

Programmes | 2021/2022

Tribute to Stravinsky | 50 years after his death

John Cage (1912-1992)	from "String quartet in four parts": Quietly Flowing Along
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	Concertino (for string quartet)
John Cage (1912-1992)	from "String quartet in four parts": Quodlibet
Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377)	"Quant en moy" (Motet)
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914), I
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)	Polka (1931)
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914), II
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)	Ave Maria in B minor (1880)
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914), III
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	Anthem "The Dove Descending Breaks the Air"

Carlo Gesualdo di Venosa (1566-1613)	Tres Sacrae Cantiones (arr. for strings Igor Stravinsky)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)	String quartet in F major No. 16 Op. 135
	or
Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)	String quartet in F minor Op. 20 No. 5 Hob.III:35

The Three Pieces for String Quartet will each be prefaced by a reading (on tape) of the poem Stravinsky Three Pieces, 'Grotesques' for string quartet by Amy Lowell (1874-1925).

At this moment in time, a half century after the death of the great composer Igor Stravinsky, we offer a programme that celebrates his strikingly original and gripping works for string quartet and provides a framework within which to experience them afresh. The pieces in the first half are arranged in a kind of kaleidoscopic collage, with reflections and internal dialogues between the short works and movements. Stravinsky's *Concertino* keeps quirky company with two movements of Cage which share with it some musical DNA. The *Three Pieces for String Quartet* each have a companion, each pair trafficking in similar issues. The first piece is paired with Machaut and its interlocking patterns; the second, inspired by Little Tich, an English music-hall clown, is heard alongside the Shostakovich Polka, which dances also in awkward and comic fashion; the liturgical-style third piece is heard alongside the *Ave Maria* of Verdi, whom Stravinsky so admired. Each of these pieces is also prefaced by a reading of an Amy Lowell poem inspired by the *Three Pieces* which aims to "reproduce the sound and movement of the music as far as is possible in another medium." A textless string quartet reading of a haunting choral anthem by Stravinsky rounds out the first half.

After intermission we play three Gesualdo madrigals, all of which Stravinsky, whose great enthusiasm for Gesualdo brought him back into the public consciousness, chose to arrange for orchestra. The ending work, Beethoven's final string quartet, Op. 135, is arguably the closest of the Beethoven quartets to Stravinsky's mosaic-like textures and utterly clear textures, with a notable pre-echo of the *Three Pieces* in the quartet's scherzo.

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30 years Brentano String Quartet

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)	String quartet Op. 71 No. 2 Hob III:70 in D major
Bruce Adolphe (*1955)	“ContraDiction - a reaction to Bach’s Art of the Fugue, Contrapunctus No. 2” for string quartet <i>Commissioned by the Brentano String Quartet for their 10th anniversary</i>
Steven Mackey (*1956)	“Lude” (2002) for string quartet <i>Commissioned by the Brentano String Quartet for their 10th anniversary</i> <i>or in place of Adolphe and Mackey</i>
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) ***	Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914)
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	String quartet in G major Op. 161 D 887

Having started making music thirty years ago, as optimistic and eager young musicians with a great love for string quartets, we’ve since grown up together as artists and as people. It continues to be a rare joy and privilege to play this compelling, beautiful and probing repertoire together, and to share our investigations into these works with audiences. The programme starts with the same piece with which we started our very first concert together in 1992. I still remember the excitement, the great hope, and the great privilege I felt playing this music with people I love. All of that persists thirty years later, and it is a delight to share this wonderful and not so known Haydn quartet again with our listeners. We follow that with two works we commissioned as part of a tenth anniversary project celebrating Bach and composers of our time. On this program, we play two of the fugues from Bach’s Art of Fugue (a piece we’ve spent a lot of time with as part of two very special projects) alongside two works commenting on Bach by Bruce Adolphe and Steven Mackey, two composers with whom we’ve worked since the very beginning. (In fact, the second piece on our very first concert was the world premiere of Bruce’s String Quartet No. 2!)

After intermission, we share the great final quartet of Schubert, a work we’ve lived with, pondered, and loved for decades, and to which we’re thrilled to return. All of it makes us glad for our very rich past as well as full of eager anticipation for our continued conversations into the future.