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UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

School of Music
and Dance

ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET

Geoff Nuttall, violin | Lesley Robertson, viola | Owen Dalby, violin | Christopher Costanza, cello

March 6, 2016 | 3 p.m. | Beall Concert Hall

String Quartet in C major, Op. 76, No. 3 “Emperor” Franz Josef Haydn
 Allegro (1732-1809)
 Poco adagio cantabile
 Menuet. Allegro & Trio
 Finale. Presto

Haydn Discovery

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.

INTERMISSION

Quartet in A, Op. 41 No. 3 (1842) Robert Schumann
 Andante espressivo: Allegro molto moderato (1810-1856)
 Assai agitato
 Adagio molto
 Finale: Allegro molto vivace

The St. Lawrence String Quartet

Appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists (davidroweartists.com)
 Recordings can be heard on EMI Classics and ArtistShare (artistshare.com)
 is Ensemble-in-Residence at Stanford University (slsq.com)

Joseph Haydn wrote the six Op. 76 Quartets in Vienna in 1796-7, not long after returning from his second and final visit to England. He was at the height of his fame as a composer as he neared the end of an important chapter in the history of the string quartet, a genre he had pioneered on and off for 46 years. The Op. 76, his last completed set, was commissioned by the Viennese-Hungarian Count Joseph Erdödy, who paid a fee of 100 ducats with the stipulation that they would initially be for his private use only. On their publication in 1799, British critic Charles Burney wrote to Haydn that he had “never received more pleasure from instrumental music” and that the quartets “are full of invention, fire, good taste, and new effects.”

The focal point of Op. 76, No. 3 is a set of variations on Haydn’s celebrated tune *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser* (“God Preserve Franz the Emperor”), written as a bold challenge to the *Marseillaise* as Vienna was under threat of invasion by Napoleon—hence the quartet’s nickname “Emperor.” Each instrument in turn introduces the solemn melody, while the others weave an increasingly intricate web around it. But Haydn goes further, structuring the entire work around the movement. The melody also finds its way into the Allegro in a theme derived from the initials of the song’s title: G–E–F–D–C. This would have been recognized in Haydn’s day as one of the many ‘learned’ effects he used in his late quartets, complementing such popular elements as the lively country dance he fashions out of the same notes over a viola and cello drone in the central development section. A forthright minuet sets the variations’ intensity and dignity into relief, and an intense finale rounds out Haydn’s strong structure.

Robert Schumann, who tended to focus on one genre at a time, composed the better part of his chamber works in a manic creative spell in 1842. Early that year, during a period of depression and frustration at being in the shadow of his celebrated pianist wife, Clara, he wrote in his journal of having “constant quartet thoughts”—not for the first time, as he’d previously sketched a pair, but that spring he devoted himself to intensive study of the quartets of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, playing through scores at the keyboard with Clara. He then rapidly wrote three string quartets, the only ones he completed, in June and July, and dedicated them to Mendelssohn.

In contrast to his piano works and songs, in which Schumann was relatively unconstrained by formal strictures, his quartets hew closely to classical models. The A major quartet begins with an echo of Beethoven, a falling fifth motive identical to the initial gesture of the Op. 31, no. 3 piano sonata; after a short Andante introduction, he extends the fifth into one theme and introduces another, a graceful melody taken up by the instruments one by one as in a fugue. The exposition is repeated, in textbook Viennese fashion. A rising fourth (the inversion of the first movement’s falling fifth) announces the fragmentary, hesitant theme of the Assai agitato, which Schumann then elaborates in variations that are in turn dark-hued, fugal, hymn-like and rhythmically assertive. The third movement unfolds with quiet intensity, taking on an increasingly somber cast with the addition of an insistent, funereal, dotted-note accompanying figure, while the fourth concludes the quartet with rustic vigor and elegance alternating in a unique and energetic hybrid of rondo, scherzo, and trio.

“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 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.

The St. Lawrence 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 the UK, 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, SC.

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, NY, 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.

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Collegium Vocale Gent | April 17, 2016
special 7:30 p.m. start time

One of the world's leading vocal ensembles will perform Orlandus Lassus' *Lagrimae di San Pietro*, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe.



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