



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

PEACHTREE STRING QUARTET

Christopher Pulgram, violin

Sissi Yuqing Zhang, violin

Yang-Yoon Kim, viola

Thomas Carpenter, cello

David Fung, host

SUN OCT 18, 2020, 3:00 PM

Hodgson Concert Hall

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PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

String Quartet No. 1 in F major, Op. 18, No. 1

I. Allegro con brio

String Quartet No. 5 in A major, Op. 18, No. 5

III. Theme and Variations (Andante cantabile)

String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat major, Op. 74, “Harp”

I. Poco Adagio – Allegro

String Quartet No. 15 in A minor, Op. 132

III. Molto Adagio (*Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der Lydischen Tonart*) – Andante (*Neue Kraft Fühlend*)

Program is subject to change.

PROGRAM NOTES

By Luke Howard

String Quartet No. 1 in F major, Op. 18, No. 1

I. Allegro con brio

Although Beethoven’s earlier string trios (Op.9) showed his remarkable facility for chamber and string writing, his first attempts at a string quartet didn’t flow so easily. The string quartet was a special genre, and had already taken on substantial cultural importance by the turn of the century. It was expected to be genteel, refined, one of the highest expressions of the composer’s art. Beethoven wanted to make sure he was getting it right. Two years after he completed the quartet in F major in 1799 (published as Op. 18, No. 1) Beethoven wrote to his friend and the quartet’s dedicatee, Karl Amenda, “Don’t let anyone see your quartet as I have greatly changed it. I have just learned how to write quartets properly.”

The many compositional sketches, and this major revision of the F-major quartet, are evidence of Beethoven’s doubts about how to write a quartet. But it wasn’t the weight of 18th-century tradition or the shadows of Mozart or Haydn that caused his hesitation. He learned a great deal from the quartets of those two great masters, for sure. But more likely it was a question of Beethoven learning to trust his own technique. In these quartets, for instance, he gives each instrument greater independence than Mozart or Haydn ever did, liberating the viola and cello in particular from their traditional accompanimental roles.

In early sketches for the first movement, Beethoven appears to have conceived it in 4/4 instead of 3/4,

but eventually decided that the extra beat was superfluous. He filled sixteen pages of sketches to produce a single rhythmic kernel that contained within it the material for the whole movement. This brisk, fragmentary theme, stated in octaves at the opening, entirely subsumes the charming and light second subject. The rhythmic motto recurs over one hundred times, though the movement as a whole is characterized not by this repetition of a single motif, but by contrasts of modulation, dynamics, attack, and texture.

String Quartet No. 5 in A major, Op. 18, No. 5

III. Theme and Variations (Andante cantabile)

The six string quartets in Beethoven’s Op. 18 set, composed between 1798 and 1800, reflect a transition from Classical gentility to Romantic passion, but it’s not a smooth transition. The first quartet, for instance, is full of drama (and melodrama), and the kind of motivic intensity more associated with Beethoven’s middle period works, while the fifth is perhaps the most Mozartian quartet Beethoven ever composed.

There is more to the Mozart legacy in Beethoven’s Op.18, No.5, than simply the stylistic influence of a great master. Beethoven was especially impressed with Mozart’s Quartet in A, K. 464, copying out two movements for himself by hand, and later exclaiming, “That’s what I call a work!” It’s no coincidence that his own quartet, in the same key, draws several features directly from Mozart’s. One of these is the switch of the inner movements, putting the minuet before the “slow” movement.

The third movement is not really a “slow” movement, as such, despite the

tempo marking (*Andantino*). The theme and five variations differ in tempi and rhythmic activity, but Beethoven wrote the indication “pastoral” on the score, showing that he still intended it to have the function of a slow movement, if not always the tempo. The theme itself is little more than a scale pattern, harmonized in 6ths. Because of its simplicity, it’s easily recognized in each of the variations, while allowing for a wider diversity of treatments.

String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat major, Op. 74, “Harp”

I. Poco adagio; Allegro

The first decade of the 19th century was remarkably prolific and dynamic for Beethoven—a period that catapulted him from a local piano celebrity in Vienna to an uncontested position as the leading composer in Europe. But the last year of that decade, 1809, turned out to be an especially unproductive one. Beethoven was concerned at the time about the political situation in Vienna, a city under attack from Napoleon’s French forces. He even remarked that the summer of 1809 was filled with nothing but the explosions of bombs and canons, making composition impossible for him. It was only when he escaped to the countryside away from Vienna that he regained some physical and psychological comfort, and composed the String Quartet in E-flat, Op. 74. But his rate of composition slowed again after he returned to the city. The following year was even less productive.

The Op. 74 quartet belongs to Beethoven’s middle period, but it includes both a looking back and a view forward. The cool response to his “Razumovsky” quartets in 1806 had troubled Beethoven, and he privately decided

that his next quartet would be more accessible, more immediately pleasing to the listener. And while Op. 74 is indeed an unproblematic, user-friendly quartet, it can also be regarded as the first step toward the composer’s later style, not least in its contrapuntal complexity and the tendency to avoid dramatic passion in favor of quietude.

The first movement opens with an *Adagio*—a nod to Haydn, who favored slow introductions. It is questioning and hesitant, in a reserved manner that would come to characterize the composer’s later quartets. After this restrained opening, the *Allegro* that follows bears the classical hallmarks of balance and untroubled lightness. Extended *pizzicato* passages, especially in the development section, have earned the quartet its nickname, the “Harp.” No quartet to that time had employed *pizzicato* so extensively, especially in passages that are not merely accompaniment.

String Quartet No. 15 in A minor, Op. 132

III. Molto adagio: Andante

Beethoven hadn’t composed any string quartets for twelve years when in 1822 he received a commission from Prince Nicolas Galitzin of Russia (who was himself a talented cellist) for “one, two, or three new quartets.” The composer obliged, and produced three new quartets dedicated to Galitzin—the Opp. 127, 130, and 132—though it was several years before they were completed. The A-minor quartet (Op. 132) was completed in July 1825 and privately premiered in November of that year, but there were so many delays in publishing it that the work didn’t appear in printed score until after the composer’s death.

Early in the spring of 1825, as he was working on this quartet, Beethoven contracted a serious illness. His recovery is commemorated in the title he gave to the third movement: “Holy Song of Thanksgiving of a Convalescent to the Deity” (marked *Molto adagio*). Occasionally in the more solemn moments of his late works—the “Incarnatus” from the *Missa solemnis*, for example—Beethoven reverts to the harmonic language of the church modes as a contrast to functional tonal

harmony. In this movement of Op. 132, he uses the Lydian mode (with a raised-fourth scale degree) in the hymn-like phrases and the more rapid figuration that frames them. The hymn is restated and varied twice more, with a brilliant D-major passage (which Beethoven marks, “Feeling new strength”) between them. This, the last of Beethoven’s extended slow movements, ends quietly on a chord of astounding peacefulness, with all instruments playing pianissimo in the treble register.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

CHRISTOPHER PULGRAM, violin

Founder and director of the Peachtree String Quartet, Christopher Pulgram has been a first violinist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra since 1992 and has recorded extensively with the orchestra. Since 2007, he has also been the concertmaster of the Wintergreen Festival Orchestra. He performed in Europe and the U.S. as principal violinist with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra and as a soloist with orchestras in the U.S., Switzerland and Italy, including 2001, 2003, and 2005 performances with the DeKalb Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Pulgram has served as concertmaster of the Elysium Chamber Orchestra in Atlanta and as assistant concertmaster for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for two years. He has recorded with Usher and the group Collective Soul on the album, *Dosage*. Mr. Pulgram recently recorded with Bruce Springsteen.

Mr. Pulgram graduated under the tutelage of Ruggiero Ricci from the University of Michigan’s School of Music, where he received the Norman F. Maier Distinguished Music Student Award. As winner of the Atlanta Pro-Mozart Society Competition, Mr. Pulgram attended the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, where he coached with Sandor Vegh. After studies at the International Menuhin Academy in Gstaad, Switzerland, Christopher Pulgram toured Europe, Scandinavia, Canada, and the Far East, performing as soloist and chamber musician with Yehudi Menuhin and Camarata Lysy. He has recorded on the EMI label with Maestro Menuhin at the Abbey Road studios in London. Mr. Pulgram was the violinist of the Atlanta Chamber Players for 15 seasons, and has recorded extensively with that ensemble.

SISSI YUQING ZHANG, violin

Violinist Sissi Yuqing Zhang is a native of China. With a bachelor and master of music degree from the Juilliard School, she has studied extensively with Ronald Copes, Lewis Kaplan, Ani Kavafian and Ida Kavafian. Sissi is active in chamber, solo, and orchestral playing. Her appearances have included the U.S., Europe and her mother country, China.

Sissi's festival experiences include the New York String Seminar, Juilliard ChamberFest, Sarasota Music Festival, Bowdoin International Music Festival, Kneisel Hall, Music Academy of the West, Fontainebleau School of Arts in France, Schleswig-Holstein Music festival in Germany, and Verbier Festival Orchestra. At these festivals and also at Juilliard, she had the privilege to work with world renowned conductors such as Christoph Eschenbach, Charles Dutoit, Alan Gilber, Manfred Honeck, Jamie Laredo, Peter Ounjian, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Josef Silverstein, Michael Tilson Thomas, Krzysztof Urbanski, David Zinman, Josef Silverstein. Her master class instructors include James Ehnes, Glenn Dicterow, Pemala Frank, Maricio Fuks, Frank Huang, Feng Ning, Aaron Rosand and Antje Weithaas. Her solo experience with orchestra includes winning the concerto competition at the Music Academy of the West. She is also a founding member of the Hsin Trio, which was in the Juilliard Honors Chamber Music and made its debut recital in Alice Tully Hall, New York.

Before starting her first season with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, she was pursuing her master of musical arts degree at the Yale School of Music, where she served as concertmaster of Yale Philharmonia and Yale Opera.

Apart from being a professional musician, Sissi is also very enthusiastic about learning new languages and art history. She has fulfilled four semesters in French study at Columbia University and one semester each in architecture and art history at Yale University.

YANG-YOON KIM, viola

Yang-Yoon Kim joined the Atlanta Symphony in April 2009. She received her bachelor of music degree at Korean National University of Arts, and a master's of music at Indiana University, where she studied with Atar Adar, Alan DeVeritch, and Stanley Ritchie. She is currently pursuing an artist diploma and doctor of music performance at Indiana University.

She was the winner of the 1995 Se-Gye Newspaper Music Competition, First Place recipient of the LG Art Center Chamber Music Festival Audition, Third Place winner of the Dong-Ah Newspaper Music Competition, a 2003 Finalist in the William Primrose International Viola Competition, a 2004 Viola Prize recipient at the Kingsville International Competition, Third Place winner of the WAMSO Young Artist Competition, and the 2006 Performance Certificate Winner (Special Distinction) at Indiana University.

She has performed all over the world and has been a featured soloist for the Minsker Kammer Orchestra and the Kumho Chamber Music Society. She has performed at Indiana University, where she played with the Dubinsky Memorial Concert-Piano Quartet and the Residence String Quartet, which was honored by Kuttner Quartet Audition. She has been a featured guest with the Young Artists Concert Series in Seoul, Korea, and played in the Dubinsky Memorial Concert-Piano Quartet.

THOMAS CARPENTER, cello

Thomas Carpenter, cellist, is in his third season with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra as well as his first as cellist of the Peachtree String Quartet. He recently came from the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida. Originally from Charlottesville, Virginia, he completed his undergraduate degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music, studying with Stephen Geber, and completed his master's degree with Norman Fischer at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music.

Mr. Carpenter has participated in music festivals throughout the U.S. and Europe, including the Grand Teton Music Festival, the New York String Orchestra Seminar, the Britten Pears Orchestra, the Tanglewood Music Center, and principal cellist of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. Mr. Carpenter was also a winner of the New World Symphony concerto competition and performed Ernest Bloch's Schelomo with the orchestra.

He particularly enjoys teaching and, in addition to working with his students in Atlanta, Thomas was able to travel to Medellin, Colombia, as part of a partnership with the New World Symphony and Universidad EAFIT, to teach students from both Colombia and Chile. Aside from music, he enjoys playing soccer, swimming, golf, hiking, biking, camping, and cooking.



DAVID FUNG, host

Concert pianist David Fung is widely recognized for interpretations that are elegant and refined, yet intensely poetic and uncommonly expressive. He appears regularly with the world's premier ensembles, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, National Orchestra of Belgium, National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, San Diego Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and the major orchestras in Australia.

Mr. Fung garnered international attention as a major prizewinner in the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition in Brussels and the Arthur Rubinstein Piano International Masters Competition in Tel Aviv. In Tel Aviv, he was further distinguished by the Chamber Music and Mozart Prizes, awarded in areas in which Mr. Fung has a particularly passionate interest. Mr. Fung is the first piano graduate of the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles. Mr. Fung is on faculty at the University of Georgia and is a Steinway Artist.



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