

THE YING QUARTET WITH BILLY CHILDS

Saturday, February 11, 2017, 7:30 pm

A collaboration with the UI String Quartet Residency Program



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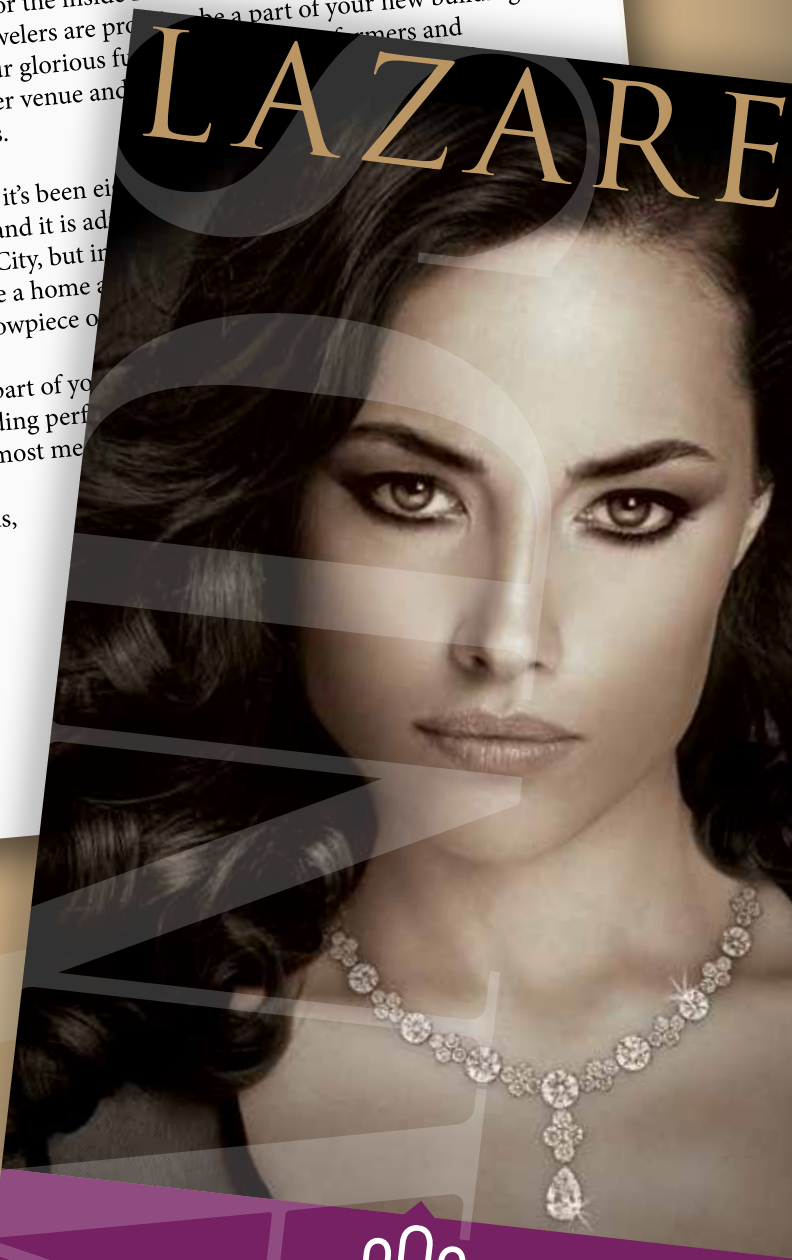
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THE YING QUARTET

ROBIN SCOTT *Violin*

JANET YING *Violin*

PHILLIP YING *Viola*

DAVID YING *Cello*

THE PROGRAM

Quartet in F Minor, Opus 95 ("Serioso") Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro con brio

Allegretto ma non troppo

Allegro assai vivace ma serioso

Larghetto espressivo; Allegretto agitato; Allegro

The River, the Bird, and the Storm

Billy Childs

INTERMISSION

Quartet No. 14 in A-flat Major, Opus 105 Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Adagio ma non troppo; Allegro appassionato

Molto vivace

Lento e molto cantabile

Allegro, non tanto



Photo: Raj Naik

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

THE YING QUARTET

“The Ying Quartet performed with technical mastery, musical insight, vivid imagination, and tireless enthusiasm.” – *Peninsula Reviews*

The Ying Quartet occupies a position of unique prominence in the classical music world, combining brilliantly communicative performances with a fearlessly imaginative view of chamber music in today's world. Now in its second decade, the Quartet has established itself as an ensemble of the highest musical qualifications. Their performances regularly take place in many of the world's most important concert halls, from Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House; at the same time, the Quartet's belief that concert music can also be a meaningful part of everyday life has also drawn the foursome to perform in settings as diverse as the workplace, schools, juvenile prisons, and the White House. In fact, the Ying Quartet's constant quest to explore the creative possibilities of the string quartet has led it to an unusually diverse array of musical projects and interests.

The Ying's ongoing *LifeMusic* commissioning project, created in response to their commitment to expanding the rich string quartet repertoire, has already achieved an impressive history. Supported by the Institute for American Music, the Ying Quartet commissions both established and emerging composers to create music that reflects contemporary American life. Recent works include Billy Childs's *Awakening*; Lera Auerbach's *Sylvia's Diary*; Lowell Liebermann's String Quartet No. 3, *To the Victims of War*; Sebastian Currier's *Next Atlantis*; and John Novacek's *Three Rags for String Quartet*. In August 2016 the Ying Quartet released a new Schumann/Beethoven recording on Sono Luminus with the cellist Zuill Bailey, and in 2016-17 the five will tour with the Schumann Cello Concerto transcribed for cello and string quartet along with Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata," also reimagined for cello quintet.

The Ying Quartet's many other recordings reflect many of the group's wide-ranging musical interests and have generated consistent, enthusiastic acclaim. The group's CD *American Anthem* (Sono Luminus), heralding the music of Randall Thompson, Samuel Barber, and Howard Hanson, was released in 2013 to rave reviews; their 2007 Telarc release of the three Tchaikovsky quartets and the *Souvenir de Florence* (with James Dunham and Paul Katz) was nominated for a Grammy Award in the Best Chamber Music Performance category.

The Ying Quartet first came to professional prominence in the early 1990s during their years as resident quartet of Jesup, Iowa, a farm town of 2000 people. Playing before audiences of six to six hundred in homes, schools, churches, and banks, the Quartet had its first opportunities to enable music and creative endeavor to become an integral part of community life. The Quartet considers its time in Jesup the foundation of its present musical life and goals.

As quartet-in-residence at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, the Ying Quartet teaches in the string department and leads a rigorous, sequentially designed chamber music program. One cornerstone of chamber music activity at Eastman is the noted "Music for All" program, in which all students have the opportunity to perform in community settings beyond the concert hall. The Quartet is the ensemble-in-residence at the Bowdoin International Music Festival and at Arizona State University, and from 2001-2008, the members of the Ying Quartet were the Blodgett Artists-in-Residence at Harvard University.

BILLY CHILDS

“As a pianist, he possesses the improvisatory skills and powerful sense of swing one associates with world-class artists...Childs is an inventive composer and arranger whose effort in those areas consistently expand the dimensions of the jazz genre—and beyond.” — *The Los Angeles Times*

Jazz pianist/composer Billy Childs remains one of the most diversely prolific and acclaimed artists working in music today. Childs's canon of original compositions and arrangements has garnered him the 2013 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship (2009), fourteen Grammy nominations, and four Grammy awards, most recently for Best Arrangement, Instrumental & Vocal (featuring Renée Fleming and Yo-Yo Ma) in 2015 for “New York Tendaberry,” from his highly successful release *Map to the Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro*. Previously he won Best Instrumental Composition for *The Path Among the Trees* (2011) and *Into The Light* (2005), from his much-heralded jazz/chamber releases, *Autumn: In Moving Pictures* and *Lyric*. *Downbeat* magazine states, “...Childs's jazz/chamber group has taken the jazz-meets classical format to a new summit.”

Born in Los Angeles in 1957, Childs was already proficient at the piano by age 6; he was accepted in USC's Community School For The Performing Arts at age 16, studying music theory and piano with some of the world's most renowned musical scholars. He graduated from USC in 1979 with a degree in composition. Among Childs's early influences: Herbie Hancock, Keith Emerson, Chick Corea, and others. He credits classical composers such as Paul Hindemith, Maurice Ravel, and Igor Stravinsky for also influencing his love of composition. Childs's performing career was also enriched with early-career apprenticeships with legendary jazz trombonist J.J. Johnson, and trumpet great Freddie Hubbard, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Childs released his first solo album, *Take For Example, This...* in 1988, on Windham Hill Jazz Records. It was the first of four raved-about albums on the imprint, culminating with the acclaimed *Portrait Of A Player*, in 1993. In 1995 Childs released *I've Known Rivers* on Stretch/GRP Records. In 1996 he released *The Child Within* on Shanachie Records. Songs from both recordings garnered his first Grammy nominations.

Childs's multiple musical interests also include collaborations, arrangements, and productions for other acclaimed artists, including Yo-Yo Ma, The Kronos Quartet, Wynton Marsalis, Sting, Chris Botti, and Leonard Slatkin, among others. He has received orchestral commissions from The Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Los Angeles Master Chorale, The Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and The Lincoln Jazz Center Orchestra. In 2013, he premiered *Enlightened Souls*, a commission from Duke University featuring Dianne Reeves and the Ying Quartet, to commemorate fifty years of African-American students attending the school. In 2016, he premiered the piano quintet, *The Bird, The River, The Storm*, also with the Ying Quartet (a piece they commissioned).

In 2014, Childs released *Map to the Treasure – Reimagining Laura Nyro* (Sony Masterworks), which was produced by Larry Klein and features Reneé Fleming, Esperanza Spalding, Alison Krauss, Shawn Colvin, Rickie Lee Jones, Becca Stevens, Ledisi, Chris Botti, Yo-Yo Ma and Susan Tedeschi. In spring 2017, he reaches back to his jazz roots with *Rebirth*, a quartet album and his debut on the Mack Avenue label.

PROGRAM NOTES

Quartet in F Minor, Opus 95 (“Serioso”)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

The Siege of Vienna in 1809 left Ludwig van Beethoven depressed, and he was unable to produce much new music during the following year. He did, however, complete the String Quartet, op. 95. His sketchbook from this period contains the comment: “Quartets every week.” These sessions were spearheaded by the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who championed Beethoven’s quartets, and hosted by Baron Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz, a cellist. When Opus 95 was published six years later, it was dedicated to Zmeskall “from his friend Ludwig van Beethoven,” a departure from previous practice, as Beethoven’s compositions were typically issued with the names of the patrons who assisted him. For a time, an annuity from three nobles allowed the composer to concentrate on his own musical choices rather than on fulfilling commissions. The Quartet’s origins are reflected in Beethoven’s indication that it was “written for a small circle of connoisseurs and is never to be performed in public.” Its added label, “serioso,” both captures the work’s mood and suggests that its learned musical language is for this elite audience.

Beethoven scholars frequently herald the *Quartet serioso* as an early precedent for the remarkable quartets of the composer’s final style period. Joseph Kerman finds it to be “Beethoven’s most self-absorbed and uncompromising and fraught with energy, the energy turned squarely in on itself.” The choice of F minor suggests the work’s tragic overtones. Afflicted by abrupt shifts of mood, the opening *Allegro con brio* surges from gruff unison outbursts and passages underscored with low rumblings, to soaring first violin, scales suddenly shooting upward, and dramatic descending leaps. A more subdued yet still tense second movement is dominated by the contrapuntal imitation characteristic of Beethoven’s late quartets. The intensity of the first movement returns in the vigorous but still “serioso” scherzo; the second of its inner trios is unable to retain its calmer state, sliding briefly back to the original material to conclude the movement. The finale opens with a slow, lamenting introduction, leading to a driving, agitated *Allegro*. The brilliant coda in the major mode that concludes the Quartet is an all too fleeting respite from its brooding darkness, somehow maintaining the work’s tension even as it hurtles towards its final release.

– Marian Wilson Kimber

The River, the Bird, and the Storm

Billy Childs

A recurring theme in much of my music has been a love of nature, and this is certainly the case with *The River, the Bird, and the Storm*. I wanted to compose a three movement suite with kind of an open-ended program—the titles of each movement are mere suggestions as to a storyline for the piece. In this piece, more than others that I have composed, I stayed away from a formal structure and let the music reveal to me where it wanted to go.

In *The River*, I started with the opening three-note pattern in the piano which serves as a thematic engine around which string quartet events occur. To me, the pattern symbolizes the “river,” with its flowing movements, and the strings quartet entrances are events in nature which you might see surrounding a river. The perpetual motion of the pattern remains a constant throughout the movement, interrupted briefly by a contemplative section which leads to an improvised piano cadenza.

The Bird is my portrait of the slow aerial flight of an eagle or falcon across the backdrop of a vast horizon. The harmonic language uses pentatonics, quartal

harmony, and polytonality. The movement starts out with a lonely, plaintive piano melody, followed by the cello's upper register "E" entrance; this melody symbolizes the first appearance of the bird. The middle cantabile section in 3/4 is kind of an impressionistic depiction of other birds joining the scene. The piano serves mostly as accompaniment to the counterpoint of the string quartet. A return to the rubato-feeling *Andante* section of the beginning and the movement comes to a close with the same plaintive statement played in the piano, transposed a fourth down (from "B minor" to "F# minor").

The Storm is the most angular movement, meant to illustrate the harshness and unpredictability of a storm. It is constantly shifting meters and rhythmically is influenced by my jazz roots, with many accents coming on upbeats and other unexpected weak beats. In fact, I composed this part of the suite imagining the sound of a drum set accompanying the piano and string quartet—that is the spirit which it should be performed in.

This piece, commissioned by the Ying Quartet, represents the latest chapter in one of the most successful, musically exciting, and rewarding collaborations of my career. I want to thank the Ying Quartet for this commission.

– Billy Childs

Quartet No. 14 in A-flat Major, Opus. 105

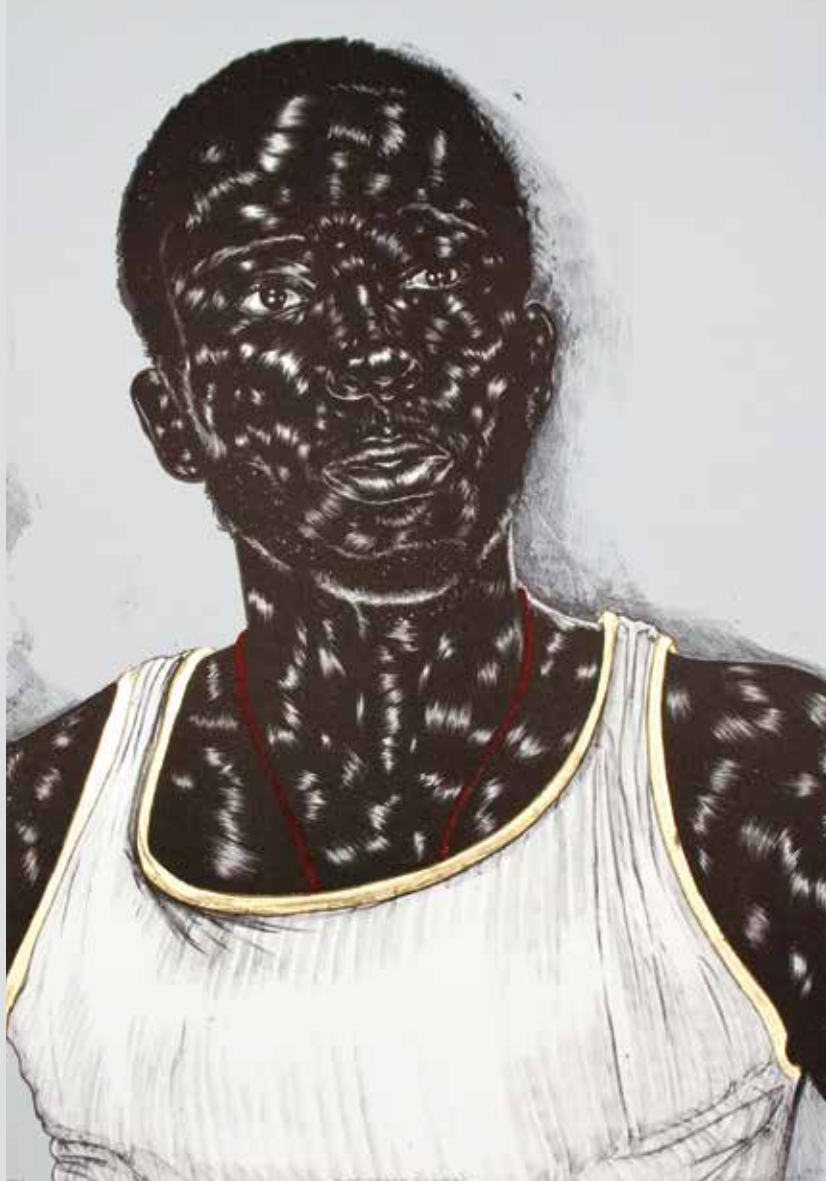
Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Hired by Jeanette Thurber to direct the National Conservatory in New York City, Antonín Dvořák spent several years in the United States in the 1890s. His residency was historic in the nation's musical life and resulted in the transformation of his own compositional style. Homesick for Bohemia, Dvořák spent the summer of 1893 in the Czech village of Spillville, Iowa, where he was struck by the vastness of the prairie. He also visited St. Paul's Minnehaha Falls, named for the character in Longfellow's poem, *Hiawatha*, which he had read. The composer's highly publicized pronouncements about the need for a nationalistic style based on the music of indigenous peoples and African Americans met with some resistance but also generated innovations by American composers. His travels produced some of his best-loved works, including the "American" String Quartet and the Symphony No. 9, "From the New World," premiered to great acclaim at Carnegie Hall. However, Mrs. Thurber was unable to pay Dvořák his full salary after the economic crash of 1893, and he eventually had to depart for Europe. When he left New York, Dvořák abandoned his "American" style in favor of symphonic poems and operas that more overtly expressed Czech culture.

The String Quartet, op. 105, was composed during this turning point. Begun in New York in 1895, it was completed in the composer's native land some months later. The work's premiere, performed by the Bohemian Quartet, took place in Prague in 1897 at the Czech Society for Chamber Music. Called one of Dvořák's "most perfect compositions" by Jan Smaczny, the Quartet returns to a language inspired by Czech music, manipulated within organic forms. The turning motive introduced in the slow opening is also heard in the first theme of the *Allegro appassionato* that follows. After a vigorous second theme, the motive dominates the movement's stormy central development. The scherzo is a lively *furiant*, the dance type marked by irregular accents that makes frequent appearances in the composer's *Slavonic Dances* as well. Its lyrical central trio is imbued with Czech melodic flavor. In one of its darkest moments, the Quartet's third movement recalls the trio's melody, a minor mode passage that precedes the eventual tranquil mood. Returning to the atmosphere of Czech dances, the final *Allegro* features both driving intensity and moments of lyricism.

– Marian Wilson Kimber

Marian Wilson Kimber is Associate Professor of Musicology in the School of Music at The University of Iowa.



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The Hancher Showcase – staffed and managed by volunteers in the Hancher Guild—is filled with unique, high-quality items that you'll want for yourself or when you need a special gift.

Proceeds of all Showcase sales are used to support Hancher's educational programs.

The Showcase opens one hour prior to a performance's starting time and remains open through and after the performance.

The Showcase is also open on Wednesdays, from 10 am to 1 pm, and on Thursdays, from 4:30 to 7:30 pm, while the Stanley Café is open to the public for Thursday Nights at Hancher.

HOURS:

- One hour before performances, at intermission, and after performances
- Wednesdays 10 am-1 pm
- Thursdays 4:30-7:30 pm

 HANCHER SHOWCASE





2/16



HANCHER

Exploring the aesthetics of **empathy**



3/8



3/9



5/4

2/16

Tanya Tagaq
in concert with *Nanook of the North*

3/3-4

Circus Oz

3/8

Hancher Culinary Arts Experience: Oasis

3/9

Las Cafeteras

3/23

Jessica Lang Dance

3/27

Leslie Odom Jr.

3/30

David J. Skorton

4/14

Club Hancher: Fred Hersch Trio

5/4

/peh-LO-tah/

TICKETS

Order online hancher.uiowa.edu

Call (319) 335-1160 or 800-HANCHER

Accessibility Services (319) 335-1158

\$10

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



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