

PROGRAM NOTES

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String Quartet in C minor, Op. 18, No. 4 in C minor . . .

Ludwig van Beethoven

(Born December 16, 1770, in Bonn; died March 26, 1827, in Vienna)

In his first string quartets, Beethoven summed up the styles and the accomplishments of his two great predecessors, Haydn and Mozart, and prepared for the great advances in technique and expression that he was to make in his mature quartets. His Op. 18 is a set of six that he wrote between 1798 and 1800. They were published in 1801 with a dedication to his noble friend, Prince Franz Joseph Lobkowitz, who spent a large part of his great fortune on music.

At the time that he was working on this quartet, Beethoven had already begun to suffer the progressive hearing loss that burdened him during his entire adult life, but he was just approaching the full command of the enormous creative powers that account for his special place in history. "Some excellent works by Beethoven are outstanding among recent publications," a reviewer wrote shortly after the first three quartets appeared. "They give perfect proof of his art -- but they need to be played well and heard often, for they are very difficult to perform and are in no sense 'popular.'" They may not have initially been very much liked, but since then, they have become very nearly the most popular works in all the string quartet literature, and "popular" in the best sense. Historically, they are at once the final, climactic masterpieces of the 18th century and the first, forward-looking ones of the 19th.

The six quartets of Opus 18 were published in two books of three during the summer and autumn of 1801, each book presenting its contents in a sequence that a group of players might best enjoy when reading through them from beginning to end. This Quartet opens the second book with a melodious, strong, thoughtfulness; it is the only one of the six in a minor key. Its origins are shrouded in mystery, for none of Beethoven's preliminary sketches or any other early documentation of its existence has been found.

The first movement of the quartet is an expressive, soaring Allegro, ma non tanto. This stormy movement's final section is noteworthy: it gives a new understanding to the idea of the coda. In Beethoven's early quartets, it has become more important than it was in Haydn's quartets. Here the coda brings back the minor tonality and with it an anxious feeling, soon after the recapitulation has, following the convention of the time, returned the movement to the bright major mode.

The next movement begins with an uncertain feel, and it is not really a slow movement of the type that was commonly found in this position. This quartet marks the only time in Beethoven's whole quartet oeuvre that he actually has not included a slow movement. Instead, he calls the delicate second movement a Scherzo, and marks it Andante scherzoso, quasi allegretto, but in fact, it is constructed like a sonata-form movement, and

not a scherzo at all. It opens with a *fugato* and features contrapuntal imitation throughout its entire length.

To the third movement Beethoven gave the name Minuet, *Allegretto*, but it really can be understood as a scherzo. Modulating into many distant keys, it brings back the darker mood of the opening movement. The finale, *Allegro*, is a spirited rhythmic rondo that is sometimes thought to resemble Haydn's popular *Gypsy Rondo* or the finale of Mozart's great *G minor Symphony*, or both. What is unusual in this movement is that the listener becomes surprised when repeatedly, (six times) the music stops at a fermata, and when finally the listener has adjusted to the pattern and predicts its repetition in the climax, Beethoven defeats those expectations and lets the music continue unabated, catching the listener off guard yet again.

***The Space Between* for string quartet. . . Anna Weesner (Born May 13, 1965 in Iowa City, Iowa)**

Anna Weesner's music has been described as "animated and full of surprising turns" (*New York Times*, Oct. 10, 2003), as "a haunting conspiracy" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 24, 2001) and it has been cited as demonstrating "an ability to make complex textures out of simple devices" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*, March 27, 2001). Composer John Harbison has written, "None of it proceeds in obvious ways. Her vocabulary is subtle and rather elusive; the effect is paradoxically confident and decisive."

Weesner is the recipient of a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship and a 2008 award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has received many other awards, including a 2006 Award for Excellence in the Arts from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, where she was in residence during the summers of 2007 and 2008, and a Pew Fellowship in the Arts (2003). She has been in residence at the MacDowell Colony, the Wellesley Composers Conference, Blue Mountain Center, the Summit Institute for the Arts and Humanities, the Seal Bay Festival, and at Fondation Royaumont.

Chamber music for strings represents a significant portion of Weesner's music. Her recent piano trio, *Lift High, Reckon—Fly Low, Come Close*, commissioned by Open End, has been performed frequently. She has also written solo pieces for violin and cello, three string quartets, and duos for violin and piano and for viola and piano. Weesner's music for larger ensembles has been performed by leading ensembles, including the American Composers Orchestra, Metamorphosen, the Indianapolis Symphony, and the orchestra of the Curtis Institute.

Weesner, who grew up in New Hampshire, currently lives in Philadelphia, where she is Associate Professor at the University of Pennsylvania. As an undergraduate at Yale, she studied flute with Thomas Nyfenger and composition with Jonathan Berger and Michael Friedmann. She completed a D.M.A. at Cornell University where her teachers included Steven Stucky, Roberto Sierra and Karel Husa. She has also studied with John Harbison and George Tsontakis.

She has written her own note for *The Space Between*, composed in 2012:

“If I listen for—and think about—what I really mean to indicate with my markings for soft and loud in *The Space Between*, I come across the idea that in addition to volume, or dynamic range, those markings refer to a notion of *near* or *far*, and also of *private* or *public*. The piece opens with a strangely loud, aggressive and, I’d say, *public* unison in all four players that is immediately contrasted with a soft and, I’d say, *private* high note in the first violin alone. In a sense, the dialogue between these two “voices” travels the entire piece. I suppose this dichotomy might also be described as an idea of the *one* (private) and the *many* (public). (It seems a happy thing that words might fail here, as it helps highlight the ineffable and nonverbal aspects of what music can do. These ideas—of near and far, public and private—matter to me, but I want always to leave the door open to whatever expressive experience a listener might come across with a given piece.) At any rate, the string quartet seems a perfect medium for exploration of these sonic possibilities of blend and individuality. The notion of the sound of *near* versus *far* might also be heard in a temporal way, as in the sound of an earlier time juxtaposed with a sound of now. And indeed, I’ve experimented with asking the quartet to play various passages “as you would play Mozart”, for example, or in reference to some other style of composer. In this way, I hope to tap in to those performance modes that come so easily to experienced players and to listeners as well. One question I think this piece attempts to ask is about melody, about what it means to write a simple melody in a string quartet now. The simplest and most straightforwardly presented melody comes deliberately rather late in the game in this piece, which I hear as being related to the expression of near and far, or then and now.

“The piece unfolds as a multi-movement piece played continuously. *The Space Between* grew out of a quartet I wrote for the Call and Response project by the Cypress Quartet in 2001. The connection between this piece and the first movement of that piece is evident, but the presence of new material and recasting of salvaged material makes this a distinct piece. I’m deeply grateful to the amazing quartets I’ve had the opportunity to work with while writing this piece: the Cypress Quartet, the Cassatt Quartet and the Daedalus Quartet—incredible and deeply thoughtful musicians all.”

Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, in B minor, Op. 115 (1891) . . .

Johannes Brahms

(Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg; died April 3, 1897, in Vienna)

In the 1890's, the fashionable Alpine resort town of Bad Ischl had become Brahms's second home. There, in 1891, on his 58th birthday, he drew up his will. He subjectively felt old, worried that his creative powers were leaving him, that it was time to prepare for the end, and that perhaps he would write no more. Two months later he sent a new piece to a friend, a trio with clarinet, that he said was “twin to an even greater folly.” The “greater folly” was to be one of his most moving works, this *Clarinet Quintet*. The clarinet had never had an important place in his music before this final burst of inspiration; nevertheless, his last four pieces of chamber music, the *Trio*, this *Quintet* and two *Sonatas for Clarinet*, all resulted from his admiration for a particular clarinetist. This clarinetist, a man Brahms first met in 1891 and called a “dear nightingale,” was Richard Mühlfeld (1856-1907).

Mühlfeld was trained as a violinist and taught himself to play the clarinet. In 1873, he joined the violin section of the fine orchestra that the Duke of Meiningen maintained at his court, and in 1876, he became its first clarinetist. In March 1891, Brahms went to Meiningen as an

honored guest to hear von Bülow conduct some of his works. On one of the programs Mühlfeld played a Weber concerto for clarinet. “The clarinet cannot be played better,” Brahms, known to be sparing of praise, wrote to Clara Schumann. In July, when he had completed both the trio and the quintet, he reported to Clara, “I look forward to returning to Meiningen if only for the leisure of hearing them. You have never heard a clarinet player like the one they have there. He is absolutely the best I know of.” Clara read through the score of the *Clarinet Quintet* at the piano with her daughter and wrote back that it was a “heavenly work.” When she heard Mühlfeld play it in 1893, she wrote to Brahms, “I am not feeling very well, but I must write you a line after having heard your exquisite Quintet at last. What a magnificent thing it is, and how moving! Words are inadequate to express my feelings. He plays so wonderfully, he must have been born for your music.”

If Brahms had not encountered Mühlfeld when he did, perhaps some other performer or instrument would have caught his interest and sparked the fire of invention again. There is no way to know, but posterity is grateful to Mühlfeld for these last glorious works, and for the *Clarinet Quintet* most of all. The music is mellow and warm, even sensuous, but it is also a touching valedictory, introspective and retrospective, a calm and beautiful farewell. The movements of the quintet are interrelated, as had become usual in Brahms's late chamber music, by patterns, motives, turns of musical phrase that appear and reappear in the long course of the work. At the very end, in the coda to the finale, the music that opens the work comes back to round out the score with great elegance.

After the gentle melancholy of the *Allegro* first movement comes a remarkable *Adagio* in a simple three-part form. It begins with a floating melody in the clarinet, richly but quietly accompanied by the muted strings. A contrasting middle section does not introduce new material but instead turns the first theme into a dark, wild gypsy rhapsody.

The third movement opens as a simple and gentle *Andantino* with two themes, which Brahms soon transforms into a scherzo-like *Presto non assai, ma con sentimento* that starts quietly in the strings alone. Despite the apparent great change in tempo, Brahms writes the music so that although it looks and feels as though it is going by at a great rate, the actual beat is very nearly the same as that of the opening music. The last movement, *Con moto*, is a masterly, Mozartian set of variations on a theme that seems reminiscent of the first and third movements. As it proceeds, the opening theme from the first movement reappears as part of and in combination with the music that is new here, as though it were itself new.

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

DAEDALUS STRING QUARTET

Praised by *The New Yorker* as “a fresh and vital young participant in what is a golden age of American string quartets,” the Daedalus Quartet has established itself as a leader among the new generation of string ensembles. Since winning the top prize in the Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2001, the Daedalus Quartet has impressed critics and listeners alike with the security, technical finish, interpretive unity, and sheer gusto of its performances. *The New York Times* has praised the Daedalus Quartet’s “insightful and vibrant” Haydn, the “impressive intensity” of their Beethoven, their “luminous” Berg, and the “riveting focus” of their Dutilleux. The Washington Post in turn has acclaimed their

performance of Mendelssohn for its “rockets of blistering virtuosity,” while the Houston Chronicle has described the “silvery beauty” of their Schubert and the “magic that hushed the audience” when they played Ravel, the Boston Globe the “finesse and fury” of their Shostakovich, the Toronto Globe and Mail the “thrilling revelation” of their Hindemith, and the Cincinnati Enquirer the “tremendous emotional power” of their Brahms.

Since its founding the Daedalus Quartet has performed in many of the world’s leading musical venues; in the United States and Canada these include Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center (Great Performers series), the Library of Congress, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., and Boston’s Gardner Museum, as well as on major series in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. Abroad the ensemble has been heard in such famed locations as the Musikverein in Vienna, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Cité de la Musique in Paris, and in leading venues in Japan.

The Daedalus Quartet has won plaudits for its adventurous exploration of contemporary music, most notably the compositions of Elliott Carter, George Perle, György Kurtág and György Ligeti. Among the works the ensemble has premiered is David Horne’s Flight from the Labyrinth, commissioned for the Quartet by the Caramoor Festival; Fred Lerdaahl’s Third String Quartet, commissioned by Chamber Music America; and Lawrence Dillon’s String Quartet No. 4, commissioned by the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts. In 2013, the Fromm Foundation awarded a commission to the Daedalus Quartet and composer Huck Hodge; the quartet will premiere Hodge’s new work, based on the writings of Jorge Luis Borges, Carl Jung, and the contemporary Buddhist poet Ko Un, in April 2016.

The Quartet has also collaborated with some of the world’s finest instrumentalists: these include pianists Marc-André Hamelin, Simone Dinnerstein, Awadagin Pratt, Joyce Yang, and Benjamin Hochman; clarinetists Paquito D’Rivera, Ricardo Morales, and Alexander Fiterstein; and violists Roger Tapping and Donald Weilerstein.

To date the Quartet has forged associations with some of America’s leading classical music and educational institutions: Carnegie Hall, through its European Concert Hall Organization (ECHO) Rising Stars program; and Lincoln Center, which appointed the Daedalus Quartet as the Chamber Music Society Two quartet for 2005-07. The Daedalus Quartet has served as Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Pennsylvania since 2006. In 2007, the Quartet was awarded Lincoln Center’s Martin E. Segal Award. The Quartet won Chamber Music America’s Guarneri String Quartet Award, which funded a three-year residency in Suffolk County, Long Island from 2007-2010.

The Daedalus’ recording, for Bridge Records, features the string quartets of George Perle, and has been described as “disc with some unforgettable contemporary chamber music” (Classical Lost and Found), and the Strad Magazine praised the quartet’s “exemplary intonation and balance.” In the spring of 2014, the Daedalus Quartet recorded Joan Tower’s “White Water” (written for Daedalus) as well as her “Dumbarton Quintet” (with pianist Blair McMillen). The quartet’s debut recording, music of Stravinsky, Sibelius, and Ravel, was released by Bridge Records in 2006. A Bridge recording of the Haydn’s complete “Sun” Quartets, Op. 20, was released on two CDs in July 2010. An album of chamber music by Lawrence Dillon (Fall 2010) and the complete string quartets of Fred Lerdaahl (Fall 2011) followed.

Among the highlights of the Daedalus Quartet's 2015-16 season were a pair of performances at Shanghai Concert Hall, a return to the Bard Music Festival performing the music of Revueltas, Copland, and Carlos Chavez, the US premiere of Wolfgang Rihm's Sextet, at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the world premieres of works by Robert Maggio and Benjamin C. S. Boyle (with baritone Randall Scarlata and pianist Marcantonio Barone) at the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and a return to the Bard Music festival, playing the music of Verdi, Puccini, and Respighi. In the 2016-17 season, the quartet will premiere new works by Fred Lerdahl (in Philadelphia) and Louis Karchin (in San Francisco), present a program based around the Kreutzer Sonata for the Schubert Club in St. Paul, MN, with actress Linda Kelsey, and collaborate in performance with jazz bassist John Patitucci at World Café in Philadelphia.

The award-winning members of the Daedalus Quartet hold degrees from the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute, Cleveland Institute, and Harvard University.

OSKAR ESPINA RUIZ, CLARINET

Oskar Espina Ruiz has performed at major concert halls and festivals to high critical acclaim, including concerto performances at the Philharmonic Hall in St. Petersburg, Russia, and recitals in New York City, Washington DC, Moscow, Madrid, Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. During the 2017-2018 season he is appearing in concert in Australia, China and the US, is getting back to the recording studio to record works by Arriaga and Isasi, and will work on a new clarinet concerto dedicated to him by composer Alfonso Fuentes, to be premiered in 2019. Oskar Espina Ruiz has appeared as soloist with the St. Petersburg State Academic Symphony (Russia), St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic (Russia), Orquesta Sinfónica de la Ciudad de Asunción (Paraguay) and Bilbao Symphony (Spain). His chamber music collaborations include the American, Shanghai, Cassatt, Escher and Daedalus string quartets, the Quintet of the Americas, pianists Victoria Schwartzman, Benjamin Hochman, Ursula Oppens and Anthony Newman, cellist David Geber (founder, American String Quartet) and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra artists. He has recorded for the Bridge, Kobaltone and Prion labels, receiving high critical acclaim by fellow clarinetists Richard Stoltzman and Charles Neidich for his solo recording "Julián Menéndez Rediscovered." He has been described by the press as a "masterful soloist" and a "highly expressive" clarinetist. He holds a DMA from Stony Brook University, where his major teachers were Charles Neidich and Ayako Oshima. Currently he is artistic director of the Treetops Chamber Music Society, in Stamford, CT, and the Music Mountain Festival in Falls Village, CT. From 2009 to 2011 he was on the clarinet faculty at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, in San Juan, PR, and since 2011 is clarinet artist faculty at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, in Winston-Salem, NC, while keeping a busy concert schedule.