

Sunday, November 22, 2015, 7pm
Hertz Hall

Danish String Quartet

Frederik Øland, *violin*
Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, *violin*
Asbjørn Nørgaard, *viola*
Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin, *cello*

PROGRAM

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) String Quartet in C major, Op. 54, No. 2 (1788)

Vivace

Adagio

Menuetto: Allegretto

Finale: Adagio — Presto — Adagio

Thomas Adès (b. 1971) Arcadiana, Op. 12 (1994)

I. Venezia notturno

II. Das klinget so herrlich, das klinget so schon

III. Auf dem Wasser zu singen

IV. Et... (tango mortal)

V. L'Embarquement

VI. O Albion

VII. Lethe

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) String Quartet No. 16 in F major, Op. 135 (1826)

Allegretto

Vivace

Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo

Der schwer gefasste Entschluss: Muss es sein?

Es muss sein! Es muss sein! Grave, ma
non troppo tratto; Allegro

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Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
String Quartet in C major, Op. 54, No. 2

Composed in 1788.

By the 1780s, Haydn's fame in Paris was immense. His music first appeared there in January 1764, when the publisher de la Chevardière brought out "*Six Symphonies ou Equators Dialogués*," which were not symphonies at all but rather Haydn's Op. 1 String Quartets. Nevertheless, the vogue for the compositions of this "Maitre de Musique à Vienne," as de la Chevardière's edition dubbed this Viennese master of music, grew rapidly. In March 1764, Venier issued Haydn's Symphony No. 2 in C, and six string trios were printed by de la Chevardière later that year. The demand for Haydn's music in Paris became so great that publishers procured pieces by some of his followers and passed them off as his original compositions. So pervasive was this practice that more spurious than authentic compositions appeared under Haydn's name in Paris between 1775 and 1780. By the time Haydn contributed his six "Paris" Symphonies to Le Concert de la Loge Olympique in 1786 and 1787, his compositions had become some of the most sought-after music in Paris.

Haydn capitalized on his Parisian notoriety by composing a half-dozen string quartets and two symphonies (Nos. 88 and 89) in 1787–1788 to sate the French appetite for his works. He gave the scores of these new compositions to Johann Tost, the principal second violinist in his orchestra at Esterháza from 1783 to 1788, who left his post in March 1788 to try his luck in Paris as a soloist; Haydn entrusted him with negotiating a deal for engraving the symphonies and quartets with the publisher Sieber. The sly Tost, however, sold Sieber not two but three symphonies, the third being a piece by Adalbert Gyrowetz that the violinist passed off as Haydn's. (Gyrowetz later had enormous difficulty persuading French musicians that this was, indeed, his work. When Sieber complained about this shady deal to Haydn, the composer, who had been

systematically victimized by publishers throughout his career, replied without sympathy, "Thus Herr Tost has swindled you; you can claim your damages in Vienna.") Perhaps to augment their market value, the six quartets were issued in two sets of three compositions each as Opp. 54 and 55, a procedure that Haydn apparently approved since he permitted Artaria in Vienna to publish them in the same manner soon thereafter. Such entrepreneurial success encouraged Tost to try his hand at commerce, and by 1790 he had abandoned music as a career and settled in Vienna as a cloth merchant. During that same year, he married Maria Anna von Jerlischek, a wealthy lady attached to the household of Prince Nicholas Esterházy, and he used her fortune as collateral for his burgeoning business. It is unknown whether Haydn dedicated the Op. 54 Quartets to "the wholesale merchant Johann Tost" out of admiration for his playing while in the Esterházy orchestra, or for his assistance in the dealings with Sieber (Tost also helped with the Viennese publication of the Quartets), but the "Tost" Quartets are among the most lustrous jewels in the diadem of the composer's chamber music.

The Quartet in C major (Op. 54, No. 2) is, at once, a tribute to Tost and one of Haydn's most daring formal experiments. Though Haydn here preserved much of the conversation-among-equals quality of the quartet form that is among his greatest contributions to this branch of musical composition, the first violin throughout is given a featured role, soaring repeatedly into its highest register, leading the ensemble in the presentation of thematic material, rising in intricately constructed arches above the background of the other instruments. Indeed, the *Adagio* almost becomes a miniature concerto movement as the violin drapes its intricate musings across the melancholy chorale tune of the lower strings. Haydn's taste for innovation in this Quartet elicits surprise bordering on shock. On the very first page of the score, for instance, the main theme begins, as it should, boldly and with clear purpose, but before even its first phrase is completed, it

disintegrates into fragments and silence. A second try produces the same indecisive result. Only when the music drops into a wildly unrelated key does it seem able to sustain itself, but then needs some quick shifts of harmony to get back into its proper formal track. All of this within just the first two-dozen measures. Similar musical *legerdemain* is performed in the *Menuetto*. The strains that fill the movement's outer sections—so pleasing in themselves that their relationship to the little two-note falling motive which served as the first movement's second theme could easily be overlooked—stand in startling juxtaposition to the solemn, minor-mode plaint that occupies the central episode. Most unconventional of all, however, is the Quartet's finale. The movement begins, as some finales do, with a stately introduction in slow tempo. This introduction, though, grows and grows, until it seems that it will take over the entire movement. Just as that thought settles in, however, Haydn breaks off his *Adagio*, and sends in a rambunctious *Presto*, the perfect music for a spirited ending. But just when the music appears headed for its closing gestures, the *Presto* halts on an inconclusive harmony, the music draws a short breath, and the movement turns its closing measures over to the stately music with which it began. One of the wonders of Haydn's genius is the manner in which such daring, even brazen originality is molded into music of polish, suavity, and apparent inevitability.

Thomas Adès (b. 1971)
Arcadiana, Op. 12

Composed in 1994. Premiered on November 16, 1994, in Cambridge, England, by the Endellion Quartet.

Not since the youthful days of Benjamin Britten has a young British composer created such excitement as Thomas Adès. Adès (*ah*-diss), born in London on March 1, 1971, studied piano with Paul Berkowitz and composition with Robert Saxton at the Guildhall School of Music before first coming to notice when he

won the Second Piano Prize in the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition in 1989. That same year he entered King's College, Cambridge, where his principal teachers included Hugh Wood, Alexander Goehr, and Robin Holloway, and he began establishing his reputation as a composer when the BBC Philharmonic under Mathias Bamert played his Chamber Symphony at the Cambridge Festival in 1990; he graduated from Cambridge in 1992 with highest honors. Other works of sharply defined but greatly varied character quickly brought Adès to wide prominence—the piano solos *Still Sorrowing* and *Darkness Visible*, the song cycles *Five Eliot Landscapes* and *Life Story*, and *Catch and Living Toys* for chamber orchestra—and in 1993 he was appointed Composer-in-Association to the Hallé Orchestra; he composed *These Premises Are Alarmed* in 1996 for the Hallé's inaugural concert in the new Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. His opera *Powder Her Face*, based on the story of the uninhibited Duchess of Argyll, created an international sensation when it was premièred at the Cheltenham Festival in 1995, and it has since been heard in London, Berkeley, Aspen, Magdeburg, New York, Helsinki, Brisbane, and Aldeburgh. In 1997, Adès was appointed Britten Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music; he has also served as Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival and Music Director of the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. He was Resident Composer with the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 2005 to 2007, and held the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer Chair at Carnegie Hall in 2007–2008. He is also active as a pianist and conductor, with many concert and broadcast performances in Europe, America, and Japan. Adès's quickly accumulating list of distinctions includes the Paris Rostrum (1994, for *Living Toys*, judged the best piece by a composer under 30), 1997 Royal Philharmonic Society Prize (for *Asyla*), Elise L. Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (1998, for *Arcadiana*), Salzburg Easter Festival Prize (1999), Munich Ernst von Siemens Prize for

Young Composers (1999), a 1999 Mercury Prize nomination (for the recording of *Asyla* on EMI), 2000 Grawemeyer Prize (for *Asyla*, the youngest composer to receive that prestigious award, the largest international prize for composition, since its inception in 1985), and an honorary doctorate from the University of Essex (2004); in November 2010, he was named *Musical America's* "Composer of the Year." London's Barbican Centre staged a retrospective festival of Adès's work in 2007. His most recent opera, *The Tempest*, commissioned by the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, was greeted with great acclaim upon its première in London in February 2004; the work received its American première at Santa Fe Opera in July 2006, was first staged, with the composer conducting, at the Metropolitan Opera in 2012, and is seen, again under his baton, at the Vienna Staatsoper in 2015.

The distinguished critic Andrew Porter wrote of Adès's creative personality, "In work after work—non-repeating, non-formulaic, untainted by 'hype,' each score an excited new adventure—he has created personal sounds and forms while generously and gratefully embracing sonic and technical inspiration suggested by masters from Couperin and Mussorgsky to Ligeti and Kurtág.... The old basics are freshly heard and ordered: the clash or consonance of note against note; the force of an intervallic leap; ticking time against time disordered; traditional timbres invaded and challenged by strange sounds never made before.... Thomas Adès is the bright new star of British music."

Of *Arcadiana*, composed in 1994 for the Endellion Quartet and première on November 16th at that year's Cambridge Elgar Festival, Adès wrote in a preface to the score, "Each of the seven titles which comprise *Arcadiana* evokes an image associated with ideas of the idyll, vanishing, vanished or imaginary. The odd-numbered movements are all aquatic, and would be musically continuous if played consecutively. Movement I [*Venezia notturno*] suggests an ethereal Venetian barcarolle. Movement III [*Auf dem Wasser zu singen*]

alludes to the eponymous Schubert Lied. The title of movement V [*L'Embarquement*] derives from Watteau's painting *The Embarkation from the Island of Cythera* in the Louvre. Movement VII [*Lethe*] bears the name of the mythical River of Oblivion. The second [*Das klinget so herrlich, das klinget so schön*] and sixth movements [*O Albion*] inhabit pastoral Arcadias, respectively Mozart's 'Kingdom of Night' [i.e., recalling the enchanted bells by which Papageno calms Monostatos and his slaves in the Act I finale of *The Magic Flute*] and more local fields [i.e., the elegiac *Nimrod* movement of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*]. At the dead centre is the fourth movement [*Et... (tango mortale)*], bearing part of the Latin inscription on a tomb which Poussin depicts being discovered by shepherds: *Et in Arcadia ego* ("Even in Arcady am I")."

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

String Quartet No. 16 in F major, Op. 135

Composed in 1826. Première on March 23, 1828, in Vienna by the Schuppanzigh Quartet.

Beethoven's last year was one of emotional and physical stress, occasioned not only by the declining state of his health (deafness, of course, as well as gout and a serious and painful intestinal inflammation), but also by the difficult relationship with his nephew Karl, whose custody he had won from his widowed sister-in-law in a vicious court battle in 1820. Karl had proven to be a continuing trial for the bachelor Beethoven, and by 1825 (he was 19), he had acquired an unsavory local reputation as a financial deadbeat, womanizer, and general ne'er-do-well. Beethoven harangued him incessantly about his conduct (much of which was probably brought on by teenage rebellion against his gruff and domineering uncle), and by July 1826, matters came to a head with Karl's attempted suicide. To spite his uncle, Karl chose to shoot himself in the head in the Helenenthal, one of the composer's favorite spots in all of Vienna, but he was not sufficiently dedicated to this exercise to make a success of it. Karl was hospitalized until late

September, after which he and Uncle Ludwig spent the next three months at the Gneixendorf estate of the composer's brother Johann, a successful apothecary, when it was decided to get the lad out of Vienna (where suicide was a crime) by enlisting him in the army. Beethoven appealed for help to Stephen von Breuning, a member of the Austrian War Council and his long-time friend and patron (the Violin Concerto was dedicated to him), who found a place for Karl in Field Marshal Joseph von Stutterheim's regiment at Iglau. Uncle and nephew returned to Vienna in December, staying along the way at a miserable inn whose damp, drafty rooms exacerbated Beethoven's illnesses. (Karl was sent for a doctor immediately upon their arrival in the city, but stopped first for a game of billiards.) The nephew was finally bundled off to the army on January 2, 1827; ten weeks later, Beethoven was dead. Karl served for five undistinguished years in the military and then became a farm manager. The estates that he inherited first from Ludwig and, in 1848, from Johann allowed him to live in comfort until his death at the age of 52 in 1858.

The creation of the Quartet in F major, Beethoven's last complete work (his only subsequent music was a new finale for the Op. 130 Quartet to replace the *Grosse Fuge*), wrapped around the painful events of his final months. The earliest sketches date from April 1826, when he misled the Berlin publisher Moritz Schlesinger, for whom he had agreed the previous year to supply two quartets but to that date had delivered only the Op. 132, by implying that "a new quartet [i.e., Op. 135] will be finished in two or three weeks at the latest." Though it was to be three months before Beethoven undertook serious work on the Quartet, at least one thematic idea for the piece is known to have originated in April—the text/music epigram that heads the finale: "*Muss es sein? Es muss sein!*" ("Must it be? It must be!"). Ignaz Dembscher, a court official and long-time friend and admirer of the composer, asked if he could borrow the parts for the Op. 130 Quartet so that he could give a performance of the new piece at his home.

Beethoven chided Dembscher for not attending the première of the Quartet the preceding month, and refused him use of the parts. Dembscher asked Karl Holz, the composer's amanuensis during those months, to intervene, and he suggested that Dembscher send Ignaz Schuppanzigh, whose quartet had given the première, an honorarium of 50 florins, the price of a subscription to his concerts. "*Muss es sein?*" Dembscher asked. "*Es muss sein!*" Holz replied. When Holz recounted this exchange, Beethoven exploded into laughter, and immediately tossed off a comic little vocal canon (WoO 196) whose motive and text were based on Holz's reply: "It must be, it certainly must. Put cash on the table."

The F major Quartet was composed mostly during August and September 1826, as much to keep Beethoven's mind off Karl's hospitalization as to fulfill the commission from Schlesinger, and it was largely sketched by the time uncle and nephew arrived at Gneixendorf at the beginning of October; the score was completed before the end of the month. Beethoven's health deteriorated rapidly after his return to Vienna in December, however, and plans for the quick première of the work collapsed; it was not given publicly until the Schuppanzigh Quartet played it in Vienna on March 28, 1828, one year and two days after its composer's death. The score was published by Schlesinger the previous September, when it appeared with a dedication to Beethoven's friend Johann Wolfmayer, a cloth merchant who on several occasions replaced the composer's ratty top coat with a fine new one and who, a decade earlier, had commissioned (and paid an advance of 1,000 florins) for a Requiem Mass Beethoven was still planning to write at the time of his death.

The Op. 135 Quartet, the shortest such work that Beethoven composed except for Op. 18, No. 2, stands in its sunny demeanor and compact scale as a kind of optimistic pendant to the visionary profundities of the other late quartets. Holz reported Beethoven telling him that this brevity was occasioned by what he contended was the underpayment of

fees by his publisher (“If he sends me short money, I’ll send him short quartets”), but it seems more likely, as with the Fourth and Eighth symphonies, that he was simultaneously relaxing after the rigors of creating a vast musical canvas (the seven-movement Quartet, Op. 131) and allowing the more unbuttoned side of his creative personality to emerge. “The F major Quartet does not attempt to plumb the depths of human experience,” wrote Roger Fiske, “yet it achieves something very near perfection in its own humorous, epigrammatic way.” The qualities of relaxation and good cheer are exhibited by the opening movement, a self-conscious evocation of the gracious and genteel chamber works with which Haydn and Mozart dominated Viennese musical society when Beethoven first arrived in the city from Bonn three decades before. The half-dozen distinct motives comprising the main theme are discussed in a warm conversational manner by the participants before the music passes onto its formal second subject, initiated by a rocket phrase shot into the highest reaches of the violin’s range from the launching pad of a scurrying arpeggiated accompaniment in triplet rhythms. The exposition is not repeated. The tiny development section is allowed enough time only to engage the triplet accompaniment and a single idea from the first theme before the colloquium returns to the expressive and formal security of the recapitulation.

If the first movement borrows its demeanor from the late 18th century, the scintillating *Vivace*, the Quartet’s scherzo, is decidedly a product of Beethoven’s final creative period. The syncopations, cross accents, and harmonic abruptness of the outer sections of this three-part movement (A–B–A) are drawn from the expressive and technical realm of the quartets immediately preceding this one, while the central trio posits a melody that tries to fly completely beyond the limits of the violin and a whirring accompaniment figure whose dogged repetitions nearly transform it into some kind of demonic ostinato.

George R. Marek stated, flatly, “I think that the slow movement is the most beautiful piece of music ever composed.” This *Lento*, music of

sublime introspection and rapturous stillness, rarely rises above a stage whisper. Over the opening theme, which serves as the subject for a series of free variations, Beethoven wrote, “*Süsser Ruhegesang, Friedengesang*”—“Sweet restful song [or lullaby], song of peace.” It is not impossible that this phrase had autobiographical import for the composer, then 56 years old and seriously ill. Just as the Quartet was nearing completion, he wrote to his old friend Franz Wegeler, “I still hope to give several more great works to the world, and then, like a tired child, to end my earthly existence among friendly souls.”

The cryptic legend heading the finale—*Der schwer gefasste Entschluss. Muss es sein? Es muss sein!* (“The difficult resolution. Must it be? It must be!”)—apparently arose from the playful canon that Beethoven wrote for Dembscher in April, but six months later, when the motives derived from its syllables gave rise to the principal theme of this movement, it may have taken on a more philosophical implication for the composer—the quintessential question of the acceptance of his own mortality. (The manuscript is inscribed in French in the composer’s hand, “*Dernier [last] quatuor de Beethoven.*”) The slow introduction, the only tragic passage in the entire work, is hewn from the falling shape of the motive “*Muss es sein?*” but the main body of the sonata-form movement forges its joyous resolve from the rising reply: *Es muss sein!* Once, to join the development to the recapitulation, the tragic music returns, but its melancholic emotions are soon dispelled by the Quartet’s jubilant close.

“The F major Quartet is the work of a man who is fundamentally at peace,” wrote J.W.N. Sullivan. “It is the peace of a man who has known conflict, but whose conflicts are now reminiscent. There is no real conflict depicted in the last movement; the portentous question meets with a jovial, almost exultant answer, and the ending is one of perfect confidence. It would appear that at the end of his life, the inner Beethoven, the Beethoven who expressed himself in music, was content.”

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Caroline Bittencourt

EMBODYING the quintessential elements of a chamber music ensemble, the **Danish String Quartet** has established a reputation for their integrated sound, impeccable intonation and judicious balance. With their technical and interpretive talents matched by an infectious joy for music-making and “rampaging energy” (Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*), the quartet is in demand worldwide by concert and festival presenters alike. Since making their debut in 2002 at the Copenhagen Festival, the group of musical friends has demonstrated a passion for Scandinavian composers, who they frequently incorporate into adventurous contemporary programs, while also proving skilled and profound performers of the classical masters. In 2012, *The New York Times* selected the Quartet’s concert as a highlight of the year, saying the performance featured “one of the most powerful renditions of Beethoven’s Op. 132 String Quartet that I’ve heard live or on a recording.” This scope of talent secured them a three-year appointment in the coveted Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s CMS Two Program that began in the 2013–2014 season. The Quartet was also named as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist for 2013–2015.

The Danish String Quartet’s 2015–2016 season includes a release of their debut disc on ECM Records, a first-time tour of China as well as summer performances at the Mostly Mozart Festival, Maverick Concerts, Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, Toronto Summer Music Festival, and Ottawa Chamberfest. International highlights include concerts in Berlin, Copenhagen, Glasgow, and London, and a debut at the Louvre Museum in Paris. With increasing popularity, the Danish String Quartet is considered one of the most sought-after chamber ensembles in the world. Their repertoire is diverse, from Nielsen, Abrahamsen, Adès, and Shostakovich to Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Debussy, and Haydn. Currently in their third season with the CMS Two program, they will perform all four of the Nielsen string quartets in the Rose Studio and the final concert of a six-concert Beethoven cycle at Alice Tully Hall. This past November, the Quartet launched their recording of Danish folksongs entitled *Wood Works*, released by the Dacapo label and distributed by Naxos, at SubCulture in New York. It was selected by NPR as one of the best classical albums of 2014, and the Quartet was featured on an NPR Tiny Desk Concert performing works from the highly acclaimed album.

In addition to their New York performances, the Quartet's robust North American schedule takes them to Ann Arbor, Seattle, Orange County, Santa Barbara, Phoenix, Buffalo, Durham, Humboldt, Cedar Falls, and Calgary this season, as well as two weeks of residency activities and performances at Cal Performances. The Quartet will make their debut at the Savannah Music Festival in spring 2016. Last season, the Quartet presented the U.S. premiere of Danish composer Thomas Agerfeldt Olesen's Quartet No. 7, "The Extinguishable," at the University of Chicago Presents series and subsequently performed the work in St. Paul, Santa Barbara, Pasadena, New Haven, Gainesville, Jacksonville, and Laramie. In addition to its commitment to highlighting Scandinavian composers, the Danish String Quartet derives great pleasure in traditional Scandinavian folk music.

The Danish String Quartet made their West Coast debut in summer 2013 at Music@Menlo. They returned to Menlo in 2014 to perform programs of Haydn and Beethoven quartets as part of a busy summer festival schedule that also included performances in Ireland, France, and at home in Denmark.

Since winning the Danish Radio P2 Chamber Music Competition in 2004, the Quartet has been greatly desired throughout Denmark, and in October 2015 they presented the ninth annual DSQ-Musikfest, a four-day event held in Copenhagen that brings together musical friends the Quartet has met on its travels. In 2009, the Quartet won First Prize at the eleventh London International String Quartet Competition, as well as four additional prizes from the same jury. This competition is now called the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, and the Danish String Quartet has performed at the famed hall on several occasions. They returned to Wigmore Hall in March 2015 to perform a program of Haydn and Shostakovich.

The Danish String Quartet was awarded First Prize in the Vagn Holmboe String Quartet Competition and the Charles Hennen International Chamber Music Competition in Holland, and the Audience Prize in the Trondheim International String Quartet Competition in 2005. They were awarded the 2010 Nordmetall Ensemble Prize at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany and, in 2011, received the prestigious Carl Nielsen Prize.

In 2006, the Quartet was Danish Radio's Artist-in-Residence, giving them the opportunity to record all of Carl Nielsen's string quartets in the Danish Radio Concert Hall, subsequently released to critical acclaim on the Dacapo label in 2007 and 2008. In 2012, the Quartet released an equally acclaimed recording of Haydn and Brahms quartets on the German AVI-music label. They recorded works by Brahms and Fuchs with award-winning clarinetist Sebastian Manz at the Bayerische Rundfunk in Munich, released by AVI-music in 2014, and recently signed with ECM Records for future recording projects.

Violinists Frederik Øland and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen and violist Asbjørn Nørgaard met as children at a music summer camp, where they played both football and music together, eventually making the transition into a serious string quartet in their teens and studying at Copenhagen's Royal Academy of Music. In 2008, the three Danes were joined by Norwegian cellist Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin. The Danish String Quartet was primarily taught and mentored by Professor Tim Frederiksen and have participated in master classes with the Tokyo and Emerson string quartets, Alasdair Tait, Paul Katz, Hugh Maguire, Levon Chilingirian, and Gábor Takács-Nagy. Visit the Quartet online at www.danishquartet.com.