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JUILLIARD
STRING QUARTET

Saturday, February 27, 2016 ~ 2:00 pm
Coolidge Auditorium
Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building

The ROBERT MANN FUND FOR CHAMBER MUSIC was established in 1997 on the occasion of the retirement of Robert Mann from the Juilliard String Quartet, to honor his distinguished musical contributions to the Library of Congress over a span of nearly 50 years. The fund supports activities directly related to the creation, presentation and preservation of chamber music at the Library of Congress.

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The Library of Congress
Coolidge Auditorium
Saturday, February 27, 2016 — 2:00 pm

THE ROBERT MANN FUND FOR CHAMBER MUSIC
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

JOSEPH LIN, VIOLIN
RONALD COPES, VIOLIN
ROGER TAPPING, VIOLA
JOEL KROSNICK, CELLO



Program

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

String Quartet in C minor (Quartettsatz), D.703 (1820)
Allegro assai

ELLIOTT CARTER (1908-2012)

String Quartet no. 1 (1950-51)
I. Fantasia: *Maestoso–Allegro scorrevole*
II. *Allegro scorrevole–Adagio*
III. Variations: [quarter] = 120

INTERMISSION

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Quartet in F major, op. 135 (1826)

Allegretto

Vivace

Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo—Più lento—Tempo I

Grave ma non troppo tratto—Adagio—Allegro—Grave ma non troppo tratto—

Allegro—Poco adagio—Tempo I



About the Program

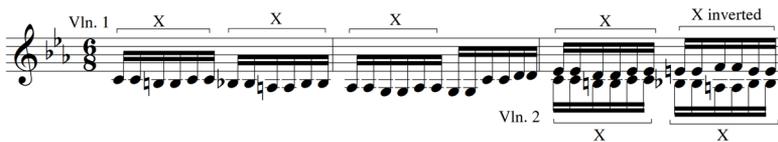
FRANZ SCHUBERT, String Quartet in C minor, D. 703

When Schubert began working on his C-minor string quartet in 1820, it had been four years since his last effort in the medium, and over three years would pass before he would return to the quartet. The outcome of his 1820 foray consists of a single movement, plus a tantalizing opening to a second movement that was never completed. The finished movement is commonly referred to as Schubert's "Quartettsatz," and it has enjoyed a special status alongside the "Unfinished" Symphony (D. 759) as a piece that can stand on its own in performance.¹ It was not published, however, until fifty years after its composition.

The opening of the Quartettsatz features the staggered entrance of a quiet but agitated measured-tremolo figure that carries the germ of the primary theme. This idea is something of an eerie precursor to the figuration that Schubert would use a bit later in the B-minor "Unfinished" symphony, linking the two texturally:

EXAMPLE 1

a)



Schubert, String Quartet in C minor, D. 703: mm.1-3 simplified

1 Another aspect that has been noted about the work is that the cello part is more actively involved; Martin Chusid had a diplomatic explanation for this: "This reflects, perhaps, the fact that Schubert was no longer living at home and writing for the family quartet. His father, the cellist, appears to have had modest performing skills." Chusid, Martin, "Schubert's chamber music" in *The Cambridge Companion to Schubert*, Christopher Gibbs, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 178.

b)

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Schubert, Symphony in B minor, D. 759, I: mm.9-10 violins

The tremolos pile up, building to an emphatic arrival on an unexpected chord (a first inversion flat-II "Neapolitan" chord²—this is important to mention in part due to the melodically and harmonically significant half-step between the roots C and D-flat). We then hear a non-tremolando version of the main theme presented in the first violin. The violin also leads in the beautiful second theme (now in A-flat), with the inner voices continuing the groupings of three that prevailed in the opening theme. The tremolo returns the music to a turbulent transitional space, leading to G major, the final key of this three-key exposition. While the initial material in G outlines a new melody, Schubert effortlessly incorporates the chromatic groups of three notes as part of the accompaniment; in addition, he cleverly includes the Neapolitan of G (an A-flat triad) that outlines the second theme in the cello at the close of the passage—later this technique will give renewed emphasis to the original Neapolitan chord of D-flat just prior to the work's conclusion.

A-flat is emphasized just after the G-major close of the exposition, again bringing to the fore the half-step connections of the material both melodically and harmonically. While the second and third themes are further explored along with the transitional materials, eventually settling into C major, Schubert holds the first theme in reserve. He then repurposes the tremolando introduction as a fierce coda-reprise to close the movement in C minor. It is an elegant and dramatic conclusion to a piece that works successfully on its own, as much as we would have liked for Schubert to have completed the full quartet.



ELLIOTT CARTER, *String Quartet no. 1*

The string quartets of Elliott Carter are among his great achievements, and the first quartet was something of a watershed work for him. In addition to many of his other works, the Library of Congress holds manuscript materials related to the *String Quartet no. 1*, to the tune of some 538 pages, all of which are available to view on our website. As the volume of material may suggest, the work is quite involved, featuring harmonic and tempo-based concepts³ (including the idea of "metric modulation") that are integral to Carter's later music. For those interested in an introduction to the technical side of Carter's work, Carter himself recommended David

² How one assigns flavors to each note in a Neapolitan chord depends on the region, but typically one finds a combination of chocolate, vanilla and strawberry.

³ These tempo alterations are not reflected in the work listing due to their frequency and complexity.

Schiff's *The Music of Elliott Carter*, which offers insights about some of Carter's techniques. Whenever possible, we prefer to let the composer offer thoughts on a work, and in this case we do have several notes from Carter. They are non-technical and offer an interesting perspective on the circumstances of the first quartet's composition, as well as a brief description of the music. In addition to his description of the environment in which the quartet was composed, Carter's mention of Ives offers as a source of inspiration is worth bearing in mind as the listener encounters music operating at different speeds. Robert Mann, the founding first violinist of the Juilliard Quartet, had this to say in his heartfelt introduction to an edition of Carter's string quartets: "After a lifelong involvement with this repertoire, I cannot escape the conclusion that Elliott Carter in his five quartets has created a musical world that for its boldness of design, integrity of form, polyphonic interplay of voices, virtuosic use of instruments and profound emotional expressiveness is as fulfilling as any in the entire string quartet literature."⁴ For the dedicated performer and the listener open to the experience, spending time with Carter's music is indeed time well invested.

Notes from the composer:⁵

... The *First Quartet* was "written largely for my own satisfaction and grew out of an effort to understand myself," as the late Joseph Wood Krutch (a neighbor during the 1950-51 year of this quartet) wrote of his book *The Modern Temper*. For there were so many emotional and expressive experiences that I kept having, and so many notions of processes and continuities, especially musical ones—fragments I could find no ways to use in my compositions—that I decided to leave my usual New York activities to seek the undisturbed quiet to work these out. The decision to stay in a place in the Lower Sonoran Desert near Tucson, Arizona, brought me by chance into contact with that superb naturalist Joe Krutch, who was then writing *The Desert Year*. Our almost daily meetings led to fascinating talks about the ecology of the region—how birds, animals, insects, and plants had adapted to the heat and the limited water supply, which consists of infrequent, spectacular but brief cloudbursts that for an hour seem about to wash everything away, and then very long droughts. There were trips to remote places such as Carr Canyon, the wild-bird paradise, but mainly it was right around the house that exotica (for an Easterner) could be seen—comic road runners, giant sugaros [sic], flowering ocatillos, all sharing this special, dry world. It was indeed a kind of "magic mountain,"⁶ and its specialness (for me) certainly encouraged the specialness (for me at that time) of the quartet as I worked on it during the fall and winter of '50 and the spring of '51.

Among the lessons this piece taught me was one about my relationship with performers and audiences. For as I wrote, an increasing number of musical difficulties arose for prospective performers and listeners, which the musical conception seemed to demand. I often wondered

4 Mann, Robert, "The String Quartets of Elliott Carter" in Elliott Carter, *The String Quartets* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc. and Hendon Music, Inc./Boosey & Hawkes, 1998), iii.

5 These notes have been extracted from Elliott Carter's 1970 program notes about his first two string quartets, as provided with the Nonesuch recording of the works by The Composers Quartet, H-71249 stereo. Reproduced in Carter, Elliott, "String Quartets No. 1 (1951) and No. 2 (1959)" in Else Stone and Kurt Stone, eds., *The Writings of Elliott Carter: An American Composer Looks at Modern Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 274-278. Carter's comments related to the second or both quartets have been omitted and signified by ellipses.

6 This reference is to the Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. Carter, 274-5.

whether the quartet would ever have any performers or listeners. Yet within a few years of its composition it won an important prize and was played more than any work I had written up to that time. It even received praise from admired colleagues. Up to this time, I had quite consciously been trying to write for a certain audience—not that which frequented concerts of traditional music, nor that which had supported the avant-garde of the '20's (which in the '40's had come to seem elitist) but a new, more progressive and more popular audience. I had felt that it was my professional and social responsibility to write interesting, direct, easily understood music.

With this quartet, however, I decided to focus on what had always been one of my own musical interests, that of "advanced" music, and to follow out, with a minimal concern for their reception, my own musical thoughts along these lines. Now I think there is every reason to assume that if a composer has been well taught and has had experience, then his private judgment of comprehensibility and quality is what he must rely on if he is to communicate importantly.

Like the desert horizons I saw daily while it was being written, the *First Quartet* presents a continuous unfolding and changing of expressive characters—one woven into the other or emerging from it—on a large scale. The general plan was suggested by Jean Cocteau's film *Le sang d'un poète*, in which the entire dream-like action is framed by an interrupted slow-motion shot of a tall brick chimney in an empty lot being dynamited. Just as the chimney begins to fall apart, the shot is broken off and the entire movie follows, after which the shot of the chimney is resumed at the point it left off, showing its disintegration in mid-air, and closing the film with its collapse on the ground. A similar interrupted continuity is employed in this quartet's starting with a cadenza for cello alone that is continued by the first violin alone at the very end. On one level, I interpret Cocteau's idea (and my own) as establishing the difference between external time (measured by the falling chimney, or the cadenza) and internal dream time (the main body of the work)—the dream time lasting but a moment of external time but from the dreamer's point of view, a long stretch. In the *First Quartet*, the opening cadenza also acts as an introduction to the rest, and when it reappears at the end, it forms the last variation in a set of variations. Not only is this plan like that of many "circular" works of modern literature, but the interlocked presentation of ideas parallels many characteristic devices found in Joyce and others—the controlled "stream of consciousness," the "epiphany," the many uses of punctuation, of grammatical ambiguities, including the use of quotation. This quartet, for instance, quotes the opening theme of Ives's *First Violin Sonata*, first played by the cello in its lowest register after each of the other instruments has come in near the beginning. A rhythmic idea from Conlon Nancarrow's *First Rhythmic Study* is quoted at the beginning of the *Variations*. These two composers, through both their music and their conversation, had been a great help to me in imagining this work and were quoted in homage.

...The *First* [Quartet] is in four large sections: *Fantasia*, *Allegro scorrevole*, *Adagio* and *Variations*. This scheme is broken by two pauses, one in the middle of the *Allegro scorrevole* and other just after the *Variations* have been started by the cello, while the other instruments were concluding the *Adagio*. The first section, *Fantasia*, contrasts many themes of different character frequently counterpointed against each other. It concludes with the four main ideas being heard together,

fading in and out of prominence. This leads directly to a rapid *Allegro scorrevole*, a sound-mosaic of brief fragments, interrupted once by a dramatic outburst, then resumed, again interrupted by a pause, again resumed, and finally interrupted by another outburst that forms the beginning of the *Adagio*.

During this extended slow movement, the two muted violins play soft, contemplative music answered by an impassioned, rough recitative of the viola and cellos. This *Adagio* forms the extreme point of divergence between simultaneous ideas in the quartet and has been led up to and is led away from by many lesser degrees of differentiation. The last section, *Variations*, consists of a series of different themes repeated faster at each successive recurrence, some reaching their speed vanishing point sooner than others. One that persists almost throughout is the slow motive heard in separated notes played by the cello just before and after the pause that precedes the Variations. This motive passes through many stages of acceleration until it reaches a rapid tremolo near the end.

- Elliott Carter



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN, String Quartet in F major, op. 135

Did Beethoven know that his op. 135 string quartet would be among the last works he would complete? I would hazard the guess that, like most of us, Beethoven did not possess foreknowledge of his death; a view supported by his continued sketching. Yet it seems that the impulse to fit a "last work of Beethoven" into the Romantic construction of *Beethoven* often colors the interpretation of his final string quartet. The expectations of posterity are often brought to a head with the enigmatic motto of op. 135's final movement:

Example 2

Der Schwer Gefasste Entschluss
[The difficult/heavy resolution]

Grave	Allegro	
Muss es sein?	Es muss sein!	Es muss sein!
[Must it be?]	It must be!	It must be!]

Beethoven, String Quartet in F major, op. 135/IV: heading

There is no doubt that such a statement, isolated as it is in this context, bears a certain weighty gravitas. The movement associated with it, one might expect, would be a monumental struggle between something like fate and humanity, a work that takes its place in the pantheon of Beethoven's other late quartets. Yet for many, it does not achieve this, nor does it seem to aspire

to do so. The motivic cells in Example 2 are not only related one to the other, but can be found throughout the entire quartet—but what of the origin of their associated words? Without limiting the interpretive potential of Beethoven's meaning(s) here, there seems to be a more mundane origin for the words and material, heralding from Beethoven's light-hearted "Es muss sein" canon (WoO 196), a response to the need for a patron to "pay subscription dues."⁷ Does it mean then that a joke serves as the basis for the last quartet? If so, how does that square with the desire to ascribe profundity to the revered composer's last utterances? An alternative view might be to look at Beethoven as a composer whose musical ideas were fluid, and not linearly fixed in a progressive sense. After writing a work like the op. 131 string quartet, was there the need to write something comparable? Had he lived longer, my guess is that Beethoven would have continued to write music in ways that interested him, and it may or may not have fit the evolutionary narrative that history has ascribed to his output.

In Beethoven's op. 135 quartet, he returns to a traditional four-movement structure. This does not mean, however that all aspects of the quartet can be accounted for in a "traditional" sense; as K. M. Knittel points out, "...with the exception of the extremely solid and final-sounding cadence in bar 10..., there is very little about Op. 135/I that isn't problematic."⁸ The problems, however, tend to be more on the analytical side, and any perceived lack of clarity in the music may actually serve to enhance our appreciation of it—an expectation met is sometimes a missed opportunity. One aspect of the opening *Allegretto* that I will bring up here is the role of the opening grace notes, ascending step-wise from G to B-flat. In addition to Beethoven's manipulation of other motivically significant material in the movement, he also develops this idea, often paired with the opening four-note "main" melodic cell—he does not treat it simply as ornamentation. The melodic minor seventh is also featured periodically, and the minor-seventh scale degree (E-flat) is emphasized near the end of the first movement in a way that is palindromically mimicked (in a fashion) in the next movement.

The *Vivace* scherzo opens quietly with the top three voices entering on different beats above the cello's more active line. The playful F major is interrupted quite suddenly by an accented E-flat, which is then played in three octaves before slipping up to E natural. The emphasis on E-flat completes the local E-flat–F–E-flat mirror around the end of the first movement and the beginning of the second, and the half-step movement of E-flat to E is reminiscent of Beethoven's half-step gambit at the close of the scherzo in the "Hammerklavier" piano sonata, op. 106. As the op. 135 scherzo develops, a new figure is introduced that gains in prominence as the trio progresses. Isolated, it is a turn figure that typically looks like this:

Example 3



Beethoven, String Quartet in F major, op. 135/II: extracted motive from trio

7 Reynolds, Christopher, "The Representational Impulse in Late Beethoven, II: String Quartet in F Major, Op. 135," in *Acta Musicologica*, Vol. 60, Fasc. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 189. While this is a piece of lore that goes way back, Reynolds' article is mentioned here because he takes pains to show motivic relationships between the motto and the full quartet.

8 Knittel, K.M., "Late, Last, and Least: On Being Beethoven's Quartet in F Major, op. 135," in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (Jan. 2006), 33-35.

While Beethoven does play around a bit with inversions of this idea, it is fascinating how he eventually fixates on it to form a repeated bass figure in the lower three strings beneath a violin melody. It is insistently repeated almost fifty times, with alterations only in the dynamics, as the first violin plays a folksy tune above—it is simultaneously raucous and mesmerizing, and caused much consternation for early critics of the work. One overtly critical view about it is from Alexander Oulibicheff, writing in 1857, as quoted by Knittel: "Examine this fragment with the curious attention it deserves, and if you think, after that, that Beethoven heard it mentally as you can hear it with your ears, that he saw it on the paper with the same eyes as you, and that he attached sense to it—that is to say that the absolute nonsense that arises from it for everyone—then, in your opinion, Beethoven would not be a madman but an idiot."⁹ At this remove, many people (including me) find this passage to be remarkable in a positive way. In any case it was a novel development in a Beethoven trio section, and the scherzo closes with a return to the opening material.

The *Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo* is the last of a lifetime's worth of beautiful slow movements to flow from Beethoven's pen, and serves as the point of greatest stability in the quartet. The writing is subtle and not entirely without complication, especially near the close of the movement as the lower three voices form cumulative rising arpeggios and the first violin includes more thirty-second note melodic inflections. The soft tones of D-flat major contribute to the hushed demeanor of the music. The final movement, some aspects of which were mentioned above, is largely a light, positive affair that capitalizes on the question/answer dynamic of the motto material. The "question" errs on the weighty side, while the "answer" is given the bulk of the movement's space. While moments of tension do occur, Beethoven generally appears to be having fun with the material—the movement does not strike me as striving to be his "final will and testament," and perhaps such an interpretation would prevent us from appreciating the music's innate qualities. A *pizzicato* start to the coda yields at last to a sudden fortissimo outburst in F major to close the quartet, a work the reception of which may have been colored unfairly by chronological circumstance.

David Henning Plylar
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division

9 Oulibicheff, Alexander, *Beethoven, ses critiques et ses glossateurs* (Leipzig and Paris, 1857), 282, as translated and quoted in Knittel, 18.

About the Artists

The **Juilliard String Quartet**, widely known as the quintessential American string quartet, celebrates the 2015/16 season, the Quartet's 70th, with concert tours in North America, Europe and Asia; performances of Elliott Carter's String Quartet no. 1 and a new work by Richard Wernick commissioned for them by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society; and concerts honoring cellist Joel Krosnick at New York's Alice Tully Hall, the Ravinia Festival and the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, featuring the Schubert Cello Quintet with guest cellist Astrid Schween who succeeds Krosnick in the fall of 2016. The Quartet also celebrates a groundbreaking new interactive app on Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet, released in 2015 by Touchpress and the Juilliard School.

Founded in 1946, the Juilliard String Quartet was the first ensemble to play all six Bartók quartets in the United States, and its performances of Schoenberg's quartets helped establish the works as cornerstones of the modern string quartet literature. The Quartet's recordings of the Bartók and Schoenberg Quartets, as well as those of Debussy, Ravel and Beethoven, won Grammy Awards, and in 2011 the Quartet became the first classical music ensemble to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. In 2014 Sony Classical reissued the Quartet's landmark recordings of the first four Elliott Carter String Quartets together with the recently recorded Carter Quartet no. 5, making a complete historical document.

Over its seven decades, the Quartet has made manifest the credo of its founders to "play new works as if they were established masterpieces and established masterpieces as if they were new." In addition to Carter and Wernick, the Quartet's 2015/16 season repertoire features Schubert's *Quartettsatz*, Mozart's "Dissonance" Quartet, the Debussy Quartet and Beethoven's Quartet Op. 135. Their collaborations also include the Brahms Piano Quintet with Mihae Lee, as well as the Brahms G-major Sextet with cellist Marcy Rosen and former Juilliard Quartet violist Samuel Rhodes. Last season they toured North America, Asia and Europe with typically varied programming including Shulamit Ran's Quartet no. 2, "Vistas," works by Webern, Berg, Martinů and Elgar, as well as Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet. In 2013 they premiered the String Quartet no. 3, "Whereof man cannot speak . . ." by Jesse Jones.

Devoted master teachers, the members of the Juilliard String Quartet offer classes and open rehearsals when on tour. At the Juilliard School, where they are the String Quartet-in-Residence, all are sought-after members of the string and chamber music faculty. Annually in May, they are hosts of the five-day internationally recognized Juilliard String Quartet Seminar.

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ANDREAS STAIER, Harpsichord

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Coolidge Auditorium, Jefferson Building (Tickets Required)

Preconcert Conversation with the Artist - 6:30pm

Whittall Pavilion (No Tickets Required)

Friday, March 11, 2016– 8:00 pm [Concert]

TALEA ENSEMBLE

Works by Aperghis, Anderson, Cheung and the world premiere of a newly-commissioned work by Brian Ferneyhough

Coolidge Auditorium, Jefferson Building (Tickets Required)

Preconcert Conversation with the Composer - 6:30pm

Whittall Pavilion (No Tickets Required)

Tuesday, March 15, 2016– 12:00 pm [Lecture]

MY IRISH SONG OF SONGS:

Irish-American Identity in Popular Song and Musical Theater

Janet McKinney of the Music Division explores the evolution of Irish ethnic stereotypes in song lyrics, sheet music cover art and plot narratives from the pre-Civil War era through the early 20th century.

Whittall Pavilion (Registration Suggested)

Thursday, March 24, 2016 – 7:00 pm [Lecture]

LISTENING TO STONE:

The Art and Life of Isamu Noguchi

Noguchi biographer Hayden Herrera will lecture on the acclaimed artist who contributed important scenic designs to Martha Graham's dance projects, including *Appalachian Spring*.

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| 3/26 - 2:00 pm | Triple Bill Film Screening: Short Documentaries on Graham & Noguchi |
| 3/30 - 7:00 pm | <i>Cave of the Heart</i> : Noguchi's Set for the Graham Ballet [Lecture] |
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