

PROGRAM
November 26, 2017
CALIDORE STRING QUARTET

Quartet in D Major, Op. 64, No. 5, "The Lark"

Allegro moderato
Adagio cantabile
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Vivace

Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Entr'acte {minuet & trio}

Caroline Shaw
(b. 1982)

First Essay: Nimrod (2016)

Caroline Shaw

INTERMISSION

Quartet in F minor, Op. 80

Allegro vivace assai
Allegro assai
Adagio
Finale: Allegro molto

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Jeffrey Myers, Violin
Ryan Meehan, Violin
Jeremy Berry, Viola
Estelle Choi, Cello

*The Concord Chamber Music Society wishes to express appreciation to the
Concord Academy faculty and staff for their assistance and support*

PROGRAM NOTES

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

String Quartet Op. 64, No. 5 ("Lark")

Haydn had written string quartets frequently in the 1760s and the early 1770s, but during the decade from 1775 to 1784 he was very much involved in the composition of opera (and rehearsals for productions of operas by others) for his music-loving patron Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy. He took these responsibilities seriously (along with such requirements as keeping all the instruments in the Prince's household and orchestra in good repair, making sure the players behaved and did not get carried away with drink or other social problems. With all of this to do, he evidently found little time or impetus to work on string quartets. Only a single set of quartets, published as Opus 33, dates from that period. But in the late 1780s he returned to quartet composition on a regular basis, writing no fewer than twenty-five quartets in the decade from 1785 and 1795. Among these were twelve quartets written for and dedicated to a businessman named Tost, hence the nickname "Tost Quartets" applied to Haydn's Opus 54 (three quartets), 55 (three more), and 64 (six).

The quartet nicknamed "the Lark" (a name not, apparently, given by Haydn) appears as No. 5 of the Opus 64 set, though it was the sixth and last to be composed. It has long been one of the most popular of the Haydn quartets; the composer himself adapted the last movement in 1793 for performance by a mechanical flute-clock! All of the Tost quartets show Haydn at a peak of invention and compositional freedom, drawing from years of experience in quartet composition and indulging in the richest variety. The ornithological nickname surely comes from the first violin's entrance in the opening movement — soaring above the staccato part of the three lower voices with a sweet cantabile melody; or, perhaps, from the richly embellished first violin part in the Adagio cantabile, where it leads most of the activity. For the rest, though, the four participants support one another, interact, discuss and (occasionally) argue with the musical equivalent of that most prized of social qualities in eighteenth-century life, the art of conversation.

CAROLINE SHAW (b. 1982)

In 2013, Caroline Shaw became the youngest composer ever to win the Pulitzer Prize, awarded for *Partita for 8*, a title that sounds like an instrumental piece, though it was actually for a vocal octet, without accompaniment. She composed for a group with the wonderful name Roomful of Teeth, of which she is herself a member. In addition to being a professional singer, she is also a violinist who made her solo debut with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 2015.

Born in Greenville, North Carolina, she started studying violin with her mother at the age of two. The earliest composing started at ten. She concentrated on violin in her undergraduate work at Rice University, adding a master's degree from Yale in 2007. In 2010 she entered the doctoral program in composition at Princeton, where she was still finishing the degree when she became famous overnight as the winner of the Pulitzer Prize in composition. Prior to that time she had been very busy as a singer or violinist (including backup work with Paul McCartney on Saturday Night Live, as well as appearances on Letterman and the Tonight Show with The National and the Roots, respectively).

She remains committed to her life as a performer, but the Pulitzer has meant many commissions for a wide range of pieces, including work for the Carmel Bach Festival, the Cincinnati Symphony, the Guggenheim Museum (a work for the FLUX Quartet), and more. She received the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, which requires the recipient to pursue a project in three countries outside the United States for a year. Her project was a study of historical formal gardens. She was also a Rice Goliard Fellow, for which she studied busking and fiddling in Sweden, and a Yale Baroque Ensemble fellow.

The following notes have been provided by the composer.

Entr'acte {minuet & trio}

Entr'acte was written in 2011 after hearing the Brentano Quartet play Haydn's Op. 77 No. 2 — with their spare and soulful shift to the D-flat major trio in the minuet. It is structured like a minuet and trio, riffing on that classical form but taking it a little further. I love the way some music (like the minuets of Op. 77) suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition.

~ Caroline Shaw

First Essay: Nimrod (2016)

First Essay: Nimrod began as a simple exercise in translating the lilt and rhythm of one of my favorite authors, Marilynne Robinson, into music. She writes beautifully and bravely on notions of the human soul, weaving delicately in and out various subjects (politics, religion, science) in each of her rich, methodical essays. In addition to thinking deeply about how the Calidore String Quartet approaches music and who they are as musicians, my jumping off point for this piece was considering Robinson and other writers. Usually my music is inspired by visual art, or food, or some odd physics quirk, but this time I wanted to lunge into language, with all its complex splintering and welding of units and patterns! The piece begins with a gentle lilt, like

Robinson herself speaking, but soon begins to fray as the familiar harmony unravels into tumbling fragments and unexpected repetitive tunnels. These unexpected musical trap doors lead to various worlds that are built from the materials of the beginning, like the odd way dreams can transform one thing into another. The title refers to the legendary biblical figure Nimrod, who oversaw the construction of the Tower of Babel — a city designed to be tall enough to reach heaven but which resulted in confusion and scattering of language. This image of chaos and fragmentation, but also of extraordinary creative energy, may serve as a framework for listening to this musical essay.

I have written *First Essay: Nimrod* particularly for the wonderfully thoughtful Calidore Quartet, whose performances of and investigations into the rich string quartet repertoire are an inspiration to me.

~ Caroline Shaw

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

String Quartet No. 6 in F minor, Opus 80

So much of Mendelssohn's music is cast in the light and airy style of the "fairy music" familiar from the *Midsummer Night's Dream* score or the finale of the Violin Concerto, that the poignancy, dissonance, and expressive depth of this last finished chamber music score from his hand comes as something of a surprise. A surprise, that is, only until we learn the circumstances of the work's composition. All his life, and even through a profoundly happy decade of marriage, Mendelssohn had remained close to his two sisters, and especially to Fanny, who was herself no mean composer and who had taken such an active role in the brilliant music-making of their teen years. So when Fanny suddenly died of a stroke in May 17, 1847, in her forty-second year, Felix himself nearly collapsed on hearing the traumatic news.

He was persuaded to spend the summer in peaceful isolation in Switzerland with just his wife and a few friends, in the hope of helping him recover from the blow. During that time he composed the F-minor string quartet, a work that — had he lived longer — might have presaged the beginning of a new and more profound late stage to his career.

Perhaps as befits a work composed in the most serious of moods, Mendelssohn seems to have restudied the string quartets of Beethoven, or at least to have summoned up in his mind some of the most striking passages in Beethoven's quartet output, with ideas that colored his own work without ever approaching imitation.

The opening movement is driven and passionate, and its opening figure recalls Beethoven's Opus 95 quartet in the same key — though only for a measure or so, after which Mendelssohn extends his claustrophobic opening into a much wider space and follows it with aggressive and tender versions of an annunciatory theme. As the movement unfolds, daring harmonic tensions drive forward in ways that even Wagner had hardly yet thought of in 1847.

The scherzo of the second movement follows Beethoven in converting the social niceties of the minuet into a driven, even savage dance. Good cheer has been replaced by a terrifying sense of disquiet through energetic syncopations and unexpected dissonances. In the Trio, viola and cello unfold a kind of passacaglia theme in octaves, and over this the two violins play a tentative and macabre waltz figure, projecting a mood that seems to anticipate Gustav Mahler by a half century.

The Adagio is one of the most Beethovenian passages that Mendelssohn ever composed, clearly under the influence of Beethoven's many profoundly rich quartet slow movements. Mendelssohn was a friend of Gustav Nottebohm, the first scholar who undertook a detailed study of the Beethoven sketchbooks, and it has been suggested that Nottebohm had told Mendelssohn of Beethoven's annotation in the sketch for the slow movement of his Opus 59, No. 1 quartet: "A weeping willow or acacia tree on my brother's grave." Those words might well have suggested to Mendelssohn an appropriate musical approach for memorializing a beloved sibling. This is music of great anguish, building to a single massive climax, then falling back to a gentle, poignant close.

The finale maintains the passionate, dark mood. Its contrasting themes are by turns restless and drooping, separated by a remarkable themeless impressionistic passage that is unlike anything else in Mendelssohn. Ultimately, Mendelssohn closes the quartet with a shaking of the fist at the universe in response to the loss that had so greatly undone him.

The manuscript of the quartet is dated September 1847. Mendelssohn himself never entirely recovered; he, too, suffered a series of strokes in the ensuing weeks. On November 4, he followed his sister in death, at the age of thirty-eight.

© Steven Ledbetter (www.stevenledbetter.com)



**kitchen
outfitters**

cookware, bakeware,
knife sharpening, blenders, mixers,
mashers & more

Acton Woods Plaza • Intersection 2A & 27, next to CVS •
342 Great Road • Acton • 978-263-1955



TAKE TIME TO JUST
LISTEN

with Boston's only 24/7
classical music station

99.5 WGBH

Classical Radio Boston
A service of WGBH

Download on the
App Store

GET IT ON
Google Play

f t i



Wendy Putnam
Founder and Director
Concord Chamber Music Society

Wendy Putnam, Founder and Director of the Concord Chamber Music Society, has been a violinist in the Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1996. She has collaborated and concertized with many of the world's most renowned musicians, including her BSO colleagues. Distinguished artists have not only recognized Ms.

Putnam's ability as a highly accomplished violinist, but also commended her devotion to the arts and humanities.

Ms. Putnam was born in Wisconsin and began her study of the violin there at the age of three. She made her first appearance in the concert hall at the age of nine when she was invited to perform as soloist with the Green Bay Symphony. By age sixteen, she had enrolled at Louisiana State University under the guidance of Professor Sally O'Reilly, where she completed both her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees.

In 1991, while also working on her Master of Music degree with Josef Gingold at Indiana University, Ms. Putnam was appointed Concertmaster of the New Orleans Symphony, now the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. Her performance of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with the LPO under Maxim Shostakovich was named "Best Classical Performance of the Year" in 1995 by the *New Orleans Times Picayune*.

In addition to having earned fellowships to many of the world's most prestigious music festivals, Ms. Putnam has been the recipient of awards from numerous organizations, including the National Federation of Music Clubs and the Henry B. Cabot Foundation at Tanglewood.

Ms. Putnam founded the Concord Chamber Music Society in January 2000.



Steven Ledbetter
Musicologist

Steven Ledbetter was Musicologist and Program Annotator for the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998, at which time he created his own service, Steven Ledbetter Program Notes. He currently writes notes for orchestras, chamber ensembles, opera companies and other musical entities. His program notes have appeared on every continent except Antarctica, and he is in demand as

a pre-concert lecturer. He has written the notes for approximately 300 recordings. His scholarly specialties include the 16th-century Italian madrigal, American music, and musical theatre. In 1991 his BSO program notes received an ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award for "distinguished print and media coverage of music." The 2017-18 season marks Mr. Ledbetter's seventeenth season as program annotator and his sixteenth as guest lecturer for the Concord Chamber Music Society.

CALIDORE STRING QUARTET

The Calidore String Quartet has won accolades across the globe and become firmly established as one of the finest chamber music ensembles performing today. The Calidore String Quartet — violinists Jeffrey Myers and Ryan Meehan, violist Jeremy Berry, and cellist Estelle Choi — have won many chamber music competitions, including Fischoff, Coleman, and the M-Prize of the University of Michigan. Most recently in 2017 the Calidore was honored with the Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award. The 2017-18 season continues a three year residency for them with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's CMS Two program.

Highlights of the 2017-18 season include debuts at the Kennedy Center and in Boston, Philadelphia, Paris, Brussels, Cologne, Barcelona. The quartet returns to London's Wigmore Hall and the Verbier Festival in Switzerland as well as to major series across North America from Montreal to Seattle. In April 2018 the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center presents the Calidore in their Alice Tully Hall recital debut.

In the 2016-17 season, the Calidore gave world-premieres of works by Caroline Shaw, Hannah Lash and Benjamin Dean Taylor. In addition, the Calidore premiered string quartets of Pulitzer-prize winner Caroline Shaw in New York, Berlin, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Portland, Detroit and Belfast, among others. Formed in 2010 at the Colburn School of Music, the Calidore has studied closely with such luminaries as the Emerson Quartet, David Finckel, Paul Coletti, Ronald Leonard, Clive Greensmith, Martin Beaver and the Quator Ebène.

As a passionate supporter of music education, the Calidore String Quartet is committed to mentoring and educating young musicians, students and audiences. Since 2016 the Calidore has served as Visiting Guest Artists at the University of Delaware and Guest Artists in Residence at the University of Michigan. The Calidore has conducted master classes and residencies at Princeton, Stanford, the University of Michigan, UCLA and Mercer University. Previously, the Calidore served on the faculty of the Ed and Mari Edelman Chamber Music Institute at the Colburn School.

Using an amalgamation of "California" and "doré" (French for "golden"), the ensemble's name represents a reverence for the diversity of culture and the strong support it received from its home of origin, Los Angeles, California, the "golden state." The Calidore String Quartet aims to present performances that share the passion and joy of the string quartet chamber music repertoire.