Miró Quartet

Sunday Afternoon Concert
Sunday, October 25, 2020 - 3:00 p.m.
Pre-Concert Lecture by Kevin Puts - 2:15 p.m.
Artist Q&A immediately following performance.
OurConcerts.Live

Program

Home

String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor, D.810, “Death and the Maiden”
Allegro (“Quickly”)
Andante con moto (“Slowly, with motion”)
Scherzo: Allegro molto (“Very quickly”)
Presto (“Instantly”)

Kevin Puts
(American, b. 1972)

Franz Schubert
(Austrian, 1797-1828)
Kevin Puts  
**Born in 1972 in St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.**

**Home**  
**Composed in 2019; 17 minutes**

One of the most widely performed American composers today, Kevin Puts writes music that has been acclaimed as “breathtaking,” “thrilling,” and “emotional, compelling, and relevant” by leading critics. Born in St. Louis, Puts grew up in central Michigan, where he first learned the piano. He went on to study piano and composition at the Eastman School of Music, then received his master's degree from Yale University before returning to Eastman to complete his doctorate in composition. Puts’s teachers include Samuel Adler, Jacob Druckman, David Lang, Christopher Rouse, Joseph Schwantner, and William Bolcom.

Puts has been composer-in-residence with Young Concert Artists, the California Symphony, the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, and, more recently, the Fort Worth Symphony. He has written music in a wide variety of genres, including three operas, four symphonies, multiple chamber and choral works, and several concertos. In 2006, his Percussion Concerto was premiered by Dame Evelyn Glennie; later that same year, his cello concerto, Night, received its premiere with Yo-Yo Ma in the solo role. Puts’s first opera, Silent Night, inspired by the 1914 Christmas truce during World War I, was honored with the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 2012. More recent works include his 2015 opera The Manchurian Candidate, his 2017 orchestral work The City, which commemorates both the 100th anniversary of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the 125th anniversary of Carnegie Hall, and his 2016 song cycle Letters From Georgia, based on the personal letters of Georgia O’Keeffe, which was premiered by soprano Renée Fleming. Puts previously taught at the University of Texas at Austin and currently serves as Professor of Composition at Baltimore’s Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University and as Director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer’s Institute.

Puts’s most recent work for string quartet, Home, was co-commissioned by a consortium that included the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, where the piece received its world premiere in August 2019, along with Chamber Music Tulsa, Chamber Music Northwest, the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Chamber Music Monterey Bay, and Rockport Music. It is the third work Puts has written for the Miró Quartet, to whom it is dedicated. The music was directly inspired by world events, as the composer notes: “The refugee crisis in Europe, documented in recent media by horrific stories and photos of displaced families, led me to compose Home.

“The work begins in what is essentially C major, or with a tonal center of ‘C,’ which I intended as a sonic representation of ‘home’ and one which is abandoned after the idyllic atmosphere of the work's first several minutes in search of new and unfamiliar harmonic terrain. As is my way, I worked through the piece in a linear fashion, never certain what lay around each corner. My only hope was that I would find my way back to the musical idea heard at the opening, and that it would present itself in a way that suggested this material (or one's perception of it) had been altered in some way by the journey the work represents.”
Franz Schubert
Born January 31, 1797, in Lichtental (Vienna), Austria
Died November 19, 1828, in Vienna

String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor, D.810, “Death and the Maiden”
Composed in 1824; 38 minutes

In 1823, 26-year-old Franz Schubert came face to face with his own mortality. That year, he spent several days in a Viennese hospital, suffering from a debilitating outbreak of the illness that would ultimately claim his life just five years later. Even today, we are not entirely sure what this illness was; it was once thought to have been typhus or typhoid fever, but more recent biographers believe Schubert may have died of syphilis. Regardless, upon leaving the hospital, Schubert entered into what would be the last and most productive phase of his compositional life. His works from that point on show an even greater ambition in form, scale, and compositional craft.

Just a few months after his hospitalization, in the spring of 1824, Schubert returned to the string quartet, completing his first new works in the genre since 1816 (not counting an unfinished quartet from 1820). Interestingly, both of these new quartets refer back to earlier works in the composer's already-vast output: One of them borrowed a melody from his incidental music to the play Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus, which he had just completed a few months earlier. The other quartet took a theme from the song, or Lied, “Der Tod und das Mädchen” (“Death and the Maiden”), which Schubert had composed seven years prior during a pivotal phase in his musical development. Given how infrequently Schubert had quoted himself in his previous instrumental compositions – his 1819 “Trout” Quintet is another rare example – the re-use of these melodies seems significant.

Schubert's 1817 song “Death and the Maiden” is a setting of a German romantic poem by Matthias Claudius (1740–1815), who wrote under the pen name Asmus. The poem is an invented folk legend in which a young woman is visited by the figure of Death. Immediately, she pleads breathlessly for her life:

*Pass! Oh, pass!*
*Go, vicious skeleton!*
*I am still young! Go, please,*
*And touch me not!* 

But Death is insistent, plaintively intoning:

*Give your hand, you beautiful and gentle thing.*
*I am a friend, and come not to punish.*
*Take heart! I am not vicious;*
*You shall sleep softly in my arms.*

Schubert went on to publish the song in 1821, but we do not know exactly why he decided to revisit it some three years later. His previous instrumental quotations of his own song melodies were usually requested by patrons or friends, as was the case with the “Trout,” but no such request for “Death and the Maiden” can be found. It is tempting to conclude that Schubert's own recent brush with death – and his desire to rage against it – may have brought this song back to his attention. Indeed, while a melody from “Death and the Maiden” only appears in one of the movements of his new string quartet, its overall tone seems to suggest that the struggle against Death might be the theme of the entire work.
Set in the key of D minor, Schubert’s 14th String Quartet opens with a bleak introductory gesture that eventually gathers itself into the allegro movement’s vigorous first theme. This is soon contrasted by a gently lilting second theme, which begins unexpectedly in the relative major key before settling on the customary dominant, showing how far Schubert was starting to push the traditional rules of musical form. The andante con moto second movement presents the “Death and the Maiden” theme – though, interestingly, Schubert chose to use Death’s plaintive chorale tune and not the maiden’s pleading melody – and subjects it to a series of five variations. The final variation builds to dramatic heights before subsiding, but the mood is quickly dispelled by the subsequent allegro molto scherzo movement, which may have been inspired by the iconic image of Death playing the violin. The presto finale is in the form of a tarantella, a frenetic Italian folk dance that was thought to ward off death from the bite of a tarantula. With this movement, Schubert’s quartet has progressed all the way from the grim specter of Death to a desperate affirmation of life.

Unfortunately, the initial response to the “Death and the Maiden” Quartet at its private premiere in 1826 was not positive, and Schubert put the piece aside. What is now the most celebrated of all of Schubert’s string quartets was not rediscovered and published until 1831, more than three years after the composer’s own untimely death.

**About the Miró Quartet**

The Miró Quartet is one of America’s most celebrated string quartets, having performed throughout the world on the most prestigious concert stages. Based in Austin, TX, and thriving on the area’s storied music scene, the Miró takes pride in finding new ways to communicate with audiences of all backgrounds while cultivating the longstanding tradition of chamber music.

The Miró celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2019-20, performing a wide range of repertoire that pays homage to the legacy of the string quartet and while looking to the future of chamber music and string quartet playing in the U.S. In honor of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth, the Quartet performs the composer’s complete string quartets in concert and on recording. The Quartet has performed full Beethoven cycles at Tokyo’s Suntory Hall, Chamber Music Tulsa, Chamber Music Northwest, and the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival in Washington State, where it has also been in residence since 2016. Beyond the concert hall, the Miró concluded its recording cycle of Beethoven’s string quartets with the release of a complete box set on Pentatone in November 2019. The ensemble began this recording project in 2005 with the release of the Op. 18 quartets, and the finished cycle represents not only the Beethoven’s journey as a composer, but also a 14-year journey for the Quartet.

The Miró Quartet has championed the music of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts for more than a decade, and this season it premieres a new string quartet titled "Home", composed by Mr. Puts for the Miró’s 25th anniversary. The work is presented by a consortium of commissioning partners, including the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival (world premiere), Chamber Music Detroit, and Chamber Music Tulsa.

Formed in 1995, the Miró has been awarded first prize at several competitions including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and Naumburg Chamber Music Competition; and in 2005, became the first ensemble ever to be awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant. Committed to music education, members of the Miró has given master classes at universities and conservatories throughout the world; and since 2003, has served as faculty string quartet-in-residence at the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas, Austin.
**Sponsors**

This concert weekend is being held in honor of Emily Wood's 95th Birthday and in memory of her dear husband, Phil Wood.

This concert weekend is underwritten by Emily Wood, Lobeck Taylor Family Foundation, Ruth Nelson and Tom Murphy, George Krumme and Aldean Newcomb.

With additional assistance from Noam Faingold, Janie and Earl Funk, Kathleen Gerety and James Howard, The Herbert and Roseline Gussman Foundation, Bruce Sorrell, Mollie Williford, and Sharon King Davis.

---

**Haydn Circle**

$20,000 and above
Anonymous
Arts Alliance Tulsa
The Estate of Susan Douze
The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation
The Oklahoma Arts Council

$15,000 to $19,999
Anonymous
Pam and Terry Carter
Amanda and Kenneth Lawrence
The Charles and Marion Weber Foundation

$10,000 to $14,999
Ruth Nelson and Tom Murphy
Lobeck Taylor Family Foundation

$5,000 to $9,999
Mervin Bovaird Foundation
Mary McIlhany and Harley Galusha
Mary Lee Townsend and Burt B. Holmes
Soohyun and Marvin Jin

$2,500 to $4,999
Ana Maria Lloyd Jones
Steve Murtha
George Krumme and Aldean Newcomb
C.W. Titus Foundation
T.D. Williamson
Emily Wood
QuickTrip Corporation Fund
The Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation

$1,000 to $2,499
Caitlin Schein and Ross Alexander
*Michael Turner and Joseph Arndt
The Etta May Avery Foundation

Chamber Music Tulsa's concerts and educational outreaches are presented with the assistance of the Oklahoma Arts Council, the Mid-America Arts Alliance, and Arts Alliance Tulsa.
$500 to $999
Barbara Buckoltz
Sandra and Ed Moore
Catherine and Gordon Nielsen
*Jean Seeger
The Helen Savage Family Fund
Betsy and Joel Zeligson

$100 to $499
Linda Acton-Smith
*Ginny and Mike Ayling
Houston Conner and Scott Black
*Michael Blechner
Adele and Rolf Blom
Evelyn Boake
Marianne Boshuizen
Brian Bovaird
Martha Rupp and Lewis Carter
Jay Chandler
Jennifer Gibbens and Tom Clark
John Clark
Irene and Jimmy Cody
Alice and James Costas
Sally and Robert Donaldson
Sarah and Ryan Doolin
Myriam and Rainer Dupont
Norma Eagleton
Claire and James Farr
Linda and Marc Frazier
Joel Genung
Scott Gregory
Nancy and Bill Hermann
Sarah and Dobie Langenkamp
Jerry and Ginny LeDoux
Margorie Levin
Maria Lyda
Paula Milsten
Bethany and Kyle Myers
Terry Monkres
Kym Morella
Rick Phillips
Tom Riggs
Beverly Seay
Joan and Harry Seay
The Shakespearean Society
Stanfield + O’Dell
Susan and Tom Swatek
Renata and Sven Treitel
Ruby Trinh
Peter Walter
Josie Winter

Up to $100
Barbara Bates
Leta Bell
Vera Berlin
Laura Bottoms
Michael Boyle
Barbara Brehm
Don James Brown
Jean Brown
Kathryn Burke
Jaime Carini
Velma Carson
Noam Faingold
Chris Fisher
Omar Ghady
Emily Graham
Mahlon Halleck
Lori Hauge
Taylor and Jose Luis Hernandez
Rosie and Bill Hinkle
Erin Jones
Dwight Kealiher
Jason Kleps
Jeanette and Bud Lightfoot
Gina and Steve Martin
Michael McGivern
Gay Miller
Tracey Norvell

In Memory of Mary Athens
Adele and Rolf Blom
Norma Eagleton
Linda and Marc Frazier
Mary McIlhaney
Emily Wood

In Memory of Jay Engle
Michael Blechner
Adele and Rolf Blom
Norma Eagleton
Linda and Marc Frazier
Kathleen Gerety and James Howard
Margorie Levin
Mary McIlhaney
The Shakespearean Society

In Memory of Bob Gregory
Janie and Earl Funk
Bruce Sorrell

In Memory of Zach Haney
Janie and Earl Funk
Mary McIlhaney
Bruce Sorrell
Emily Wood

In Memory of Frankie James
Ginny and Mike Ayling
Myriam and Rainer Dupont
Linda and Marc Frazier
Nancy and Bill Hermann

In Memory of Dr. Robert Searcy
Maria Lyda

---

Board and Staff

**Executive Committee**
Kym Morella, *President*
Scott Murtha, *Vice President*
Ryan Doolin, *Treasurer*
Caitlin Schein, *Secretary*
Claire Farr, *Past President*

**Committee Chairs**
Pam Carter, *Development*
Noam Faingold, *Education*

**Board Members**
Joseph Arndt
Gillian Ryan Cawiezell

**Staff**
Bruce Sorrell, *Executive Director*
J.J. Cody, *Customer/Donor Relations Manager*
Margaret Hartley, *Concert Manager*
LeRoicia Penney, *Intern*

*indicates monthly giving