



# Advance Program Notes

St. Lawrence String Quartet

*Haydn Discovery*

Sunday, October 25, 2015, 2 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

## St. Lawrence String Quartet *Haydn Discovery*

Geoff Nuttall, *violin*

Owen Dalby, *violin*

Lesley Robertson, *viola*

Christopher Costanza, *cello*

The "father" of the string quartet, Haydn is too often regarded as an opening act; pleasant music before the "meat" of the program. In *Haydn Discovery* Geoff Nuttall and his St. Lawrence String Quartet colleagues will reveal Haydn's genius, first unpacking this masterpiece via "active listening," then offering a full performance.

### String Quartet in F minor Op. 20, No. 5 (Hob.III:35)

Franz Josef Haydn

1732-1809

Allegro moderato

Menuetto

Adagio

Finale: Fuga a due soggetti

### INTERMISSION

### Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131 (1825-6)

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770-1827

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo

Allegro molto vivace

Allegro moderato

Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Presto

Adagio, quasi un poco andante

Allegro

The St. Lawrence String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists. For more information, visit [www.davidroweartists.com](http://www.davidroweartists.com). St. Lawrence String recordings can be heard on EMI Classics and ArtistShare ([www.artistshare.com](http://www.artistshare.com)). The St. Lawrence String Quartet is Ensemble-in-Residence at Stanford University. Visit [www.slsq.com](http://www.slsq.com).

# *Program Notes*

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

Quartet in F minor, op. 20, no.5 (Hob.III:35) (1772)

By 1772, the year Haydn composed his six op. 20 quartets, the composer had spent over a decade in the service of the Esterházy family. He was now 40 and had already written some 20 quartets and more than 50 symphonies. He had lived through the *sturm und drang* ('storm and stress') period in the German arts, then reaching its peak. It left its mark in the increasingly subjective nature of his music. Each of the op. 20 quartets has a distinctive character. Each instrument speaks with an independent voice as an equal contributor to a seamless four-part texture. One of two quartets in the minor key, the F minor quartet, opens with a sustained, emotionally intense theme over a pulsing accompaniment. The mood is serious and purposeful; the tension is only slightly eased with the second theme. The *Menuetto*, too, is unusually severe, allowing just a glimpse of a folkdance in its central trio section. The slow, third movement, now in a brighter major key, yet still maintaining a feeling of poignancy, takes its underlying rhythmic pulse from the siciliano dance. Over it, the first violin weaves improvisation-like passages of great beauty.

Then there's a surprise. This is one of three op. 20 quartets to have a fugal finale. While drawing inspiration from a form associated with the past (Bach was in mid-career when Haydn was born), Haydn's F minor fugue is sprightly and forward-looking in spirit. It is based on two short, independent subjects (*due soggetti*), the first of which presents a melodic pattern familiar to the Baroque. Melodically, it bears a close resemblance to a fugue in Handel's *Messiah* ('And with His stripes') and to the A minor Fugue in the Second Book of Bach's 48. The fugue proceeds in a hushed manner, marked *sotto voce*. Its tension and contrapuntal complexity increase steadily throughout the movement until the music bursts out in a *fortissimo* canon in the crowning moment of an exceptional quartet.

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# *Program Notes, continued*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770-1827)  
Quartet in C sharp minor, op. 131 (1825-6)

This, the greatest of Beethoven's quartets, was the music that the gravely ill Franz Schubert asked to be played five days before his death. More than any other work, it epitomizes the profundity, inwardness, idiosyncrasy, and timelessness of Beethoven's late compositions. When he sent the score to his publisher, Beethoven rather flippantly scribbled an extraordinary note in the margin. "Patched together from pieces filched from here and there," he declared in one of the biggest understatements of all time. Indeed, this quartet does contain themes and ideas that he worked with in other quartets he had written. But what ideas! What themes! And what working-out of their potential he reveals in its 40-minute expanse. Beethoven was less ambiguous in his true feelings for the work when he spoke to a violinist friend, Karl Holz. "My mind has been struck by some good ideas that I want to exploit," he said. "As for imagination, thank God, it abounds more than ever."

Throughout his later works, Beethoven tended less and less to cast his music in the traditional three or four movements; op. 131 contains seven. Unusually for Beethoven, it begins with a slow movement, a calm yet gently forceful fugue that Wagner said 'floats over the sorrows of the world.' It gradually builds in intensity and prepares the listener for the scale and depth of what is to follow. The movement appears to explore every aspect of a four-note theme: G#, B#, C#, A. But then these four notes go on to provide the thematic underpinning of the entire quartet. They are, moreover, the recurring *motto* theme of two other late string quartets, op.130 and 132, which Beethoven had already completed, and, additionally, the very bedrock of the *Grosse Fuge*.

A chromatic shift upwards leads to the second movement. It forms a bright and optimistic balance to the first, tempered by frequent hesitations. Two sharp chords herald a brief, recitative-like third movement, which is just 11 measures long. The slow movement follows without break. This is the emotional center of gravity of the entire quartet. It begins with another gentle theme marked *dolce* (sweetly) that Wagner called the 'incarnation of innocence.' The scale of the movement is huge: a theme with six variations and a coda. Contrast again follows with the *Presto*, a brilliant scherzo.

With its calm, ethereal mood, the brief *Adagio* enters another world. It serves as an introduction to the extended movement that follows. This final *Allegro* is the only movement written in sonata form. The profusion of themes, however, and the power of their utterance strain at the boundaries of the edifice. Wagner thought that the movement expressed "the fury of the world's dance—fierce pleasure, agony, ecstasy of love, joy, anger, passion and suffering, lightning flashes, and thunder rolls."

—Program notes © 2015 Keith Horner. Comments welcomed: [khnotes@sympatico.ca](mailto:khnotes@sympatico.ca)

# Biography

## ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET

Geoff Nuttall, *violin*

Owen Dalby, *violin*

Lesley Robertson, *viola*

Christopher Costanza, *cello*

*"A sound that has just about everything one wants from a quartet, most notably precision, warmth, and an electricity that conveys the excitement of playing whatever is on their stands at the moment."*

—*The New York Times*

Established in 1989, the St. Lawrence String Quartet (SLSQ) has developed an undisputed reputation as a truly world-class chamber ensemble. The quartet performs internationally and has served as Ensemble in Residence at Stanford University since 1998.

SLSQ continues to build its reputation for imaginative and spontaneous music-making through an energetic commitment to the great established quartet literature, as well as the championing of new works by such composers as John Adams, Osvaldo Golijov, Ezequiel Vinao, and Jonathan Berger.

In late summer 2015 the quartet will tour Europe with the San Francisco Symphony, performing composer John Adams' *Absolute Jest* under the baton of conductor Michael Tilson Thomas for audiences in the U.K., Germany, Romania, and Switzerland. Additionally in the fall, they will perform at Carnegie Hall in New York. During the summer season, SLSQ is proud to continue its long association with the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Quartet's residency at Stanford includes working with music students, as well as extensive collaborations with other faculty and departments, using music to explore myriad topics. Recent collaborations have involved the School of Medicine, School of Education, and the Law School. In addition to their appointment at Stanford, the SLSQ are visiting artists at the University of Toronto. The foursome's passion for opening up musical arenas to players and listeners alike is evident in their annual summer chamber music seminar at Stanford.

Lesley Robertson and Geoff Nuttall are founding members of the group, and hail from Edmonton, Alberta, and London, Ontario, respectively. Christopher Costanza is from Utica, New York, and joined the group in 2003. Owen Dalby, from the San Francisco Bay area, joined in 2015. All four members of the quartet live and teach at Stanford University in California.

For more information, please visit [www.slsq.com](http://www.slsq.com).

# *Engagement Activities*

Sunday, October 25, 2015, 2 PM

## **TWEET SEATS MASTER CLASS**

*Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre*

While observing the performance by the St. Lawrence String Quartet, Virginia Tech students will participate in a Twitter-based dialogue, led by Tracy Cowden, faculty chair of music and associate professor of voice and piano.

Sunday, October 25, 2015, Following the performance

## **HAYDN COMMUNITY JAM**

*Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre, Street and Davis Performance Hall*

Bring your violin, viola, or cello and play with members of the St. Lawrence String Quartet in this open classical jam! Alongside members of the ensemble, participants will play through select movements from Haydn quartets. Preparation is recommended, but not required. All skill levels welcome, recommended for ages 12 and up. To participate as a musician, register through the box office. The session is open to the public to observe.

Monday, October 26, 2015, 10 AM

## **MASTER CLASS WITH THE ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET**

*Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre, Street and Davis Performance Hall*

Musicians from the St. Lawrence String Quartet will coach students from a chamber music class at Virginia Tech. Open to the public.

*Special thanks to Tracy Cowden and Alan Weinstein*

# *In the Galleries*

## **EVENT SPOTLIGHT: TECH-OR-TREAT**

Thursday, October 29, 2015, 5-8 PM

Cube and Grand Lobby

This hauntingly memorable event for children features Halloween fun-themed technologies developed by students and faculty at the university from a variety of disciplines. This event shows children and adults alike the amazingly creative output that happens when you combine science, engineering, art, and design.

*Co-presented by the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology and the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech*

Also on view:

## **BEYOND REAL: STILL LIFE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

September 3–November 15, 2015

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery, Sherwood P. Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

## **PHILIP TAAFFE**

September 3–November 15, 2015

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

## **GALLERY HOURS**

Tuesday-Friday, 10 AM-6 PM; Saturday-Sunday, 10 AM-4 PM; closed for Virginia Tech home football games

*Please visit [artscenter.vt.edu](http://artscenter.vt.edu) for events and more information.*