

Program

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

Joseph Haydn
(Austrian, 1732–1809)

Adagio – Allegro (“Slowly – Quickly”)
Adagio (“Slowly”)
Minuet: Allegro – Trio (“Quickly”)
Finale: Allegretto – Allegro (“A bit fast – Quickly”)

Contrapunctus II from *The Art of Fugue*, BWV 1080

Johann Sebastian Bach
(German, 1685–1750)

ContraDictions

Bruce Adolphe
(American, b. 1955)

Contrapunctus XI from *The Art of Fugue*, BWV 1080

J.S. Bach

’Lude

Steven Mackey
(American, b. 1956)

I N T E R M I S S I O N

String Quintet in C Major, D. 956

Franz Schubert
(Austrian, 1797–1828)

Allegro ma non troppo (“Not too quickly”)
Adagio (“Slowly”)
Scherzo: Presto – Trio: Andante sostenuto (“Instantly – Slowly and sustained”)
Allegretto – Più allegro – Più presto (“A bit fast – More quickly – As fast as possible”)

We ask that the audience please hold their applause until after the last movement of each work.

Today’s concert is preceded by a lecture by Dr. Jason Heilman,
host of Classical Tulsa on Public Radio Tulsa’s Classical 88.7 KWTU.

The Brentano String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists
www.davidroweartists.com www.brentanoquartet.com

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About the Program

by Jason S. Heilman, Ph.D., © 2021

Joseph Haydn

Born March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria
Died May 31, 1809, in Vienna

String Quartet Op. 71, No. 2 in D Major, Hob.III:70
1793; 17 minutes

Joseph Haydn rose from humble beginnings to become *Kapellmeister* to the powerful Hungarian Esterhazy family. At their palace in rural Eisenstadt, some 40 miles outside of Vienna, he had free reign over an orchestra and an opera house, as well as permission to publish his compositions throughout Europe. It was a secure position that made Haydn the envy of his peers, and he held it for nearly 30 years — up until the death of Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy in 1790. The new Prince Anton was not a music lover; he dismissed the orchestra, closed the opera house, and put Haydn into a kind of semi-retirement. But what might have seemed like a setback quickly turned into an opportunity, as Haydn was now free to take advantage of some of the tantalizing invitations he had been receiving from all over Europe. Barely three months after Prince Nikolaus's death, Haydn had embarked on his first of two extended trips to London, where he was received as a celebrity. The experience reinvigorated him creatively, prompting him to write 12 groundbreaking symphonies plus several new piano trios and string quartets.

Like his contemporaries, Haydn had long seen the string quartet as something for amateurs, and the fifty-odd quartets he composed prior to 1791 were mostly written for regular people to purchase and play at home with their friends. But in London, Haydn encountered something new: professional chamber music concerts. After his return to Vienna in 1792, a distant Esterhazy relative named Count Anton Apponyi commissioned six new quartets from Haydn, who seized the opportunity to write music that was not only much more technically demanding, but that also took the listener's perspective into account. He published these new quartets in two sets of three as his Opus 71 and Opus 74.

One innovation Haydn brought to these new quartets can be heard at the top: they all begin with a brief, unison gesture that announces the first movement's main theme. For the second of the Opus 71 quartets, in the key of D major, Haydn stretches this into a kind of miniature *adagio* introduction, which segues directly into the *allegro* main section and its two closely related themes. The *adagio* second movement displays the virtuosity of the violinist, who spins a tender, songlike melody. This is immediately contrasted by a very brief movement in the style of a *minuet* dance with rustic overtones. The finale introduces a deceptively simple *allegretto* round dance that veers into more complex elaborations between repetitions. This leads into an *allegro* coda that concludes the quartet in a burst of instrumental fireworks.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born March 31, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany
Died July 28, 1750, in Leipzig

Contrapunctus II and XI from *The Art of Fugue*
1740-50; 3 and 5 minutes

Johann Sebastian Bach spent virtually all of his life perfecting his counterpoint — the art of composing multiple intertwining melodic lines that complement one another in their intricacy. His magnum opus in that pursuit was *Die Kunst der Fuge*, or *The Art of Fugue*, BWV 1080, a collection of 14 fugues and four canons for four unspecified instruments that Bach worked on throughout his final decade. The fugues in particular are all based on the same melodic subject, in the key of D minor, but progress in complexity from the relatively straightforward Contrapunctus I to the triple-fugue Contrapunctus XIV, which Bach left unfinished at his death. Subsequent generations have viewed this collection as a kind of how-to guide to proper counterpoint.

In 2002, the Brentano Quartet marked their tenth anniversary by commissioning a series of ten new works inspired by (and paired with) a different fugue from *The Art of Fugue*. The group received contributions from Bruce Adolphe, Chou Wen-chung, Sofia Gubaidulina, David Horne, Steven Mackey, Wynton Marsalis, Nicholas Maw, Shulamit Ran, Charles Wuorinen and Eric Zivian.

Bruce Adolphe

Born May 31, 1955, in New York, U.S.A.

ContraDictions

2002; 5 minutes

Instantly recognizable for his clever Piano Puzzlers, which have been stumping classical radio listeners each week for nearly two decades on American Public Media's *Performance Today*, Bruce Adolphe has enjoyed a wide-ranging career as a composer, pianist, educator, and humorist. Having earned degrees from the Juilliard School, Adolphe has written music for such artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Daniel Hope, Sylvia McNair, and the Beaux Arts Trio. The author of three books on music, he has taught at Yale, Juilliard, and New York University, and is currently the Resident Lecturer and Director of Family Concerts for New York's Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Adolphe has been composer-in-residence for numerous ensembles, festivals, and other organizations over his career, including most recently the Brain and Creativity Institute in Los Angeles, where he works alongside neuroscientists using music to unlock the secrets of the brain.

His contribution to the Brentano Quartet's *Art of Fugue* project takes its inspiration from Bach's Contrapunctus II, which is characterized by subtle rhythmic shifts. Adolphe's piece, *ContraDictions*, plays with these

rhythmic ambiguities by, in the words of Brentano Quartet violist Misha Amory,

“... often making time stand still at the tense point, meditating on it. In other spots, the tied patterns are spun out into a more perpetual texture, so that they suggest a kind of spinning stasis. In a central section, graceful and airy, the main idea appears in one voice while the others dance around it in unison; over time, the tone intensifies, becoming rhythmically denser and finally reaching a crisis or breaking point. Bruce is a master at portraying how one might examine an object, becoming obsessed with it, looking at it from different angles, feeling now tender towards it, now frustrated by it, unable to put it out of mind: an apt description of what these fugues have been for later composers!”

Steven Mackey

Born February 14, 1956, in Frankfurt, Germany

'Lude

2002; 11 minutes

Although he is widely regarded as one of the most important composers of his generation, Steven Mackey once had hopes of becoming a rock star. Born to American parents stationed in Germany, his first passion was the electric guitar, which he pursued in several rock bands after relocating to northern California. He went on to study music at the University of California, Davis, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and Brandeis University, but he never abandoned his rock roots, and his compositions for such ensembles as the Kronos Quartet, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco and Chicago Symphonies, and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra have intimate ties to popular and vernacular music. Currently, Mackey is Professor of Music and chair of the Department of Music at Princeton University and performs regularly with his band Big Farm.

Mackey's first of several compositions for the Brentano Quartet draws on — or rather, incorporates — Bach's Contrapunctus XI, which is based on not one but three subjects. As Misha Amory explains,

“Not content to place his companion piece respectfully alongside the Bach, Steve chose to toss his composition and Bach's into a mixing bowl and make one piece out of them, where the music alternates between Mackey and Bach, one dissolving and melting into the other from time to time. Since his work serves as prelude, interlude, and postlude for the Bach, Steve entitled this blended result simply 'Lude'. He opens with a spiky version of the four-note motif that Bach used to express his own last name, spelt 'B-A-C-H' in musical pitches — a motif that appears elsewhere in the *Art of Fugue* although not in this contrapunctus. From there, he riffs on Bach's main *Art of Fugue* idea, using tricky cross-rhythmic textures in an energetic, popping atmosphere. When the Bach does eventually appear and take over, it seems to emerge in its own tempo while

Mackey's tempo and energy fade into the background. Later, in a particularly zany moment, he interrupts the Bach by taking a passage where the music is rising, having it gradually speed up, lose control and explode back into Mackey-world. And so the two musics alternate, one commenting on the other. When the Bach finally reaches its concluding, sustained chord, that too blurs, losing its focus and splintering back into the restless Mackey-world, which dances and fades its way to a hovering, unresolved final sonority.”

Franz Schubert

Born January 31, 1797, in Vienna, Austria

Died November 19, 1828, in Vienna

String Quintet in C Major, D. 956

1828; 50 minutes

Although his life was cut tragically short at age 31, Franz Schubert still managed to compose nearly a thousand works. Of course, the majority of these were *Lieder*, or song settings of German poetry for voice and piano. But while these *Lieder* were short, it would be wrong to dismiss them as trivial; Schubert's innovation was to elevate the parlor song to the level of high art. Brushing formal and harmonic conventions aside, he evoked the drama, the passion, and the tenderness in his poetic sources as no one else had before — and few have since. Unfortunately, the wider musical world failed to appreciate this until it was too late: for all of his life, and some decades afterward, Schubert was dismissed as a songwriting wunderkind, churning out new *Lieder* for fashionable salon gatherings throughout his native Vienna. The fact that these evenings became known as Schubertiades was just more evidence of Schubert's middlebrow status.

The leading composer in Vienna at the time was Ludwig van Beethoven, who was just beginning his musical career when Schubert was born and who predeceased him by only 20 months. Their difference is instructive: Beethoven largely eschewed *Lieder* in favor of more “serious” genres like symphonies, string quartets, and piano trios — and for most critics, this became the proper route to musical immortality. But what only a select few knew in 1828 was that Schubert had also composed extensively in those genres. In total, Schubert wrote ten symphonies (in varying stages of completion), 15 string quartets, and several other chamber works, very few of which were ever performed in public while he was alive.

Schubert's last two years were particularly prolific, likely because he knew his days were numbered. He had been hospitalized in 1823, and by 1828, he was clearly suffering from what may have been syphilis. Schubert's declining health meant that his final year alternated between bursts of creativity and fallow bouts of depression. Yet the works he produced during this time show a composer aiming at his own musical immortality — and his final chamber work may have been his most ambitious of all.

Written in the late summer of 1828, the String Quintet in C major has an almost orchestral texture and an

appropriately symphonic scope. The choice of key may have been an homage to the C-major quintets by Mozart and Beethoven, but the use of an extra cello instead of a second viola had less precedent. Any parallels with the many two-cello quintets by Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805) were likely coincidental, as there is little evidence that Schubert even knew them. The *allegro ma non troppo* first movement displays the full range of Schubert's harmonic adventurousness in its unexpected modulations, starting from a dreamlike quasi-introduction that gradually metamorphoses into the movement's primary theme. A pastoral second theme follows in a new key, and the two themes are cleverly developed before returning. The *adagio* second movement has Schubert at his most lyrical; its outer sections radiate a sublime warmth in contrast to a turbulent central episode. This is followed by a vigorous, rustic *scherzo* movement that likewise brackets a world-weary *andante sostenuto* trio section. The *allegretto* finale is in the form of a round dance with folk overtones — the kind of music a middlebrow Viennese audience might have enjoyed — but here, too, Schubert demonstrates his harmonic acumen, sliding between major and minor modes as the movement builds to a dizzying climax.

Unfortunately, Schubert never got to see his C-major Quintet performed; he died just six weeks after putting his finishing touches on the manuscript. The piece languished in obscurity until 1850, when its rediscovery and premiere helped ignite a belated Schubert renaissance.