

# **Hopkins Center for the Arts**

at Dartmouth

presents

## **Juilliard String Quartet**

Areta Zhulla, violin

Ronald Copes, violin

Roger Tapping, viola

Astrid Schween, cello

**Friday, November 5, 7:30 pm**

**2021 • Spaulding Auditorium • Dartmouth College**

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# Program

Ainsi la nuit (18')  
String Quartet Op. 96 (26')

Henri Dutilleux  
Antonín Dvořák

## Intermission (15 minutes)

String Quartet Op. 130 (45')

Ludwig van Beethoven

Juilliard String Quartet is represented by Colbert Artists Management, Inc.  
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# Program Notes

**Ainsi la nuit**, Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013)

Duration: 18 minutes  
Composed: 1973-1976

Henri Dutilleux's work for string quartet, *Ainsi la nuit*, was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation for the Juilliard String Quartet. Before starting on the actual composition, Dutilleux spent some time studying the intricacies of string-playing techniques of the time, including Beethoven Bartók as well as Webern's Six Bagatelles. After making a series of sketches in which he practiced writing for string quartet, the composer sent three completed pieces to the Juilliard Quartet in 1974. These pieces, entitled *Nuits*, have musical material which was later used in the final version of *Ainsi la nuit*. Dutilleux completed

*Ainsi la nuit* in 1976 and the work in its final form was premiered by the Parrenin Quartet on January 6, 1977. The Juilliards gave the American première of the piece in Washington, D.C., on April 13, 1978.

The piece is based on a series of studies which focus on different aspects of sound production: pizzicatos, harmonics, dynamics, contrasts, opposition of register. It is built from a single hexachord that contains the notes C# - G# - F - G - C - D, thus highlighting the intervals of fifth and major second. This chord constitutes the basis from which the whole string quartet is derived. The octatonic mode is also used extensively throughout the work.

*Ainsi la nuit* displays progressive growth, a technique frequently used by Dutilleux, through which musical

motifs can both recall music that was heard in earlier sections or hint at music that will be fully developed in later movements. Other techniques that are typical of Dutilleux can be found in the work such as fan-shaped phrases, a modal quality reminiscent of Gregorian chant as well as the highlighting of tonal triads in an atonal context.

The work is in seven interrelated movements played without a break

Nocturne  
Miroir d'espace  
Litanies  
Litanies II  
Constellations  
Nocturne II  
Temps suspendu

**String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96, B. 179, "American", Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)**

Composed: 1893

Premiere: January 1, 1894. Boston. Kneisel Quartet

Allegro ma non troppo  
Lento  
Molto vivace  
Vivace ma non troppo

Antonín Dvořák was the most prolific chamber music composer of the late nineteenth century. He wrote numerous excellent works in every standard form as well as for novel ensembles. His natural and seemingly effortless proclivity for chamber music resulted in a body of work that was unusual for a composer of the Romantic period, a time in which the exploration of large forces, extra-musical programs and expansive, subjective forms had little to do with this intimate and formalized genre most associated with the Classical era. It was characteristic of his time for Dvořák to express his musical nationalism; strong elements of

his native Bohemian (i.e. Czech or Slavonic) folk music appear in his music in the dance and narrative forms of the furiant and the dumka respectively. But despite such general influences of form, rhythm and mood, Dvořák's music was always entirely original, characteristic and, by the standards of the best chamber music, masterful. Though he was not a pioneer, his music has a freshness, a clarity of texture and a bounty of dramatic lyricism that makes it original.

Dvořák's best known works date from the 1890s during his three-year sojourn to America where he served as director of the National Conservatory in New York. They include the New World Symphony, the Viola Quintet and the "American" String Quartet. Dvořák encountered American folk music in the form of Native-American drumming and African-American spirituals, the latter of which he regarded as profoundly original music that might serve as a basis for a national style. Many find strong influences of both genres in Dvořák's own "American" compositions while others claim that his music is entirely consistent with his own European folk and classical traditions. Dvořák himself denied that he intentionally incorporated any American elements. Nonetheless, the "American" String Quartet in particular bears the stamp of the time and place of its composition.

Ironically, Dvořák composed the American quartet while on holiday in the predominantly Bohemian farming community of Spillville, Iowa. A spirit of relaxation, and perhaps joyful homecoming, inspired him to swiftly compose the quartet within a few weeks. Flowing, spacious, and bright, the music seems to reflect his disposition, if not, as some claim, the expanse of the American plains. The most pervasive aspect of the quartet supporting these qualities, as well as reflecting Dvořák's general preoccupation with folk idioms, is the use of the pentatonic or five-note scale: nearly every primary and secondary theme throughout the quartet uses a form of it. Common in

## Program Notes *continued*

folk music around the world, the pentatonic scale omits the semitones found at the 4th and the 7th degrees of the more common classical scale yielding a specific quality of broadness, stability and a lack of tension (even in a minor key). Whatever influences or expressive intentions lay behind this choice, it imbues the quartet with a personality and a continuity that is distinctive and strongly evocative. The most particular trace of the quartet's rural, American origin, however, is birdsong. The third movement Scherzo features the song of the Scarlet Tanager, a bird that Dvořák heard and transcribed while hiking the countryside. After an initial statement of a sprightly, rustic theme, the first violin sings the birdsong high in the treble range. The instantaneous evocation of dance, the outdoors and the piercing simplicity of nature's own music define a pure moment of folk music as high art.

### **String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat major, Op. 130,** Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Adagio ma non troppo - Allegro

Presto

Andante con moto, ma non troppo

Alla danza tedesca. Allegro Assai

Cavatina. Adagio molto espressivo

Finale: Allegro

Duration: 40 minutes (approximately)

Composed: 1825-1826 (age 54-56)

Premiere: April 22, 1827. Vienna, Musikvereinsaal

Note: Original version (1825), with Große Fuge, Op.133 as finale. New finale added 1825-26.

Beethoven's last string quartets were composed during the final years of his life between 1824 and 1826. The project began in 1822 with a commission from Russian Prince Nicholas Galitzin, an amateur cellist who requested "one, two or three" string quartets. Once Beethoven began work in earnest, he turned out not one, two or three, but five massive

string quartets that ultimately become six separate works known simply and profoundly as "Beethoven's Late Quartets" in accordance with division of his artistry into three phases, early, middle and late. For decades, these quartets were regarded by most as strange, difficult, anomalous, quite possibly the work of a once great composer now degenerated into a deafness and insanity. (Schubert, Mendelssohn and Schumann thought differently). It was not until the 20th century that the late quartets became widely regarded as profound and transcendent masterworks worthy of entering and if not becoming the apex of the traditional repertoire.

The third of the late quartets in the order Beethoven composed them, the String Quartet in B-flat Major Op. 130 was completed in its first version in November of 1825 (about six months before Schubert's quartet in G). Beethoven and his publisher surprisingly came to agree that the finale did not sit well with the rest of the quartet movements. A bristling, difficult fugue of epic proportions was deemed "too much." The fugue was detached henceforth as a separate opus and Beethoven composed a fresh, much lighter finale to complete Op. 130 in its revised, final version. Beethoven completed the new finale in November, 1826 (after Schubert's quartet in G). It was the very last piece of music Beethoven wrote. He died shortly after in March, 1827.

Like nearly all of Beethoven's late quartets, Op. 130 can be approached in many ways. Without regard to the well-established elite tradition of quartet form, style and expression, Op. 130 presents a surface beauty, technical facility and rich emotional aspect that can't fail to strike a casual listener as truly lovely music with profound tendencies. But seen within a framework of traditional works by Haydn and Mozart, Op. 130 is, like the other late quartets, a very odd and possibly incomprehensible departure. Herein lies one origin of the term "difficult" applied to these late works as in "difficult to follow" compared to the

rhetorical conventions of the time. But surely another meaning behind the term “difficult” is the emotional demands they make, the deep states of feeling they induce. Throughout the late quartets, one finds extreme emotional states that can, at times, be “difficult” to endure because they are simply so intense and effective.

Op. 130, particularly in its original form, is truly an odd duck from a conventional perspective. Rather than the traditional four movements, it has six. Of the six, two of the movements are almost laughably short while the original fugal finale was outrageously long and truly “difficult” in every possible sense of the word. The fourth movement is a triple meter German dance with a trio of a rustic character but the second movement is also clearly a scherzo of ternary design. Two scherzi? Although the opening movement appears to be in a rather straightforward sonata form (it is far more), the fifth movement is a basic operatic cavatina of surprisingly simple design with an indescribably haunting character nonetheless. The musicologist Michael Steinberg suggests that to the listeners of the day, this must have seemed like a miscellany of movements, more like a divertimento or

suite than a string quartet. Musicologist Leonard Ratner provides a convincing analysis that Beethoven was indeed intentionally invoking an antique form of suite complete with Renaissance canzona, a march, an aria and a gigue, a design that practically renders the Grosse Fugue an inextricable part of a grand design.

All of this only reinforces the essential fact that Beethoven was an undaunted pioneer and artistic visionary who created, particularly in the late quartets, truly complicated works of high art that speak on many levels lending themselves to multiple if not infinite interpretations and reactions. They are indescribably compelling works that have mesmerized players, composers, scholars, poets and avid listeners for nearly 200 years. Perhaps one of their most essential traits is that they can become as “difficult” as one wishes or, miraculously, as direct, simple and obvious as one’s willingness to hear and feel. It is entirely your own prerogative to “understand” them as you can and as you will. It is a project worthy of a lifetime.

*Lee Prinz*

## About the Juilliard String Quartet

With unparalleled artistry and enduring vigor, the **Juilliard String Quartet** (JSQ) continues to inspire audiences around the world. Founded in 1946 and hailed by *The Boston Globe* as “the most important American quartet in history,” the ensemble draws on a deep and vital engagement to the classics, while embracing the mission of championing new works, a vibrant combination of the familiar and the daring.

Each performance of the Juilliard String Quartet is a unique experience, bringing together the four members’ profound understanding, total commitment and unceasing curiosity in sharing the wonders of the string quartet literature.

Adding to its celebrated discography, an album of works by Beethoven, Bartók and Dvořák was released

## About the Juilliard String Quartet *continued*

by Sony Classical in April 2021 to critical acclaim. Additionally, Sony Masterworks released a JSQ catalog release (The Early Recordings) in May 2021. In the fall of 2018, the JSQ released an album on Sony featuring the world premiere recording of Mario Davidovsky's Fragments (2016), together with Beethoven's Quartet Op. 95 and Bartók's Quartet No. 1. Additionally, Sony Classical's 2014 reissue of the Juilliard Quartet's landmark recordings of the first four Elliott Carter String Quartets along with the 2013 recording of Carter's fifth quartet traces a remarkable period in the evolution of both the composer and the ensemble. The quartet's recordings of the Bartók and Schoenberg Quartets, as well as those of Debussy, Ravel and Beethoven, have won Grammy Awards, and in 2011 the JSQ became the first classical music ensemble to receive a lifetime achievement award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

The 2021-2022 season will mark the Juilliard String Quartet's 75th Anniversary which will include

performances in cities such as New York, Toronto, San Francisco, Detroit and Cincinnati as well as an extensive European tour including stops in Berlin, Prague, Geneva, Lucerne and Amsterdam. A special highlight of the season will be the premiere of two string quartets by celebrated German composer Jörg Widmann to perform alongside late quartets by Beethoven.

Devoted master teachers, the members of the Juilliard String Quartet offer classes and open rehearsals when on tour. The JSQ is string quartet in residence at Juilliard and its members are all sought-after teachers on the string and chamber music faculties. Each May, they host the five-day internationally recognized Juilliard String Quartet Seminar. During the summer, the JSQ works closely on string quartet repertoire with students at the Tanglewood Music Center.

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