his Op.20 was impossible. In the fugue movements of the ‘Sun’ quartets, a strong concentration of both form and content had been attained, but in time this sort of solution seemed too radical to him and not in conformity with the spirit of the string quartet. The progressive Haydn was not satisfied to use an antiquated contrapuntal form of the baroque period in the young string quartet. He wanted unification and concentration, but not knowing how to achieve them adequately, he renounced the compositions of string quartets for the

time being and it was not until nine years later that he found a solution to his problem.

“The ‘Russian’ quartets, which according to Haydn himself, were written ‘in an entirely new and particular manner,’ raised the principle of ‘thematic elaboration’ to the status of a main stylistic feature. Haydn had used thematic elaboration—a method of dissecting the subjects of the exposition and then developing and reassembling the resulting fragments in an unexpected manner—in his earlier works, but never with such logic and determination. Henceforth this device, combined with modulations, ruled the development sections of the sonata form.”

Furthermore, Geiringer informs us that “in the Russian quartets, all instruments as a matter of course were given equal shares in the melodic work. Even the accompanying and purely filling parts were based on motives taken from the main subjects.”

He writes: “Haydn exercised wise economy in using the sonata form only in the first movements of the ‘Russian’ quartets. The slow movements are mainly in three-part (romanza) form, with a contrasting middle part instead of development, whereas in the finales there is a return to the rondo form” (recall that for the finales of the ‘Sun’ quartets, Op. 20 he taken to using fugues instead).

As for the innovation of scherzo movements replacing the traditional minuet movements, Geiringer warns us not to take this too seriously. “An analysis of these pieces shows that the change is limited to the name of the movement and does not affect its character.”

The quartet to be heard today, No. 3, the fourth to be composed, is also the best known of the set. In a set of quartets plagued with too many nicknames, this quartet has yet its own: “The Bird.” Nothing to do with obscene gestures, or musicians biting the heads off live doves, the name arose most likely from the

# Program Notes *continued*

chirruping grace note figure in the first movement or perhaps the violin duet which forms the trio of the scherzo. Following the lovely third movement adagio, is the lively, humorous, rondo, bursting with colorful themes that resemble Central European folk music. Haydn was the master of combining and juxtaposing music of the court with music of the country.

Incidentally, Op. 33 was the first set of quartets to have the designation “quartetti.” Previous to this, all of his string quartets, including Op.20 had the designation “divertimentos.” It is said that some or all six of the quartets were premiered on Christmas Day in Vienna, in the apartment of Grand Duke Paul’s wife, Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna, a piano pupil of Haydn.

*Joseph Way*

## **David Balakrishnan (b.1954)**

### **Spider Dreams**

When my daughter Selena was very young, she had a series of nightmares she called her “Spider Dreams.” She would come upstairs into our bedroom in the middle of the night, tell me these terrifying visions she had, then curl up at the foot of our bed and go to sleep, while I stayed awake worrying about her. During that time, I was experimenting with modifying one of the “double-shuffles” used in fiddle tune classics like Beaumont Rag and the Orange Blossom Special. The result had a menacing quality which reminded me of the alien terror so vivid in a child’s dreams.”

*David Balakrishnan*

## **Claude Debussy (1862–1918)**

### **String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10**

Debussy was a child prodigy (he attended Paris Conservatoire when he was ten years old) and a revolutionary, and his string quartet, like Schoenberg’s Transfigured Night, stands at the threshold of a new era in expression; art was on the move at the end of the 19th Century.

Influenced by sources as disparate as French composer Cesar Franck, Javanese Gamelan Music, the poet Stéphane Mallarmé and Impressionist painters Monet and Whistler, Debussy was the first to explicitly use color as a thematic device, and by “color” I mean musical color, also perhaps known as timbre. That’s difficult to describe in words but maybe a food analogy will serve: if composers since the classical era had developed themes just as chefs tweak recipes with herbs or spices, Debussy’s sensual and subtle music transformed the basic ingredients into new dishes in one way familiar, yes, but something completely different nonetheless.

In the same way, Debussy ties all four movements together in the quartet with many of the same themes but paints them in such different colors as to make them almost unrecognizable. This was a new approach to developing a theme and the final departure from the classical tradition of separate movements, unrelated thematically. The first movement switches back and forth between the earthy yet sternly controlled opening and the light-as-air second melody with its breezy underlying accompaniment. The second movement is a scherzo of sorts. Scherzo means “joke” in Italian but here it is serious fun, with a quick middle section reminding one of dappled light seen through leaves on a hot summer day. The third movement starts as a long, languid exhale followed by a priest-like plainchant (in the viola) that leads to long and sad and increasingly impassioned melodies, redolent of nostalgia and conjuring distant memories of endless summers. The last movement starts with a declamation by the cello, strong and paternal, which, turning a corner, reveals an idling locomotive that departs and drives to the end. Whereas Piazzola was to push the instruments to their physical limits with wood thumps, itchy behind-the-bridge squawks, and Alfred Hitchcock *Psycho* shower-scene glissandi, Debussy pushes the instruments to their spiritual limits of expressivity.

*David Yang, Newburyport Chamber Music Festival*

# About the Artists

**Letitia Quante** started violin with the Suzuki method. She studied with David Einfeldt at Hartt Music School and performed in Australia, Japan, Belgium, France and Alice Tully and Carnegie Halls in New York. At age 11 she entered Juilliard pre-college, studying with Louise Behrend. She also minored in conducting until she graduated at age 15. She worked as a violinist, was apprentice conductor to the NY Youth Symphony, and completed her Suzuki teacher training at School for Strings. Resuming her studies at the Peabody Conservatory, Quante completed her BMA with full scholarship and stipend, studying with Victor Danchenko. While living in Maryland, she played principal with Mid-Atlantic Symphony and assistant concertmaster with Lancaster Symphony, and concertized both as a soloist and chamber musician with other ensembles in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. She has performed with diverse musicians such as Mikhail Kopelman, Leon Fleisher, Eugene Drucker, Phil Setzer, Sarah Chang, Kanye West, Bajofondo and Natalia Lafourcade. She has also performed with Singapore Symphony, New World Symphony, Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas and the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra.

Since moving to Vermont in 2012, Quante performs with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, as concertmaster for Vermont Philharmonic Orchestra, Burlington Chamber Orchestra, Middlebury Opera, and with Vermont Virtuosi. She also really enjoys playing with her piano trio Stellaria with Claire Black and John Dunlop. New and exciting this year is her string quartet Arka, with Brooke Quiggins, Stefanie Taylor and John Dunlop. Though they have performed for several years together for the acclaimed VSO's Jukebox series, this will be their first year also embarking on individual programs around the area as the Arka Quartet. Quante is playing on an 1840 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume on generous loan from Vermont Violins.

**Brooke Quiggins Saulnier**, born in Nashville, Tennessee, began her violin studies at age 5. She has

performed in recitals and concerts throughout the United States and Europe and has won top honors in numerous solo and chamber music competitions. She held the Principal Second Violin position in the Miami Symphony Orchestra, Ridgefield Symphony, Reading Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas for several years. Saulnier currently performs with TURNMusic, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and the VSO's Jukebox Quartet. Saulnier can be heard on the Sony Classical, Naxos, Columbia Records, Blue Note and Universal record labels and has been featured in several movies and television spots. Besides her orchestral work, Saulnier is also well versed in new and genre-bending chamber music, and was previously the second violinist in Osso, a string quartet created by Sufjan Stevens and Bryce Dessner (The National). She has also performed, collaborated and/or recorded with Gloria Estefan, John Legend, My Brightest Diamond, Sufjan Stevens, Young the Giant, Banda Magda and Aretha Franklin, to name a few. Brooke received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the Manhattan School of Music under the private direction of Sylvia Rosenberg and Lucie Robert.

**Stefanie Taylor** is the assistant principal violist of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, and violist for the orchestra's Juke Box Quartet. She has been principal violist of both Middlebury Opera and Green Mountain Opera, and has led the Burlington Chamber Orchestra as concertmaster. She has performed with the Craftsbury Chamber Players, Vermont Virtuosi, Williams Chamber Players, the Manchester Music Festival, Capital City Concerts and Burlington Ensemble.

In nearly twenty years in New York, Taylor performed frequently with the New York Philharmonic and as guest principal violist of the American Symphony, and in ensembles including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. She premiered several chamber works in venues including Merkin Hall, Roulette and Miller Theater, and performed live on WQXR.

# About the Artists *continued*

Taylor teaches violin and viola at the Middlebury Community Music Center, is Artistic Director of the Manchester and the Mountains Chamber Music Workshop, and is on the faculty of Berkshire Summer Music. She completed Suzuki teacher training at the School for Strings in New York.

A graduate of Indiana University and SUNY Stony Brook, Taylor studied violin with Miriam Fried, viola with Caroline Levine, and chamber music with Julius Levine and Tim Eddy. She was a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center, the Steans Institute at Ravinia, and Villa Musica (Germany).

**John Dunlop** has been playing and teaching cello in Vermont for over 30 years. Raised in Burlington, he received degrees from Oberlin College and the San Francisco Conservatory before returning to join the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, where he has

played as principal cellist for almost twenty years. As a founding member of both the VSO Jukebox Quartet and the TURN ensemble, Dunlop has been an advocate for new music and performs both classical and contemporary music in unconventional venues, reaching out to both veteran music lovers and younger audiences. He has performed with such popular entertainers as Bernadette Peters, Lyle Lovett, Trey Anastasio and Lucius. In addition, he has scored and performed several award-winning short films, performing on cello, guitar and bouzouki. Dunlop has also performed extensively as principal cellist with the Burlington Chamber Orchestra, Eleva Chamber Players, Opera North, Opera Company of Middlebury and Green Mountain Opera. He teaches cello at Dartmouth College as well as maintaining a private studio in Richmond, Vermont, where he has trained several generations of conservatory-bound students.

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