

WallisAnnenberg
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Performing Arts

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PRESENTS

BROOKLYN RIDER

Musicians

VIOLIN

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VIOLIN

Colin Jacobsen

VIOLA

Nicholas Cords

CELLO

Michael Nicolas

Program

PHILIP GLASS (b. 1937)

String Quartet No. 7

LEOŠ JANÁČEK (1854–1928)

String Quartet No. 1 *'The Kreutzer Sonata'*

Adagio con moto

Con moto

Con moto - Vivo - Andante

Con moto (adagio) - piú mosso

Intermission

COLIN JACOBSEN (b. 1978)

BTT

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95 *'Serioso'*

Allegro con brio

Allegretto ma non troppo

Allegro assai vivace ma serioso – Più Allegro

Larghetto espressivo – Allegretto agitato – Allegro

SATURDAY, MAY 13 AT 8:00PM

Bram Goldsmith Theater

Running time: 90 minutes, including a 15-minute intermission.

Exclusive Management:

Opus 3 Artists

470 Park Avenue South

9th floor North

New York, NY 10016

www.opus3artists.com

About the Artists



Hailed as "the future of chamber music" (*Strings*), Brooklyn Rider offers eclectic repertoire in gripping performances that continue to attract legions of fans and draw rave reviews from classical, world, and rock critics alike.

Last season, the group celebrated its tenth anniversary with the groundbreaking multi-disciplinary project *Brooklyn Rider Almanac*, for which it recorded and toured 15 commissioned works, each inspired by a different artistic muse. This season, Brooklyn Rider released *So Many Things* with Anne Sofie von Otter on Naïve Records, which includes music by Colin Jacobsen, Caroline Shaw, Nico Muhly, Björk, Kate Bush and Elvis Costello, among others. Their tour together included stops at Carnegie Hall and the Opernhaus Zurich.

After performances at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in July, the quartet will tour the U.S. with choreographer Brian Brooks and former New York City Ballet prima ballerina Wendy Whelan, performing *Some of a Thousand Words*. Using music from a diverse array of composers, the series of duets and solos featuring Brooks and Whelan foregrounds the live music of the quartet as a dynamic creative component.

Other recent recordings include 2016's *The Fiction Issue* with music by Gabriel Kahane, 2013's *A Walking Fire* on Mercury Classics and *The Impostor* with Béla Fleck on Deutsche Grammophon/Mercury Classics, plus 2011's much-praised *Brooklyn Rider Plays Philip Glass* on the composer's Orange Mountain Music label.

www.brooklynrider.com | facebook.com/BklynRider | twitter.com/Brooklyn_Rider

About the Program

String Quartet No. 7

Philip Glass

Philip Glass is perhaps most widely known for his dramatic scores to such iconic films as *The Hours*, *Kundun*, *Mishima*, and *Koyaanisqatsi*, as well as for his operatic works, namely *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha*. Having recorded the composer's then complete works for string quartet (Orange Mountain Music, 2011*), we found that the broad and pervasive appeal of his musical language coupled with our desire to expand the traditional boundaries of the string quartet helped to foster a deep sense of connection to this music. From the very first notes of our rehearsal process, we felt an affinity to the glowing sonorities and the way the music coaxed us towards a truly collective spirit as a quartet. The openness of the music and the ability of these quartets to be both of their time and curiously "unstuck" from time caused us to draw connections to other familiar sounds such as the urban mechanization of Brooklyn to the drone infused textures of Persian music and beyond; all of this made the music more deeply rooted in our collective 'Brooklyn Rider' experience. The expansive single movement of the Seventh String Quartet (2014), almost Bach-ian in the clarity of its expression, represents his very latest contribution to the genre, and was premiered as a collaboration between the Nederlands Dance Theater and the Kronos Quartet with choreography by Paul Lightfoot and Sol León.

— Nicholas Cords

(*please look for an upcoming recording by Brooklyn Rider of the Sixth and Seventh string quartets of Philip Glass on Orange Mountain Music.)

String Quartet No. 1 *'The Kreutzer Sonata'* Leoš Janáček

The great Czech/Moravian composer Leoš Janáček (1854-1928) found himself at the crossroads between the dusk of the romantic tradition and the dawn of the 20th century with its great proliferation of nationalistic styles. Much more closely aligned to the latter, Janáček was more importantly his own creative force and not beholden to the changing tides of tradition. I often think of his music as encapsulated; undeniably of its time and place, but at the same time, works such as tonight's seem utterly unique when compared against his contemporaries, both forward thinking and fiercely individual.

Janáček dedicated a good deal of his musical activities in the formative time after his student years to the close study of his native Moravian folk music and to the deep listening of the melodic tendencies of speech. Speaking to the latter, though Janáček assiduously

About the Program

studied the different dialects found within a close radius of his home in Brno, he was also was obsessed with the melody heard in everyday speech and made a fascinating habit of notating the inherent pitch and rhythm. For the record, any of us who think our own English tongue is flat in mellifluous inflection (as opposed to, say, Mandarin), Janáček emphatically declared on his visit to London in 1926 that the English language was indeed full of melody! Straight from the composer's mouth! It is through the curious union of a folk-inspired musical language - which Janáček believed to be a universal language - and speech-melody, that we start to understand the characteristics of Janáček's singular musical voice.

Janáček first started musing about writing a string quartet during his student days in Vienna in the 1880s. But it was not until 1923 that the legendary Czech String Quartet offered Janáček, now 69, the opportunity to compose a string quartet. [Side note: recordings of the Czech Quartet (known as the Bohemian String Quartet prior to 1918) are available on YouTube. Their recordings of Dvorák and Smetana in particular represent a lean style of string playing, much more aligned to 19th century styles, that has all but disappeared.] *The String Quartet No. 1*, inspired by Leo Tolstoy's "Kreutzer Sonata", was composed in a short fifteen-day period that October, and subsequently revised. Janáček was generally quite fond of the work of Leo Tolstoy (he visited Russia twice and studied the language), and there are numerous other completed works and sketches that reference the great Russian writer. Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) is a gripping novella about a jealous husband who murders his wife, who has had an affair. In Janáček's words, "I was imagining a poor woman, tormented and run down, just like the one the Russian writer Tolstoy describes in his *Kreutzer Sonata*. Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata" for violin and piano, Op. 47, plays a central role in the unfolding of the disturbing story. Beethoven dedicated the work to the French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer.

This first string quartet of Janáček (followed by a second quartet in 1928, *Intimate Letters*) is highly compact and terse. It uses a focused motivic and modal language that very much ties the four movements together, almost creating the effect of taking in the chapters of a novel or the episodes of a serial television series. Much in keeping with the rest of Janáček's output, the

traditional vestments of the classical tradition - principally speaking, harmonic and formal structures - are more or less abandoned, or even subjugated, in favor of a highly visceral palette that focuses on the psychological underpinning and the turbulent narrative of the *Kreutzer Sonata*.
— Nicholas Cords

BTT **Colin Jacobsen**

BTT started off in my mind as an investigation into and celebration of the incredible creative ferment and experimentation of the 1970's/80's downtown New York scene as embodied by the likes of Glenn Branca, Meredith Monk, Arthur Russell, John Zorn, the Velvet Underground, Reich, Glass, the New York Dolls, Laurie Anderson, Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company, to name a few. However, I also found myself thinking about John Cage and Johann Sebastian Bach. This happened in part because a colleague of mine suggested that Cage was really the spiritual father of that whole scene, and I had this thought that he was tapping into the same elemental stuff that Bach did—though coming at it perhaps from an opposite point of view and obviously from a very different era. While Cage is known as a proponent of chaos, one realizes that for every musical experiment he made, he set up a system of rules and then looked forward to what unfolded within that system (though often in extreme and unexpected juxtaposition). When we think of Bach and the cosmic order in his fugues, there's a similar setting up of parameters that almost has a pre-determined quality, but then there's that same sense of things unfolding in a natural and larger than human way.

All this to say that most of the musical material in *BTT* emanates from a spelling of B-A-C-H and C-A-G-E (D), which in and of itself sets up an interesting juxtaposition of tonalities. The BACH motif is chromatic and curls in on itself while the CAGE motif has an open and pentatonic feel. Over the course of the piece, the two motifs interact in a variety of ways; sometimes contradicting each other, sometimes in harmony and the resulting eclectic mix of sections may or may not relate to some of the above mentioned musicians.
— Colin Jacobsen

Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95 'Serioso' **Ludwig van Beethoven**

Sharing the distinction with *The Art of Fugue*, Beethoven's *Opus 95* is undoubtedly

one of the ultimate motivic compositions in musical history. This highly through-connected journey represents a remarkable degree compactness of form and character. The motivating ideas behind its inter-connected movements are as evident in the macro view as on a cellular level. Unequivocally heralding the complex world of his late period, this work shows Beethoven grappling with personal demons and spiritual callings practically in the same breath as moments of incredible autumnal warmth and wry humor. From the severity and gravitas of the first movement to the transcendental fugal second movement to the terse scherzo to the joyous triumph at the conclusion of the final movement, *Opus 95* makes huge demands of the musician. Indeed, studying this piece forces the musician to come to grips with emotional juxtapositions that have stretched the boundaries of string quartets over different generations. Despite the difficulties, the piece constantly shines a light in the darkest corners of the rehearsal, and inevitably brings one face to face with the creative process itself. Our job as performers is to affirmatively inhabit this world, with all of its joys, challenges, and contrasts.

In approaching Beethoven in particular, having the prior example of past performers is a luxury. We greatly admire the pre-World War II performances of groups like the Capet and Busch String quartets (only separated to the time of Beethoven by the generation of their teachers), for example. Undoubtedly, *Opus 95* was a quartet ahead of its time, and one has to marvel at the challenges the original performers in Beethoven's circle must have had to overcome without the benefit of a recording or performance history. Given the many demands of this work, Beethoven clearly seemed to believe the same as Charles Ives; music is not made for the easy chair! That said, the score will continually require a grand scale re-examination by whatever quartet decides to make the journey. And in the timeless manner of all great music, the world of Beethoven continues to magically lift itself above the fray by reinventing itself and finding evergreen relevance in a fast moving world. Ultimately, by acknowledging both the past and the present tradition and by engaging in our own creative study of the material, we strive towards an interpretation which is personal to us and hopefully to all of you, our beloved audience.
— Nicholas Cords