

Sunday, March 17, 2013, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Afiara String Quartet

Valerie Lin *violin*
Yuri Cho *violin*
David Samuel *viola*
Adrian Fung *cello*

PROGRAM

Josef Haydn (1732–1809) String Quartet in F major, Op. 74, No. 2 (1793)

Allegro spiritoso
Andante grazioso
Menuet: Allegro
Finale: Presto

Brett Abigaña (b. 1980) String Quartet No. 2 (2010)

Psalm
Berceuse
Vocalise
March

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) String Quartet in C major, Op. 59, No. 3,
“Razumovsky” (1806)

Andante con moto — Allegro vivace
Andante con moto quasi Allegretto
Menuetto: Grazioso —
Allegro molto

Cal Performances' 2012–2013 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
String Quartet in F major, Op. 74, No. 2

Composed in 1793.

Haydn's first triumph in London ended in July 1792, and it took little effort for the venture's impresario, Johann Peter Salomon, to exact a promise from the lionized composer to return for another series of performances several months hence. The 60-year-old Haydn spent the intervening time at home in Vienna, recouping his strength after the rigors of the London trip, composing, teaching a few pupils (including Beethoven), and attending to domestic matters, most pressingly seeing to the demand for new quarters of his shrewish wife (whom he referred to, privately, as the “House-Dragon”). Anna Maria had discovered a house in the Viennese suburb of Gumpendorf that she thought would be just perfect, she explained to her husband, when she was a widow. Haydn was understandably reluctant to see the place, but he found it pleasing, and bought it the next year. It was the home in which, in 1809, a decade after Anna Maria, he died.

One of the greatest successes of Haydn's London venture was the performance of several of his string quartets by Salomon, whose abilities as an impresario were matched by his virtuosity on the violin. Such public presentations of chamber works were still novel at the time, and their enthusiastic reception made it easy for Salomon to convince Haydn to create a half-dozen additional quartets for his projected visit in 1794–1795. Though composed for Salomon's concerts, the new quartets were formally commissioned by Count Anton Apponyi, who had come to know Haydn and his music when he married one of the scions of the Esterházy clan, the composer's employer for a half-century. Apponyi was an active patron of the arts in Vienna (he was a subscriber to Beethoven's Op. 1 Piano Trios), owner of a fine collection of paintings, a good violinist, and a founder and president of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*, the city's principal concert-giving organization. The six Quartets, divided into two sets as Op. 71

and Op. 74 when they were published in London in 1795, were dedicated to Apponyi. Salomon had played them to great acclaim at his Hanover Square Rooms concerts the preceding year.

The Quartets, Opp. 71 and 74 occupy an important niche in the history of chamber music as the first such works written expressly for public performance. Haydn, who was always sensitive to accommodating his audiences, made the Quartets suitable for the concert hall by providing them with ample dramatic contrasts, basing them on easily memorable thematic material, allowing a certain virtuosity to the first violinist in the fast movements (to show off Salomon's considerable skills), and giving them an almost symphonic breadth of expression. (In her study of the composer, Rosemary Hughes noted, “It is as if Haydn were pushing open a door through which Beethoven was to pass.”)

The F major Quartet, Op. 74, No. 2, is a superb example of the mastery of thematic development, control of instrumental sonority, and boldness of harmonic invention that a half-century of creative work had won for Haydn. A bright-faced theme cobbled from the notes of the tonic chord opens the Quartet, and provides the material for much of what follows. Daring, proto-Romantic harmonic progressions lead to the formal second subject that, as in many of Haydn's sonata-form movements, proves to be a recasting of the main theme in a new key. The thematic components are worked out across wide-ranging harmonic territories and at considerable length in the development section. The recapitulation returns the musical events that opened the movement in heightened settings. The *Andante* is a set of three variations (the second is in an expressive minor key) based on a long, elegant theme first given by the violins in sweet harmonies. The *Menuetto* has a higher quotient of harmonic surprises than most of its species, and even slips into a delightfully unexpected tonality for its central trio. The finale starts off with a jocular tune and a light-hearted insouciance which suggest that it will be a rondo, but the movement unfolds as a tightly worked sonata form which finds more ways to utilize the little two-note falling figure

announced immediately at the outset by the first violin than seem possible.

Brett Abigaña (b. 1980)
String Quartet No. 2

Composed in 2010. Premiered on February 8, 2011, at the Mary Irwin Theatre in Kelowna, British Columbia, by the Afara String Quartet.

Brett Abigaña was born in 1980 in Woodland, California, 20 miles west of Sacramento, and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at the Juilliard School, where he studied with Samuel Adler and Robert Beaser, and his Doctorate of Musical Arts from Boston University as a student of Samuel Headrick and Richard Cornell. His additional advanced studies include composition, harmony, and counterpoint with Narcis Bonet, Michel Merlet, and Philip Lasser at the La Schola Cantorum in Paris, and conducting with Judith Clurman. Abigaña is currently on the faculties of Boston University and Boston University Academy, and is Associate Director of the Boston Composers' Coalition; he is also an Affiliated Artist at MIT. Abigaña's music has been heard throughout the United States and Europe, including performances on Dutch Public Radio. His wide variety of works includes chamber music for strings and winds, several concertos, song cycles, and numerous pieces for orchestra and symphonic band, many written on commissions from the United States Naval Academy Band, United States Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus, Afara String Quartet, Webster Trio, Destino Winds, violinist Carla Leurs, and other noted ensembles and artists.

Abigaña wrote, "The String Quartet No. 2 was composed in 2010 for the Afara Quartet and is dedicated to the memory of Betty Samuel, the mother of Afara violist David Samuel, who passed away in 2006. The work is in four movements, each trying to capture a facet of Betty's personality. The first movement, *Psalm*, has a very simple, almost un-moving harmonic background supporting a wandering vocal-like line

in the viola. The harmony moves in such a way as to obscure as much as possible any semblance of a hierarchical beat structure. The second movement is a *Berceuse*, a lilting lullaby with a playful side. The third movement, *Vocalise*, is a strophic song over harmony that, while simple on the surface, never actually arrives at a tonic resolution. The final movement, *March*, is a rather sarcastic circus march that slowly disintegrates into strands of the three preceding movements before restarting and spinning wildly out of control."

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
String Quartet in C major, Op. 59, No. 3,
"Razumovsky"

Composed in 1806. Premiered in February 1807 in Vienna.

Count Andreas Kyrillovitch Razumovsky was one of the most prominent figures in Viennese society, politics, and art at the turn of the 19th century. Born in 1752 to a singer at the Russian court, Razumovsky ingratiated himself with a number of women of lofty station and entered the diplomatic corps at the age of 25. He was assigned to several European capitals, in which he made his reputation, according to one contemporary account, "less through his skill at diplomacy than through his lavish expenditure and his love affairs with ladies of the highest standing, not excluding the Queen of Naples." In 1788 in Vienna, he married Elizabeth, Countess of Thun and sister of Prince Lichnowsky, one of Beethoven's most devoted patrons. Four years later, Razumovsky was assigned as Russian ambassador to Vienna, whose sybaritic life style perfectly suited his personality. "Razumovsky lived in Vienna on a princely scale," wrote a contemporary named Schnitzler, "encouraging art and science, surrounded by a valuable library and other collections, and admired or envied by all; of what advantage this was to Russian interests is, however, another question." He was also an accomplished violinist who indulged his

interest in music by taking lessons from Haydn, playing in chamber concerts, and sponsoring the performance of works in his residence.

In the spring of 1806, Count Razumovsky took over from Prince Lichnowsky the patronage of the string quartet headed by Ignaz Schuppanzigh, and he commissioned Beethoven to write for the ensemble three new pieces that would be played in the grand palace the Count was building on the Danube Canal near the Prater. Beethoven, who had not composed a string quartet since the six numbers of Op. 18 in 1800, gladly accepted the proposal and immediately set to work. (Beethoven, always looking for new sources of patronage, did not take lightly the fact that Razumovsky was an intimate of such powerful figures as Metternich and von Gentz.) In honor of (or, perhaps, at the request of) his Russian patron, Beethoven included in the first two quartets of the Op. 59 set traditional Russian themes. Such music was much on the mind of the Viennese at the time because many Russian soldiers had sought refuge in the hospitals, convents, and schools of the imperial city following their great battles with the French at Austerlitz at the end of 1805. After receiving Razumovsky's commission, Beethoven determined, as he said, "to devote myself wholly to this work," and he wrote the three Op. 59 Quartets between May and October 1806 (a few sketches from 1804 were incorporated into the finished works) with the intention of having Schuppanzigh's quartet perform them late in the year at Razumovsky's new palace. However, the Count's wife took ill that fall and died on December 23rd, and no music was heard in the house during the period of mourning. Schuppanzigh played the Quartets for the first time in February 1807 at some now unknown site in Vienna, and several months later repeated them at the Razumovsky palace.

The Op. 59 Quartets, though they later became some of Beethoven's most popular chamber works, were greeted at first with some of the strongest antagonism that his music ever excited. His student Carl Czerny reported, "When Schuppanzigh's quartet first played the F major

Quartet [No. 1], they laughed and were convinced Beethoven was playing a joke on them and that it was not the quartet he had promised." "Surely you do not consider this music?" asked the bemused violinist Felix Radicati. "Not for you," replied the confident composer, "but for a later age." When Beethoven was told that Schuppanzigh was complaining about the difficulty of the violin parts, he grumbled, "Does he really suppose that I think of his puling little fiddle when the spirit speaks to me and I compose something?" The powerful style of the "Eroica" of 1804 that also infused these scores, with their intense emotional expression and formal concentration, was still revolutionary and puzzling to Beethoven's contemporaries in 1806. It would soon mark him as the most visionary musical artist of his time.

The Razumovsky Quartet No. 3, in C major, opens with an almost motionless introduction, influenced, perhaps, in its harmonic acerbity by the beginning of Mozart's "Dissonant" Quartet. The mood brightens with the presentation of the main theme by the unaccompanied first violin, and there ensues a powerful movement in fully developed sonata form. Dark currents of feeling pulse beneath the rippling surface of the *Andante*: "A lament [that] searches many shadowy corners," wrote Vincent d'Indy of this music; J.W.N. Sullivan thought that it presents "some forgotten and alien despair;" a "mystery of the primitive" concluded Joseph Kerman of it. The third movement, nominally a *Minuet*, is of a Romantic sensibility that leaves far behind the elegance and simple grace of its model. The finale is a whirlwind blend of rondo, sonata, and fugue that demonstrates Beethoven's mastery of contrapuntal techniques and incomparable ability to drive a composition to its seemingly inevitable end.

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Rory Earnshaw

The all-Canadian **Afiara String Quartet** is widely noted for its engaging, authentic presence and performances balancing “intensity and commitment” with “frequent moments of tenderness” (*Montreal Gazette*).

Winner of the 2008 Concert Artists Guild International Competition, the 2010 Young Canadian Musicians Award, top prizes at the Munich ARD International Music Competition and the Banff International String Quartet Competition, where they also took the Szekely Prize for best Beethoven interpretation, the Afiara String Quartet has lively interest in new works and fresh insight into core classical repertoire.

In the 2012–2013 season, the Afiara String Quartet opens the season with a series of concerts at the Indiana Summer Music Festival and Bay Chamber Concerts in Maine. They travel to Alberta to appear with the Calgary Pro Musica Society, as well as concerts in British Columbia with pianist Jane Coop, and to Ontario to perform at the Festival of the Sound, Harbourfront Centre, Ottawa Chamber Music Society, and Music Niagara. The Quartet tours in Ohio, Hawaii, Indiana, Maine, and California, where they appear at Cal Performances and Stanford Lively Arts. In Europe, they will undertake an extensive tour of Denmark and Sweden, and make debuts at the Esterházy Foundation in Austria and London’s Wigmore Hall.

As the Glenn Gould School Fellowship Quartet at Toronto’s Royal Conservatory of Music, the Quartet will offer master classes, educational outreach, and performances as part of their residency.

In recent seasons, the Afiara have appeared at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center with Bruce Adolphe and Jörg Widmann, the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York City, ProMusica San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, Chamber Music Cincinnati, the Washington Performing Arts Society, San Francisco Performances, and the Library of Congress. They opened the Montreal Chamber Music Festival’s six-concert Beethoven string quartet cycle, sharing duties with the Tokyo and Chiara quartets. The Quartet appeared Alice Tully Hall and Merkin Concert Hall in New York City, and joined the Juilliard String Quartet in a performance of the Mendelssohn Octet at the Kennedy Center.

The Quartet also made its Ravinia debut playing works by Haydn, Beethoven, and Dvořák. They returned to residencies at the Banff Centre and the Indiana University Summer Music Festival, and appeared in concerts at the Festival of the Sound in Ontario, the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, Domaine Forget, and the Waterside Summer Series.

Passionate advocates of new music, the Afiara String Quartet has embarked on a project

with the Common Sense Composers’ Collective and Cecilia String Quartet, performing and recording eight new quartet works at the Banff Centre. Enjoying a friendly mentorship with the Kronos Quartet, the Afiara offered affectionate tribute at Kronos’s June 2011 Avery Fisher Prize Presentation, playing Aleksandra Vrebalov’s *Pannonia Boundless*. The Afiara have also performed the world premieres of Brett Abigana’s String Quartet No. 2, *Lockdown* by Dan Becker, and Jason Bush’s *Visions in San Francisco*—all written specifically for them. Among other new music highlights, the Afiara have collaborated with timpanist Louis Siu in a set of commissions, and with singer-songwriter Kyrie Kristmanson and composer Patrick Carrabre for a world premiere song cycle at the Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival.

The Afiara String Quartet has been heard on Bavarian Radio, CBC Radio 2, TROS in the Netherlands, San Francisco’s KALW, and New York’s WQXR, and are featured in the *Road to Banff* documentary. Their debut CD, on the Foghorn Classics label, features quartets by Mendelssohn and Schubert, as well as the Mendelssohn Octet with the Alexander String Quartet.

In 2011, the Afiara String Quartet completed a two-year tenure as graduate resident string quartet at the Juilliard School in New York, where they served as teaching assistants to the Juilliard String Quartet. Prior to that, they were the Morrison Fellowship Quartet-in-Residence at San Francisco State University’s International Center for the Arts (2007–2009), where the members were teaching assistants to their mentor ensemble, the Alexander String Quartet. The Afiara players have also worked with musicians and ensembles including the American, Cavani, Emerson, Kronos, St. Lawrence, Takács and Ying Quartets, Earl Carlyss, James Dunham, Henk Guitart, Bonnie Hampton, and at the San Francisco Conservatory, where they were formed, with Paul Hersh, Mark Sokol, and Ian Swensen.

Recognizing the vital importance of music education and advocacy, the Afiara String Quartet pursues its own teaching work,

in residence at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, at Toronto’s Royal Conservatory of Music, and as faculty at Chamber Music of the Rockies, Indiana University Summer String Academy, and Canada’s Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute, among other institutions. They also provide educational outreach and make regular appearances at the Banff Centre, which generously provides the 1737 Guidantus violin played by second violinist Yuri Cho.

Formed in 2006, the Afiara String Quartet takes its name from the Spanish *fiar*, meaning “to trust,” a basic element vital to the depth and joy of its music-making.

To learn more, please visit afiara.com.