

Elias String Quartet

Tuesday, March 6, 2018, 7:30 pm



A collaboration with the UI String Quartet Residency Program

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Elias String Quartet

SARA BITLLOCH *Violin*

DONALD GRANT *Violin*

SIMONE VAN DER GIESSEN* *Viola*

MARIE BITLLOCH *Cello*

*The Elias Quartet is grateful to welcome Simone van der Giessen as a temporary member while violist Martin Saving is recovering from an injury which prevents him from participating in the current North American tour.

THE PROGRAM

Quartettsatz ('Quartet Movement')
in C Minor, Opus Post., D. 703

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Allegro assai

String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters" (1928) Leoš Janáček

(1854-1928)

Andante

Adagio

Moderato

Allegro

INTERMISSION

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Maestoso-Allegro

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Scherzo. Vivace - Presto

Finale: allegro con moto

The Elias String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists.

davidroweartists.com

eliasstringquartet.com



Photo: Ettore Causa

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Elias String Quartet is internationally acclaimed as one of the leading ensembles of their generation. Known for their intense and vibrant performances, the quartet has travelled the globe collaborating with some of the finest musicians and playing in the world's great halls.

In 2015, they completed their groundbreaking Beethoven Project: performing and recording the complete string quartets of Beethoven. Broadcast by BBC Radio 3 and performed in 11 major venues in the UK, the Quartet have also recorded the cycle for the "Wigmore Hall Live" record label. Six albums in total, the first was released in January 2015. The Elias also took all-Beethoven programmes to Carnegie Hall (New York) and San Francisco Performances. They have documented their journey on a dedicated website supported by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust: www.thebeethovenproject.com.

The Quartet was chosen to participate in BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists' Scheme 2009-11 and is the recipient of a 2010 Borletti-Buitoni Award. They were awarded the 2010 *BBC Music Magazine's* Newcomer of the Year Award and were nominated in 2013 and 2014 for an RPS Award and in 2014 for an Australian Art Music Award. In 2013 they were awarded a Mentoring Scholarship from the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn. They received 2nd prize and the Sidney Griller Prize at the 9th London String Quartet Competition.

They have performed alongside such artists as Leon Fleisher, Michael Collins, Christian Zacharias, Pascal Moraguès, Ralph Kirshbaum, Dame Anne Murray, Joan Rogers, Mark Padmore, Michel Dalberto, Peter Cropper, Malin Broman, Simon Crawford-Phillips, Piers Lane, Ettore Causa, Anthony Marwood, Huw Watkins, Roderick Williams, Allan Clayton, Melvyn Tan, and the Endellion, Vertavo, Navarra, Heath, Belcea, and Jerusalem quartets.

The Elias are passionate about new music and have premiered pieces by Sally Beamish, Colin Matthews, Matthew Hindson, and Timo Andres. They worked with Henri Dutilleux on his string quartet *Ainsi la Nuit* and recently recorded Huw Watkin's *In My Craft or Sullen Art* with Mark Padmore for NMC label.

The Quartet is steadily building a recording catalogue that has been met with widespread critical acclaim. Alongside three releases on the Wigmore Live label they have released discs of Mendelssohn and Britten. They have also released a disc of French harp music with harpist Sandrine Chatron for the French label Ambroisie, Goehr's Piano Quintet with Daniel Becker for Meridian Records, and most recently Schumann and Dvořák piano quintets with Jonathan Biss.

The Quartet take their name from Mendelssohn's oratorio, *Elijah*, of which Elias is the German form. They formed at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester where they worked closely with the late Dr. Christopher Rowland and later became Junior Fellows and Associate Quartet. They also spent a year studying at the Hochschule in Cologne with the Alban Berg String Quartet. Other mentors in the quartet's studies include Peter Cropper, Hugh Maguire, György Kurtág, Gábor Takács-Nagy and Rainer Schmidt. For four years they were resident string quartet at Sheffield's "Music in the Round" as part of Ensemble 360, taking over from the Lindsay Quartet.

PROGRAM NOTES

By Arthur Canter

Quartettsatz in C Minor, D. 703

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

As a youth, Schubert was the leading violinist in a school orchestra and played the viola in a family quartet in which his two brothers played the violin, and his father played the cello. The young Franz wrote his early string quartets for the family quartet. He became the assistant schoolmaster in an elementary school run by his father but hated this position, for it was a tedious job and conflicted with his desires to become a composer. Despite this, he did manage to compose a flood of works in his spare time. Early in 1817, the twenty-year-old Schubert was persuaded by friends to leave teaching school and devote full time to composition. By this time, he had written four symphonies, several *Singspiele*, dozens of piano pieces, a number of sacred choral pieces, hundreds of songs, and at least nine complete string quartets. Schubert's early quartets were written for amateurs to be played in homes and at private parties (called *Hausmusik*). Sometime in the next two years, he began to write instrumental music to be played by the growing number of professional musicians of Vienna, especially string players, who were giving public performances. Schubert, as was typical of him, was constantly trying his hand at varied genres of music, never fully satisfied with what he wrote. He was likely to be distracted while working on one piece, start another, and then return to finish what he had started.

Late in December 1820, Schubert, perhaps dismayed by his lack of success with opera, or some combination of other factors, composed the *Quartettsatz* (Quartet Movement) that is featured in tonight's concert. As its title suggests, this isolated piece was apparently intended to be a full quartet. Schubert is known to have started to work on the next movement (an *Andante* in A-flat) of which he wrote forty-one bars before he shelved the work and, for some unknown reasons, never returned to it. There have been speculations as to what these reasons were other than his being distracted to work on other compositions. Some writers have suggested it was because he was undecided about how to resolve the challenge this new work raised for him. Others have pointed to the personal crises the composer faced over the next two years. Whatever the causes, the result left for posterity is a work that heralded the new direction that Schubert, the composer, was to take.

The *Quartettsatz*, 10–11 minutes in length, is disturbing from its start by its unexpected agitated almost explosive notes having an anguish-sounding character. This is no traditional presentation of a classical sonata form! The drama cools down as it works into a more subdued and lyrically tinged vein built around a melody that strikes one as familiar; but, from what song? (Brian Newbould, the Schubertian scholar and biographer, suggests it was derived from a vocal quartet in the French composer André Grétry's opera *Lucile* of 1769. Its theme was used for a royalist anthem by the Bourbons in the 1800s.) The melody has a haunting quality that lingers. After repetitions of the melody, the music returns to the dramatic tone and explosive nature of the beginning of the work, ending it as if to complete the musical circle.

Quartet No. 2 (“Intimate Letters”)

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

For nearly fifty years, Janáček was practically unknown in the music mainstream except for a small number of choral and chamber works and his friendship with Dvořák. Nearly all of his early works were vocal and from the start showed a strong nationalistic flavor that had been inspired by Dvořák. Then Janáček became interested in collecting folk material and studying their speech rhythms and inflections, which could be incorporated into music. Also, he spent much of his time noting the sounds of his environment. It is out of the study of these natural sounds and melodic features of speech that he created a unique musical language that characterizes his later compositions. In 1903, he completed his first important work, the opera *Jenůfa*, which was not staged until 1916 because of the musical politics of the time. The success of *Jenůfa* marked a turning point in Janáček’s career. He subsequently produced a stream of brilliant works that established him as a major composer of the 20th century. His fame steadily spread throughout Europe and the United States through such operas as *Káťa Kabanová* (1919–21), *The Cunning Little Vixen* (1921–23), *The Makropulos Affair* (1923–25), and *From the House of the Dead* (1927–28), as well as the five-movement orchestral suite, *Sinfonietta* (1926), *The Glagolitic Mass* (1926), and his two string quartets, the first (“Kreutzer Sonata”) in 1923 and the second (“Intimate Letters”) in 1928.

In the summer of 1917, Janáček met Kamila Stösslová and her husband David, an antique dealer in Bohemia. By this time, Janáček’s marriage had its problems. His wife, Zdenka, seemed unable to match the passion and fervor that her husband invested in everything he did. Accounts have it that the composer became infatuated with Kamila who was thirty-eight years younger than he. It is also clear that she never reciprocated his feelings, while remaining an admirer and friend. Nevertheless, the relationship embittered Zdenka, increasing the emotional distance between composer and wife; although, it did not lead to any serious separation. Over the next eleven years, Janáček wrote to Kamila nearly every day, pouring out his heart, anxieties, and joys. Janáček’s letters, over 600 of them, have been preserved and published, in translation, under the title *Intimate Letters*. This obsession with Kamila, one-sided as it was, apparently served as an important outlet and valve for the intense emotions felt by the composer at this time of his life. She was the inspiration for a number of Janáček’s greatest works. In the last years of his life, he even kept a special diary for Kamila.

Quartet No. 2 is the one work of all the late works by Janáček inspired by his love for Kamila Stösslová that was written as an explicit expression of that love. It was composed early in 1928 during a three weeks’ period when he had taken time off from his work on the opera *From the House of the Dead*. Janáček’s own nickname for the quartet was “Love Letters,” but he changed its subtitle to “Intimate Letters.” He hinted that the work was a musical diary of his feelings and did not want to divulge its contents, as he wrote: “I do not reveal my feelings to idiots.” In his letters to Kamila, he implied that the quartet was to be about the two of them, how they met, and his feelings toward her. In these letters, he frequently referred to the work as “my/your” quartet. Originally, he wrote it for a viola d’amore as a substitute for the regular viola of a quartet but returned to the modern viola as the older instrument lacked the power desired for the prominent role (as Kamila) that he gave it in the quartet.

The music of “Intimate Letters” is passionate and compressed. There are no extended melodic figurations. Thus, the quartet contains sharply delineated musical episodes that are disconnected from each other. There are passages with the short, abrupt tempo shifts and rhythmic patterns that are imitative



Kamila Stösslová with her son Otto in 1917



Leoš Janáček in 1926

of the sounds of the Czech (or Slavic) language being sung, a style developed and fostered by the composer in his late operas. Tightly drawn simple themes, some with eerie or haunting melodies, some harshly dramatic, are repeated in a cyclic fashion in different forms. Use is made of pizzicato, trills, the eerie metallic sounds produced by bowing strings close to the bridge, percussive raps, and dissonant dissonance.

Each movement of the quartet was apparently designed to represent a particular theme of Janáček's feelings for Kamila. In his letters, he wrote that the first movement (*Andante*) described their meeting and the love at first sight he felt for Kamila.

The second movement (*Adagio*), in which he originally planned to feature the viola d'amore, was his expression of the depths of his love and the hope that she would bear him a son. As he neared the end of working out the different movements of the quartet, he wrote that he felt "as if I'm living through everything beautiful once again."

The third movement (*Moderato*) was written to be perceived as "very cheerful and then dissolve into a vision that would resemble your image, transparent, as if in the mist, in which there should be the suspicion of motherhood." Thus, as he hoped for, "Only the most beautiful melodies can find a place in it." Janáček projected that his last movement might end up reflecting his fear that he would entrap Kamila, "that I'd bind your feet like a pretty little lamb's so you wouldn't run away."

One day later, he wrote, "Now that I'm finished with those 'Love Letters' I have an empty head. I'm like a completely ordinary man in the street—except for you." On May 25, 1928, he wrote "Today they finished playing the whole of the your-my work. The players [The Moravian Quartet of Brno] are bowled over by it." The plan was to have the first public performance of "Intimate Letters" early in the fall, but ironic fate intervened. While searching for Kamila's son who got lost in the woods during a visit with his mother to the composer's home, Janáček caught a chill that in a few days became pneumonia. He died on August 12, 1928.

Quartet No. 12 in E-flat Major, Op. 127

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

In 1822, Prince Nikolai Galitzin, a cellist and admirer of Beethoven's music, asked the composer for a set of two or three quartets. Beethoven was already preoccupied with completing the *Missa Solemnis* and working on the Ninth Symphony. He accepted the commission but stalled Galitzin until he completed the symphony in 1823. It so happened that in April of that year, Beethoven's friend and colleague, violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who in 1805 had founded a brilliant string quartet that gave public recitals in Vienna, returned from a long stay in Russia to resume his concerts. The success of the Schuppanzigh Quartet spurred the formation of other professional quartets in Vienna. This meant that Beethoven could write quartets intended for professionals to perform in public although their premières were likely to be held for private quartet parties as before. He took up the sketches he had made for a string quartet the summer before Galitzin's request and completed the E-flat Major Quartet, opus 127, in February 1825.

Schuppanzigh begged the composer to allow him and his quartet to give the first performance of the new E-flat Major Quartet to the public on March 6, 1825. Beethoven agreed and wrote to the players, humorously asking each of them to "distinguish himself and to vie with his neighbor in excellence." However, they had only two weeks to rehearse the quartet which had striking new features, one of which was greater independence of the four parts. The première was a failure! It was poorly played and badly received. The violinist Joseph Böhm replaced Schuppanzigh to lead the ensemble under the guidance of a deaf Beethoven who coached the players by watching their bow and finger movements. They gave several more performances of the quartet later that month to the pleasure of the composer. While more successfully presented, the E-flat Major Quartet was not well accepted by the audiences. It was reported that the work was "incomprehensible, incoherent, vague, and an over-extended series of fantasias." (Such comments were typical of the reactions to all of the five late-period quartets by Beethoven at their first public performances.)

The work opens with a short majestic statement (*Maestoso*) introducing a group of themes in faster tempi (*Allegro*). They are broken up by the repeated insertions of the introductory statement offering contrasts to the somewhat calm and "pastoral" nature of the first movement.

The second movement, marked *Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile*, consists of a set of variations on a double thematic melody that has been described variously as "rapt," "expansive," and "religious" in nature.

The *Scherzando vivace* that follows brings one down from the spiritual atmosphere of the preceding movement with its joy and playfulness.

The *Finale*, unmarked by Beethoven as to its tempo but deemed to fit *allegro con moto*, is very much in the mood of the first movement with its bursts of energy, repetitiveness, and pastoral character. The movement closes in a rather unusual gentle coda based on its opening theme.

—Notes by Arthur Canter

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Ferdinand Bac (French, 1859-1952), *What are looking for in the sky, crazy old man?*, c. 1950, ink on paper, Collection of Madame Sylviane Jullian



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MEET MEREDITH

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Basic information:

Meredith Music. Sophomore from Coralville majoring in piano performance and chemistry, pre-med track.

What is your position at Hancher?

Usher.

How long have you worked at Hancher?

I am starting my second year at Hancher this year.

What is your favorite part about Hancher?

Getting to share amazing experiences with people from all walks of life.

Do you have any favorite Hancher show you've worked or attended?

I really enjoyed [Terrance Simien and] the Zydeco Experience because the audience members were up and dancing and the music was very engaging. It was a really fun and interactive show and I loved watching how into the performance the devoted fans were.

I [also] loved watching Yo-Yo Ma because he has such a high level of musicianship. As a classical musician he is one of my role models and I have learned many lessons from his music and performances. Seeing Yo-Yo Ma perform live has always been on my "bucket list" and working at Hancher made that possible for me.

Do you have a favorite spot in Iowa City?

The Senate Chamber of the Old Capitol.

Do you have any favorite TV shows, movies, bands, or books?

Mr. Holland's Opus and *The Golden Girls*

Do you have any favorite classes you've taken at the University of Iowa?

Chemistry. I really enjoy chemistry because it is fascinating to learn about things that we cannot see. I think it is really interesting how all things are derived from variations of a select group of elements. Also, I find it very interesting to think about the ultimate reason that a particular process or interaction occurs.

What are your eventual career goals? How does working at Hancher help you achieve those goals?

To be a medical doctor. Working at Hancher allows me to be socially involved with others and to help other people, which I believe is prepping me for a significant part of my role when I become a physician.



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MEET HENRY

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On March 13, one of Hancher's very own will travel to Washington D.C., embarking on a campaign to spread the arts to America's children.

Henry Cardenas was selected from numerous teaching artists from across the country to teach a three-hour workshop to educators from the Washington D. C. metro area. This workshop is a part of The Kennedy Center's Changing Education Through The Arts program, an initiative that coaches teachers on blending the arts into their everyday curriculum. Cardenas will teach a workshop on digital music composition to 4-8 grade music teachers.

No stranger to mixing music and elementary education, Cardenas is also the M.C. Ginsburg Artist in Residence. As part of this residency, each week Cardenas travels to local elementary schools to teach a lesson on audio mixing. Fifth-grade students use their laptops to utilize a free online audio mixer and create loops of sound. Through this experimentation, students develop their comfort with technology and also learn music and mathematics fundamentals. Cardenas plans to bring this same lesson to educators on the east coast.

As an elementary education major, this endeavor clearly relates to Cardenas' future career goals. "I've been continuing to foster my relationship with the age range that I plan to be working with," he said. "Since I've been in the program, I believe I've gotten better at teaching because I've developed some insight as to how to properly teach students."

Cardenas works as an assistant audio engineer at Hancher. He is originally from New York and studies elementary education at the University of Iowa.

We are very proud to have Henry as a Hancher employee, and we wish him the best of luck for his time at The Kennedy Center and beyond.



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EMBRACING COMPLEXITY

Upcoming Events in Spring 2018:

THEATER | STORYTELLING

Feathers of Fire: A Persian Epic

Wednesday, April 4, 7:30 pm
The Auditorium, Hadley Stage



COMEDY

Bassem Youssef

Part of Mission Creek Festival

Saturday, April 7, 7:30 pm
The Auditorium, Hadley Stage

**MISSION
CREEK
FESTIVAL**



THEATER | STORYTELLING

Reading: *Muslims in Iowa*

Tuesday, April 10, 7:00 pm
Strauss Hall

FREE!



FREE

MUSIC

Zeshan Bagewadi and the Transistors

TWO OUTDOOR SHOWS!

Friday, May 25, 6:30 to 9:30 pm
Friday Night Concert Series
in Downtown Iowa City

PRESENTED BY HANCHER
AND SUMMER OF THE ARTS

Saturday, May 26, 2:00 pm
Lynch Snyder Green
outside Hancher Auditorium
FREE!



FREE

TICKETS

Order online
hancher.uiowa.edu

Call
(319) 335-1160 or 800-HANCHER

Accessibility Services
(319) 335-1158



Hancher's Embracing Complexity project is made possible in part by a grant from the Association of Performing Arts Professionals - Building Bridges: Arts, Culture, and Identity, a component of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art.

STANLEY CAFÉ

Located on the Second Floor

- Full café open two hours prior to showtime
- Second floor bar open following the performance



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HOURS:

- Before Performances
- Wednesdays 10:00 am–1:00 pm
- Thursdays 5:00–7:30 pm



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