

Brandeis
FALL 2022

CONCERT SERIES

Slosberg Music Center

LYDIAN STRING QUARTET



ANDREA SEGAR & JULIA GLENN,
VIOLINS

MARK BERGER, *VIOLA*

JOSHUA GORDON, *CELLO*

and special guest artist

ELIZABETH CHANG, *VIOLIN*



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2022

SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER

LYDIAN STRING QUARTET

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2022 | 7 PM TALK, 8 PM CONCERT

Slosberg Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 76, No. 6 (1796-7)

- I. Allegretto
- II. Fantasia. Adagio
- III. Minuet - Alternativo
- IV. Finale. Allegro spiritoso

Eleanor Alberga (b. 1949)

String Quartet No. 2 (1994)

~ INTERMISSION ~

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

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

- I. Allegretto
- II. Vivace
- III. Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo
- IV. *Der schwer gefasste Entschluss*. Grave, ma non troppo tratto - Allegro

PROGRAM NOTES

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 76, No. 6 (1796-7)

Fresh off of his incredible success in London, Haydn returned to the court of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy II in 1795. After dismantling the renowned musical establishment for which the Esterházy court was well known during his father's reign, Haydn was still kept on, but his duties were drastically reduced, allowing him time to accept commissions. In 1796, one such commission, along with a generous fee, came from Count Joseph Erödy, the Hungarian Court Chancellor, for a set of six string quartets. The resulting "Erödy" quartets, as a set, are now widely considered the crowning achievement of Haydn's string quartet writing career.

The 6th quartet of the set, in E-flat major, is unusual in a number of respects. It begins with a theme and variations, a form which is much more common for slow, middle movements or finales, and the expected sonata-form movement doesn't appear until the finale. Both the first movement and the slow movement contain intricately worked out fugues. The primary thematic materials of all four movements are derived motivically from the most basic of materials: the major scale. All of these unique elements – experimenting with the traditional ordering of movements, the prevalence of fugal textures, a focus of motivic connection between all movements of the quartet – would eventually be taken to new heights in the late quartets of Haydn's most famous student (Op. 131 being the most spectacular example).

The quartet opens with an Allegretto first movement, a theme and variations. The theme itself, melodically speaking, is incredibly simple. It begins with a simple sequence of 3-note scale fragments that descend one step with each repetition, gradually developing more personality and variety as the theme progresses. Three variations follow, gradually passing the theme from one instrument to another until everyone joins in with a vigorous fugue to end the movement.

If the first movement was an unusual way to start a quartet in terms of form, the Adagio second movement is even more unusual in terms of harmony. The movement is set in the key of B major, dreaded by amateur string players due to the inherent physical difficulties it presents for intonation. For Haydn's time, this key would not normally be associated with a piece in Eb major, although the 3rd of the B major chord, D#, is enharmonically equivalent to the tonic of Eb. Furthermore, in the first half of this movement, Haydn modulates keys so drastically and so frequently that he chose to not even include a key signature in the score. Nonetheless, after the extraordinary explorations of various keys in the first half, eventually the music finds its way back to B major, and the rest of the movement ensues with the main theme becoming the subject of an elaborate 4-voice fugue.

The Minuet is filled with all of the humor one would expect from Haydn, perhaps most fully on display in the middle section, where the melody is nothing more than a rising and descending major scale, passed along from one instrument to the next.

The Finale is also filled with humor. The descending major scale once again is used as the main tune, only here it is subject to all sorts of rhythmic games. In the amazing development section, the first violin plays a long line of running 8th notes while the rest of the quartet plays isolated chords as if they are looking for the downbeat, creating the aural effect of an almost Stravinskian mixed meter. Eventually everyone finally figures out where beat 1 is, and the themes recapitulate to bring the quartet to a joyous conclusion.

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Eleanor Alberga (b. 1949)
String Quartet No. 2 (1994)

Jamaican-born composer Eleanor Alberga dedicated herself to life as a concert pianist at age five, and has become one of the most highly-regarded mainstream British composers working today. In 1968, Alberga won the Royal Schools of Music Scholarship for the West Indies, allowing

her to move to London to study at the Royal Academy. Ten years later, she started working for The London Contemporary Dance Theater as a pianist. In that position, Alberga would improvise for the company's classes, and her improvisation sessions gained her notoriety and led to commissions for new compositions. At present she has composed three string quartets. The String Quartet No. 2 is an extraordinary work of rhythmic vitality, intricate counterpoint, and harmonic richness.

Alberga's String Quartet No. 2 is compact and powerful. It is a single movement spanning just over 15 minutes duration, cast in a complex form where one can sense many elements of traditional string quartets – embedded sections resemble a slow movement and scherzo within an over-arching structure that shares some of the characteristics of sonata-form. Alberga, in her program notes for the premiere recording, suggests that almost all of the material used in the quartet is present in the first two seconds. An explosive motive erupts at the beginning of the quartet, and this first initial motive indeed contains most of the materials that are expanded and explored throughout the rest of the piece. The composer's connection to dance is fully evident in the rhythmic vitality of the quartet, and it features a wide-ranging harmonic language, seamlessly incorporating familiar tonal sonorities with elements of 12-tone serialism, simple pentatonic patterns and virtuosic writing for the entire quartet.

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

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

Beethoven's Op. 135 was his last completed work, finished just months before his death in 1827. Following the gigantic, genre re-defining and boundary pushing quartets Op. 127, 130, 131 and 132, his final work is all the more striking for its lightness of tone and evident return to classical norms. The work in many ways appears to have more in common with Beethoven's early Op. 18 quartets than it does to the late ones, especially in terms of mood and proportions. Yet in spite of its light-hearted jovial nature, the way the musical narrative unfolds organically

in each movement is clearly the work of a seasoned master at the height of his powers.

The first movement is cast in a classically proportioned sonata form, initially set in motion by what sounds like a rather serious question in the viola. This is answered flippantly by the violins, as if they are telling the lower strings to lighten up and the rest of the movement unfolds congenially.

The second movement is a plucky, quicksilver scherzo which begins humorously with everyone entering on different beats of each measure, as if the two violins and viola are each searching for the downbeat while the cello plays the simple melody underneath and the intricate dance ensues. A contrasting section appears in the middle (the contrast here is all texture and key, the fast tempo is unrelenting) which builds to a tremendous climax where the lower three instruments fall into a dizzying loop of the same gesture over and over beneath the first violin, who seems to go off the rails in some of most virtuosic violin fireworks that Beethoven ever composed. After the outburst subsides the opening material recapitulates and the movement ends effervescently.

The third movement, a serene, heartfelt hymn in D-flat major, is the emotional center of the work, and is certainly one of the crowning achievements of Beethoven's late period slow movements. The choice of key creates a naturally dark timbre (all of the flats take away notes that would normally resonate with the open strings) and the melody unfolds in the lowest register of the violin. What follows is a series of variations, although the music proceeds so organically and continuously that it feels like a continuous unfolding.

The finale bears the inscription "Der schwer gefasste Entschluss," or "The Difficult Resolution." A slow introduction begins in much darker, minor key territory with the lower instruments intoning a motto which Beethoven inscribed the text, "Muss es sein?" (Must it be?). The question is asked over and over as it builds to a dissonant climax and shrinks back to a single note, C, intoned in unison by the violins. After this brooding,

heavy introduction, the main body of the finale is launched with a jolly motive which Beethoven inscribed as “Es muss sein!” (It must be!). Sunny, jovial music ensues, temporarily darkened by the stormy return of the introduction’s question in the middle of the movement, and the work ends with one of the most light hearted codas in all of Beethoven.

Much debate has occurred as to the meaning of the “Muss es sein?/ Es muss sein!” inscription. Is it a weighty philosophical question? Is it about facing and accepting the inevitability of death (Beethoven passed away only months after the completion of this quartet)? Or was it something more lighthearted, an inside joke about Beethoven fulfilling his commission and settling a bill with his publisher? We may never know, but we can certainly appreciate this work as a graceful exit from the stage – a surprisingly jovial end to Beethoven’s mighty cycle of string quartets that forever changed the course of Western music.

~ Mark Berger

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

From its beginning in 1980, the **Lydian String Quartet** (Andrea Segar and Julia Glenn, violins; Mark Berger, viola; Joshua Gordon, cello) has been acclaimed by audiences and critics across the USA and abroad for embracing the full range of the string quartet repertoire with curiosity, virtuosity, and dedication to the highest artistic ideals of music making. In its formative years, the quartet studied repertoire with Robert Koff, a founding member of the Juilliard String Quartet who had joined the Brandeis University faculty in 1958. Forging a personality of their own, the Lydians were awarded top prizes in international string quartet competitions, including Evian, Portsmouth and Banff, culminating in 1984 with the Naumburg Award for Chamber Music.

In the years to follow, the quartet continued to build a reputation for their depth of interpretation, performing with “a precision and involvement marking them as among the world’s best quartets” (Chicago Sun-

Times). Residing at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts since the group's founding, the Lydians continue to offer compelling, insightful, and dramatic performances of the quartet literature. From the acknowledged masterpieces of the classical, romantic, and modern eras to new remarkable compositions written by today's cutting edge composers, the quartet approaches music-making with a sense of exploration and personal expression that is timeless.

The Lydian String Quartet has performed extensively throughout the United States at venues such as Jordan Hall in Boston; the Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; Lincoln Center, Miller Theater, and Weill Recital Hall in New York City; the Pacific Rim Festival at the University of California at Santa Cruz; and the Snee Beethoven Series at the University at Buffalo. Abroad, the Quartet has made appearances in France, England, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Armenia, and Taiwan.

The Lydians have created intriguing thematic programming such as "Around the World in a String Quartet," a multi-year concert series that explores string quartet music from local world musical traditions in and beyond the western European art music setting; and "Vienna and the String Quartet," a project surveying the heart of the Western classical string quartet repertory by juxtaposing new and old Vienna. In addition to traditional concerts, the quartet offers programming with themes exploring concepts of time, place, the vernacular, and identity, as well as single composer programs, all-contemporary programs, cross-cultural collaborations, and mixed media programs (video, electronics, live painting projections). The Lydians enjoy working with other artists, in traditional configurations as well as in boundary-crossing performances. Most recently, these included such musicians as tabla player Sandeep Das, pipa player Chen Yihan, Syrian clarinetist/composer Kinan Azmeh, and others.

The Lydians have long championed the commissioning, performing and recording of new works. They enjoy working with young composers at the quartet's Brandeis home as well as in mini-residencies at universities

across the US. Their five-year “American Originals” Project, from 1995-2000, featured music drawn from the rich repertoire of the 20th-Century American string quartet. During that time they performed and/or recorded over sixty works by American composers from the early twentieth century onward, accompanying concerts with workshops, lectures, and discussions. The Lydians were the first to record many of these works, helping to bring them to the forefront of the American contemporary quartet repertoire. In recognition of their work, the quartet has received numerous Chamber Music America/ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming, grants from the Meet the Composer/Rockefeller Foundation/AT&T Jazz Program in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music.

In 2012 their first Lydian String Quartet Commission Prize drew over 400 applicants; as a result, first prize-winner Kurt Rohde wrote his epic string quartet treatises for an unrecovered past for the Lydians, who premiered it in 2013 and recorded it in the summer of 2015. The 2015 LSQ Commission Prize was awarded to composer Steven Snowden, who wrote *Bird Catching From Above* for the Lydians’ premiere in the spring of 2016. The 2017 LSQ Commission Prize was awarded to Saad Haddad, who wrote his *String Quartet* for the Lydians’ premiere in the spring of 2018. The 2020 LSQ Commission Prize winner is Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon.

The Lydians’ 29 currently available commercial recordings reflect their diverse and far-reaching repertoire, including works by Beethoven, Brahms, Ives, Ornstein, Persichetti, and Schubert as well as American contemporary composers they have long known and collaborated with such as Martin Boykan, Eric Chasalow, Peter Child, John Harbison, Lee Hyla, Steven Mackey, Kurt Rohde, Harold Shapero, and Yehudi Wyner. Their recording of John Harbison’s *String Quartet No. 3* and “The Rewaking” was chosen by both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* as one of the best classical recordings of 2001. Harbison recently wrote of the quartet: “Each time I encounter the Lydian Quartet my admiration for their technical, structural, and communicative power continues to grow. They are the complete package, and the wider my travels, the deeper goes my conviction.”

Of their recently released (2012) recording of Beethoven's late quartets, Paul Rapoport of Fanfare magazine writes: "these are fine and distinctive performances, recorded in very realistic sound... The dense counterpoint of the Grosse Fuge benefits especially from the textural clarity characteristic of these performances, and the Lydian players turn in one of the most cleanly executed and precisely articulated renditions of this difficult movement in my experience." The Boston Globe's Jeremy Eichler wrote, of the release: "These distinguished readings are full of subtlety, tonal refinement, and a sense of accumulated musical wisdom."

The members of the Lydian String Quartet are on the faculty of Brandeis University, in Waltham, Mass. Learn more at lydianquartet.com.

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Elizabeth Chang, violinist, enjoys a varied career as performer, teacher, and arts administrator. She is currently Professor of Violin at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a faculty member of the Pre-College Division of the Juilliard School, and previously served on the faculties of Rutgers and New York University. Throughout her career, Ms. Chang has embraced leadership roles in the arts community. In September 2021 she was appointed Artistic Director of Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, one of the pre-eminent summer study programs for string players in the country. She is also founder and director/co-director of the Lighthouse Chamber Players, Five College New Music Festival, UMass Amherst Bach Festival and Symposium, and Long River Concerts, among other projects. She has an active chamber music career, collaborating with some of the most prominent artists in the field, and has appeared as soloist, chamber musician and master class teacher in South America, Europe, and Asia. In 2021, Ms. Chang released the critically acclaimed CD Transformations: Works by Kirchner, Sessions, and Schoenberg with Albany Records. A native New Yorker, Ms. Chang is a graduate of Harvard University and was the recipient of the Presidential Scholar in the Arts Award. She was a student of Louise Behrend, Joseph Fuchs, Roman Totenberg, Max Rostal, Leon Kirchner and Luise Vosgerchian. Learn more at elizabethchang.net.

ABOUT THE SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER

Welcome to the Slosberg Music Center at Brandeis University, home to the Brandeis Concert Series and Department of Music. Please take a moment to review the information below, and feel free to ask our concert staff members for assistance at any time. Enjoy the show!

RECITAL HALL GUIDELINES

Videotaping, audio recording, and photography (including cell phones) are not permitted without specific permission from the management. Please turn off all electronic devices before the performance begins. No food or drinks are permitted in the Recital Hall.

LATE SEATING

Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the management, per the performer's request.

STAY IN TOUCH

Go to brandeis.edu/concerts or find the **Slosberg Music Center** on **Facebook** for the latest concert updates. To join our e-mail list for Brandeis arts news and discount ticket offers, visit brandeis.edu/arts.

TICKETS

Please visit brandeis.edu/tickets to purchase tickets online. Tickets are also available at 781-736-3400, at the Shapiro Campus Center Atrium, at the Usdan Game Room or at the door starting 30 minutes prior to the performance (pending availability).

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

Patrons in wheelchairs should email slosberg@brandeis.edu or call 781-736-4867 before you arrive so we can guarantee you an appropriate seat location.

RESTROOMS

Restrooms in the Slosberg Music Center are located on the lower level of the building. An accessible restroom is available on the main level behind the lobby.

ABOUT THE BRANDEIS CONCERT SERIES

Each year, the Brandeis Department of Music presents 60+ concerts, including:

MARQUEE CONCERTS*: An exceptional series of professional concerts that feature faculty and visiting artists, including the *Lydian String Quartet*.

STUDENT CONCERTS: Outstanding student ensembles and music majors perform music ranging from the Renaissance to improvisational jazz and more.

MUSIC AT MANDEL: The Department of Music and the Mandel Center for the Humanities present 5-7 FREE noontime concerts throughout the year.

BRAND NEW MUSIC: Professional and student performers showcase the work of Brandeis student, faculty and alumni composers.

* Select Marquee Concerts are ticketed (\$0-\$25). All other concerts are FREE!

2022 LYDIAN STRING QUARTET COMMISSION PRIZE

THE PRIZE

The Lydian String Quartet and Brandeis University announce their biennial competition for the commission of an original work for string quartet. The winning composer will receive a \$15,000 commission to compose a large-scale (15- to 30-minute) string quartet that will be premiered by the Lydian String Quartet in Fall 2024.

ELIGIBILITY

The competition is held without restriction regarding musical style, nationality, age, gender, race or religion. Members of the LSQ Commission Prize jury, Brandeis faculty and students currently enrolled at Brandeis University are not eligible.

As artists-in-residence at Brandeis, we believe that diversity, equity and inclusion are essential components of artistic excellence. Brandeis University is committed to creating equitable access and opportunities for applicants. Because diversity, equity and inclusion are at the core of Brandeis' history and mission, we value and are seeking applicants that represent a variety of social identities, including those that have been underrepresented in higher education, who possess skills that spark innovation and who, through their artistic pursuits, bring expertise in building, engaging and sustaining a pluralistic, just and inclusive community.

TO APPLY

All competitors must submit the following materials online no later than **December 15, 2022**:

1. Two representative scores as well as recordings of the two works, one that has been completed within the past five years and at least one demonstrating string instrument writing. MIDI representations are acceptable, but live or studio recordings are highly recommended.
2. Online application form, resume of compositional activities, biography and nonrefundable application fee of \$30 (U.S. dollars). Application fees must be submitted by credit card online.

The competition is anonymous. Please note that no identifying words, marks, voices or other indications breaking the anonymity are allowed on scores and sound files. The presence of any identifying features will disqualify the candidate.

The 2022 Lydian String Quartet composition competition is using SlideRoom as its jury platform.

To begin your submission to the competition, please visit lydianquartet.com/prize.

JUDGING AND COMMISSION PRIZE REGULATIONS

The winner of the LSQ Commission Prize will be announced by Jan. 31, 2023. Judges will include members of the Brandeis music composition faculty, guest composers, and the Lydian String Quartet. The decision of the judges is final.

By applying for the competition, each candidate accepts the regulations of this competition.