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Terra String Quartet

March 9, 2025 • Congregation Beth Shalom

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THE 2025 FENTON BROWN EMERGING ARTISTS CONCERT

Harriet Langley, *violin*
Amelia Dietrich, *violin*
Chih-Ta Chen, *viola*
Audrey Chen, *cello*

PROGRAM

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 71,
No. 2, Hob.III: 70, "Apponyi"

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

- I. Adagio – Allegro*
- II. Adagio cantabile*
- III. Menuetto: Allegro*
- IV. Finale: Allegretto*

String Quartet in F Major

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

- I. Allegro Moderato – très doux*
- II. Assez vif – Très rythmé*
- III. Très lent*
- IV. Vif et agité*

~ INTERMISSION ~

String Quartet No. 9 in C Major, Op. 59,
No. 3, "Razumovsky"

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Andante con moto – Allegro vivace*
- II. Andante con moto quasi allegretto*
- III. Minuetto: Grazioso – Trio*
- IV. Allegro Molto*

Program Notes

by Barbara Leish

Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet in D Major, Op. 71, No. 2, Hob.III: 70, “Apponyi” (1793)

The three works on today’s program demonstrate the rich possibilities when four stringed instruments play together. Each of the composers breaks new ground, beginning with Haydn, who for the first time wrote string quartets that treated all four instruments equally rather than as accompaniments for solo violin.

Haydn served for nearly three decades as Kapellmeister in the Hungarian court of the wealthy, music-loving Esterhazy princes. His prodigious output during those years included dozens of string quartets. While his earliest quartets reflected the Rococo conventions of the time – bright, charming, ornamented works that tended to feature accompanied melodies – over his years with the Esterhazys he played a major role in transforming the genre, writing dozens of increasingly inventive, technically complex, emotionally wide-ranging quartets in the emerging Viennese Classical style. By the time the Esterhazys dissolved their musical establishment in 1790, Haydn had become a beloved figure, influential in shaping the musical tastes of his day. But he was far from finished. The

violinist and impresario Johann Salomon invited Haydn to London, where for the first time he heard his string quartets performed in a public concert hall, by trained musicians, in front of listeners who paid to get in. For Haydn it was an eye-opener. When he returned to Vienna and began the six string quartets commissioned by Count Anton Apponyi, his new perspective was evident. These are bold, expressive, richly textured, technically demanding works that are big enough to fill a space considerably larger than a drawing room.

The D Major Quartet on today’s program begins with a familiar Haydn gesture: an attention-getting chord that signals the music is about to begin. After a short opener that sets the stage for the dramatic contrasts to come, the Adagio segues into a wonderfully energetic Allegro, whose main theme is “a rich and complex contrapuntal elaboration of an octave leap” as Charles Rosen describes it. There’s a sprightly second theme that’s a good example of Haydn’s gift for writing popular melodies. And there are plenty of brilliant runs, especially for the first violin. The development is compact, the recapitulation’s return seamless in this tightly structured movement. Throughout the movement, runs and octaves pass conversationally from one instrument to another – another familiar Haydn technique. In a smile-inducing close, the Allegro ends as it began, with rising octaves leaps. The leisurely, lush Adagio Cantabile is harmonically adventurous, its explorations suggesting to many listeners the heightened, expressive style-to-come of Romanticism. In contrast, the emphatically rhythmic Minuet is built from the lively octave-leap motives of the first movement. The Finale brings more surprises: The character of the infectious

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melody with which Haydn opens the Allegretto changes as the movement shifts to Allegro, with all four instruments dashing together to a brilliant conclusion.

Haydn took the Apponyi quartets with him when he returned for a second visit to London, where they were given public performances. They were published in 1795 in two parts: the first three as Op. 71, and last three as Op. 74.

Maurice Ravel: String Quartet in F Major (1902-03)

Ravel was a musical revolutionary who showed his gifts at an early age. He was born in the Basque region of France, and although his family moved to Paris when he was an infant, he retained a lifelong interest in Basque music. At the age of 14 he entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he spent the next fourteen years. During that period he studied composition with Fauré, attracted public attention with breakthrough works like “Pavane pour une infante défunte” (Pavane for a dead princess) and his only String Quartet, and dutifully tried – and failed – to win a coveted Prix de Rome. His last attempt resulted in a scandal: Everyone was furious that he didn’t win, and the uproar led to the appointment of the more progressive Fauré as the Conservatoire’s new director.

Ravel was a master of tone color, whose music was known for its luxuriant sounds. He was also one of the great masters of instrumentation. Stravinsky, referring to Ravel’s craftsmanship, careful attention to detail, and compositional meticulousness, complimented him as “the most perfect of Swiss watchmakers.” Ravel himself said of his approach to composing: “My objective . . . is technical perfection. I can strive unceasingly to this end, since I am certain of never being able to attain it. The important thing is to get nearer to it all the time.”

Debussy’s string quartet had an influence on Ravel, especially its cyclic organization and its harmonic and tonal language. But Ravel’s tightly knit, classically precise quartet is its own masterful achievement. The lyrical first movement begins with the warmly melodic theme that will be developed throughout the quartet. It is followed by an equally lovely second melody, both of which are transformed throughout the movement, which is distinguished by its striking tone colors and exotic sonorities. The second movement, “very fast and rhythmic,” is a virtuoso scherzo in the traditional three sections, with a slower, more rhapsodic middle section. It opens with pizzicatos and a suggestion of gamelan music, shimmers with trills and tremolos, and features cross-rhythms, lyrical interludes, and wandering tonality. Highlights of the lyrical and rhapsodic third movement include its many tempo changes and its rich varieties of instrumental color: at one point everyone plays on the fingerboards. The finale opens with a dramatic, metrically irregular theme, brings back earlier lyrical motifs, and builds to a final vigorous progression of chords. Ravel’s impressive technical control and precision, along with his long lyrical melodies, gorgeous sounds, clear textures, and restrained elegance, make it clear that he was carving his own original path. Debussy recognized the quartet’s strengths when he

told Ravel, “In the name of the gods of music, and in mine, do not touch a single note of what you have written in your quartet.”

Ludwig van Beethoven: String Quartet No. 9 in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3, “Razumovsky” (1806)

When Beethoven sent the manuscripts of his Op. 59 String Quartets to the Italian violinist Felix Radicati to be fingered, a baffled Radicati said to Beethoven that surely he didn’t consider these works to be music. Beethoven’s reply: “Oh, they are not for you, but for a later age!” Radicati was not alone in his reaction. Listeners found these quartets long and difficult, and performers found them extremely challenging. But Beethoven was not writing for the aristocratic amateurs who eagerly awaited new pieces of chamber music. In 1802 he had despaired to his brother about his encroaching deafness, but since then he had composed one boundary-pushing work after another, including the *Eroica* Symphony, the *Waldstein* Sonata, and the three Razumovsky String Quartets.

The Razumovsky Quartets, written for the professional Schuppanzigh Quartet, were meant for a larger stage, not the drawing room. Of the three, Op. 59 No. 3 was considered the most accessible, and for years it was the most popular, hewing close enough to Classical convention to appeal to listeners. Still, from the opening measures you’ll hear Beethoven playing with expectations, beginning with the strange, unsettling sequence of chords and pauses that open the first movement. Even when the Allegro vivace begins, Beethoven gives several measures to a violin solo before finally landing on the Quartet’s sunny key of C Major. From here on, the movement dances happily along, propelled by energetic runs and arpeggios right up to its celebratory close.

When Count Andreas Razumovsky, the Russian ambassador to Vienna, commissioned the three quartets, he stipulated that each one should contain a Russian song. While the first two quartets did include recognizable Russian tunes, there is no explicitly Russian melody in No. 3. However, many listeners feel that the remote, melancholy second-movement Andante, in A minor, is Russian in feeling. The mood is set by a somber opening melody over the cello’s pizzicato. While the viola introduces a dance-like second theme, overall the bleaker mood prevails. Not for long, though, for Beethoven’s next surprise is not his usual vigorous Scherzo, but a graceful and elegant Menuetto, complete with a spirited trio. And then comes one of Beethoven’s most thrilling finales: a joyous fugal Allegro. It opens with the virtuosic fugal theme passed from viola to second violin to cello to first violin – all at a breakneck pace that doesn’t flag for the entire movement, and that leaves both listeners and performers breathless and exhilarated. For Beethoven it was a defiant triumph. According to his biographer Alexander Thayer, on the page in his notebook where Beethoven was working out the fugal theme, he reportedly wrote, “Never again need you feel ashamed of your deafness.... Can anything in the world prevent you from expressing your soul in music?”



Terra String Quartet

Harriet Langley, *violin*

Amelia Dietrich, *violin*

Chih-Ta Chen, *viola*

Audrey Chen, *cello*

Prizewinners at the 2023 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition and 2023 Osaka International Chamber Music Competition, the Terra String Quartet (TSQ) is a vibrant young international ensemble based in New York City. They are composed of graduates of The Juilliard School, The New England Conservatory, Harvard University, and the Curtis Institute of Music. Praised for their “remarkable maturity and musicality” and “superb ensemble playing” (Hyde Park Herald, Chicago), these four musicians hail from across the globe and, through their unique individuality as artists, are committed to infusing the string quartet with equal parts passion, spontaneity, and humor.

TSQ has performed at numerous festivals and venues across the world, with recent concerts at Guarneri Hall, First Mondays at Jordan Hall, and the Emilia-Romagna Festival in Italy. They have appeared in concert with the Cremona Quartet and have collaborated with pianist Diane Walsh at the Chesapeake Chamber Music Festival and violinist Ray Chen at Rockport Chamber Festival. As the '23-24 Project Music Heals Us Arts Leadership Ensemble, TSQ is deeply invested in education and community work, and they were also chosen as the inaugural Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival's Professional Fellowship Quartet at East Carolina University. Their mentors and coaches include Ara Gregorian, Mark Steinberg, Marcy Rosen, Nina Lee, Hye-Jin Kim, Daniel Avshalomov, Natasha Brofsky, Catherine Cho, and Calvin Wiersma.

TSQ is the recipient of the Silver medal at the 2023 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, Bronze medal at the 2023 Osaka International Chamber Music

Competition, and the Grand Prize and Gold Medal at the 2022 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. They were also awarded the Christine and David Anderson Career Development Prize at the 2022 Banff International String Quartet Competition. In their spare time, they enjoy playing Mahjong together.



Harriet Langley (*violin*)

Korean-Australian violinist Harriet Langley received her education from New England Conservatory, Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth, and The Juilliard School. An accomplished soloist, she has performed with ensembles including the London Chamber Orchestra, the Verbier Festival Orchestra, the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia Varsovia, the Reno Philharmonic, the Gyeonggi Philharmonic of Korea, and the Orchestre National de Belgique. Harriet has also performed at the Seiji Ozawa Academy, Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, YellowBarn, and the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove.

Other than music, Harriet enjoys reading, going to museums, and she has a passion for perfumes and teas.



Amelia Dietrich (*violin*)

Violinist Amelia Dietrich earned her Bachelor of Music from The Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles under the teaching of Robert Lipsett, and her Master's degree from The Juilliard School studying with Ida Kavafian. She grew up studying in North Carolina with her long-time mentor, Ara Gregorian. Amelia has concertized in chamber series across the US, Europe, and Australia, including Alice Tully Hall's Wednesdays at One, National Sawdust, The Guggenheim, the Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival, the ClasClas Chamber Festival in Spain, and the Moritzburg Festival in Germany. Beyond her

performance career, Amelia has a passion for pedagogy and mentoring young musicians. She is a mentor and chamber music coach with the New York Youth Symphony, maintains a private teaching studio in New York City, and teaches at Suzuki on the Island- a school in Manhasset, NY. She enjoys running, is an avid cook, and has a passion for fashion and interior design.



Chih-Ta Chen (*viola*)

Violist Chih-Ta Chen, from Kaohsiung, Taiwan, is the winner of the 2022 Chimei Arts Award and the 2018 Borromeo String Quartet Guest Artist Award. His passion lies in chamber music, and he has been featured at Music@Menlo, Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival, Taos School of Music, Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, and the Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival. Currently, Chen holds the Jean J. Sterne and Edwin B. Garrigues Fellowship as a student at the Curtis Institute of Music, studying under Roberto Diaz, Hsin-Yun Huang, Ed Gazouleas and Misha Amory. Previously, he attended the New

England Conservatory and Tainan National University of the Arts and studied with Mai Motobuchi, Yong-Zhan Chen, and I-Chen Wang. In his free time, he loves playing badminton and spending time with his two-year-old gray cat, Cheetah.



Audrey Chen (*cello*)

Washington state native and cellist Audrey Chen has concertized with the Seattle Symphony and the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and has been featured as a guest with the Jupiter Chamber Players, Parker Quartet, Argus Quartet, and Borromeo Quartet. An avid chamber musician, she has performed at festivals across the country, including Yellowbarn, Olympic Music Festival, Music@Menlo, Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Four Seasons Chamber Music, Perlman Music Program, and Tanglewood Music Center. A graduate of the Harvard/NEC dual degree program, Audrey received her B.A. from Harvard University and

an M.M. from the New England Conservatory, where her teachers included Laurence Lesser and Lluís Claret. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center under Marcy Rosen, and she also teaches chamber music at CUNY Hunter College. Audrey was named a 2022 recipient of the prestigious Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. Outside of music, she enjoys watching films, cooking/baking, and making greeting cards.

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