

WallisAnnenberg Center for the Performing Arts

Paul Crewes
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PRESENTS

JACK QUARTET

JACK Quartet

Members:

VIOLIN

Christopher Otto

VIOLIN

Austin Wulliman

VIOLA

John Pickford Richards

CELLO

Jay Campbell

Program

STRUCTURES (6')

Morton Feldman (1926-1987)

STRING QUARTET (12')

Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901-1953)

Rubato assai

Leggiero

Andante

Allegro possibile

EARLY THAT SUMMER (12')

Julia Wolfe (b. 1958)

15 minute intermission

INTONATIONS (20')

Derek Bermel (b. 1967)

TETRAS (10')

Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017 AT 8PM

Bram Goldsmith Theater

Running Time: 75 minutes with a 15 minute intermission

JACK QUARTET Deemed "superheroes of the new music world" (*Boston Globe*), the JACK Quartet is "the go-to quartet for contemporary music, tying impeccable musicianship to intellectual ferocity and a take-no-prisoners sense of commitment." (*Washington Post*) "They are a musical vehicle of choice to the next great composers who walk among us." (*Toronto Star*)

The recipient of Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, New Music USA's Trailblazer Award, and the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, JACK has performed to critical acclaim at Carnegie Hall (USA), Wigmore Hall (United Kingdom), Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ (Netherlands), IRCAM (France), Kölner Philharmonie (Germany), the Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), La Biennale di Venezia (Italy), Suntory Hall (Japan), Bali Arts Festival (Indonesia), Festival Internacional Cervantino (Mexico), and Teatro Colón (Argentina).

Comprising violinists Christopher Otto and Austin Wulliman, violist John Pickford Richards, and cellist Jay Campbell, JACK is focused on new work,

leading them to collaborate with composers John Luther Adams, Chaya Czernowin, Simon Steen-Andersen, Caroline Shaw, Helmut Lachenmann, Steve Reich, Matthias Pintscher, and John Zorn. Upcoming and recent premieres include works by Derek Bermel, Cenk Ergün, Roger Reynolds, Toby Twining, and Georg Friedrich Haas.

JACK operates as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the performance, commissioning, and spread of new string quartet music. Dedicated to education, the quartet spends two weeks each summer teaching at New Music on the Point, a contemporary chamber music festival in Vermont for young performers and composers. JACK has a long-standing relationship with the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program, where they teach and collaborate with students each fall. Additionally, the quartet makes regular visits to schools including Columbia University, Harvard University, New York University, Princeton University, Stanford University, and the University of Washington.

STRUCTURES (1951)

(...) One of the most remarkable pieces (...) is "Structures for String Quartet" (1951). It is a classical string quartet without sonata development, without serial development in general without benefit of clergy. Like Emily Dickinson's best poems, it does not seem to be what it is until all questions of "seeming" have disappeared in its own projection. Its form reveals itself after its meaning is revealed, as Dickinson's passion ignores her dazzling technique. As with several other Feldman pieces, if you cannot hear "Structures", I doubt that studying the score would be a help, though it is a thoroughly notated field of dynamic incident, whose vertical elements are linked through some sort of shy contrapuntal stimulation of great delicacy and tautness.

—Frank O'Hara (quoted from: *Morton Feldman Essays: edited by Walter Zimmermann beginners press*, Cologne 1985)

STRING QUARTET (1931)

Ruth Crawford (who married her composition teacher Charles Seeger in November 1931, shortly after writing this quartet) was among the most daring and accomplished American avant garde composers. She wrote music in which a lot happens all at once, on every possible level. She exercised strict control over all aspects of the music, rhythm, and tone color, as well as the individual notes of the melodic lines, creating music of extraordinary dramatic tension. This quartet is often considered her masterpiece.

The quartet, a 12-minute work is fully as concentrated and advanced as any work for a similarly sized ensemble produced by Anton Webern, Schoenberg's most radical disciple. The texture throughout favors lines that are highly independent from each other. The first movement, *Rubato assai*, has the kind of wide, arching intervals that are a part of the Webern-Schoenberg style, perhaps not surprising since Crawford wrote the quartet in Berlin during her Guggenheim Fellowship year of 1930-1931. The way the movement increases in energy by piling up on itself, so to speak, is typical of Crawford's music and sets the work apart from its European models.

The second movement, *Leggiero* (*lightly*), is canonic, with imitative entrances cast in distinct registers; the lines of the music are often linked from one instrument to the next like a chain. The third movement is a remarkable study in what Crawford called "dissonant dynamics." Each of the four instruments has its own independent rise and fall in loudness on different held notes. The assertion of one particular note transfers the

listener's attention to it, so the melody emerges note by note from an ever-shifting cloud of dissonance. Later, Crawford would attempt to make this effect even clearer to the audience by arranging this movement as an Andante for string orchestra, trusting that the conductor would control these emerging melodies even better than individual string players could.

The Allegro finale features hard-edged playing at the frog of the bow by the first violin, juxtaposed with fast unison or doubled answers by the other strings, posing a tricky problem in dynamic balance for the performers. As the movement progresses, the three lower strings adopt the material and manner of the violin, and vice versa, by stages, then return via the same path to the texture of the beginning. It's a bold concept, brilliantly executed.

This quartet represented both the high point of Crawford's career as an avant-garde composer and a premature end to it. The Seegers became Communists, necessarily involved in the "proletarian music movement." Crawford Seeger's music veered sharply in that direction with the couple's subsequent pioneering work in American folk song taking all her career time. She did not return to the path indicated by this great quartet again until 1952, by which time she was already fatally stricken with cancer.

—Joseph Stevenson

EARLY THAT SUMMER (1993)

Commissioner: the MTC Lila Wallace/Readers Digest Consortium Program
First Performer: The Lark Quartet, The Kitchen, New York City, 30 May 1993

While living in Amsterdam [in 1992] I began *Early That Summer*. I was reading a book about U.S. political history and the author kept introducing small incidents with phrases like "Early that summer..." The incidents would eventually snowball into major political crises or events. I realized that the music I was writing was exactly like this – that I was creating a constant state of anticipation and forward build. *Early That Summer* was written for the Lark Quartet. I asked them to play it the way they play Beethoven. They are so clear and strong, full of fire and aggression.

—Julia Wolfe

INTONATIONS (2016)

Commissioned by the 92nd Street Y
Premiered in New York, NY on May 23, 2016 by JACK Quartet at the 92nd Street Y as part of the opening concert of the 2016 NY PHIL BIENNIAL.

Intonations is my first multi-movement quartet, inspired in part by the novel "The Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison. Each movement explores a distinct quality of the human voice, from the breath of harmonica blues to a gospel singer's melodic thread to vocal cadences in hip hop.

It has been a great joy to collaborate with the JACK Quartet for several years, both as performer and composer. I'm grateful to Clement So at the 92nd Street Y and to Ellen Highstein at the Tanglewood Music Center for helping bring this new composition to life.

—Derek Bermel

TETRAS (1983)

Iannis Xenakis was born in Romania, but studied architecture in Greece, where he also participated in the Greek resistance during World War II. He worked for the French architect Le Corbusier, notably collaborating with Edgar Varèse on the Phillips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Fair. He is well known for contributions regarding applications of cutting-edge mathematical theories to acoustic and electronic music composition, as well as an aesthetic that is influenced by his Grecian roots. He lived out the remainder of his life in France as a political exile and founded the Xenakis Institute in Paris. He died tragically of Alzheimer's disease in 2001.

I first encountered Xenakis' music rummaging through my teacher's CD collection. The liner notes described his works using words such as "mathematical," "calculus," and "scientific," which I found a bit off-putting. At the time, I had inherited my teacher's skepticism of the application of math to composition, even though I enjoyed math (especially calculus) often to the chagrin of my peers. The sounds I heard couldn't have been more contrary to my expectations. I would have described them as being brutal, primitive, and alien. I didn't quite know how to process what I was hearing at the time; I didn't know whether I liked it, hated it, or what.

—Kevin McFarland