

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Roy Barnett Recital Hall

Friday, March 11, 2022

12:00 pm

THE CARNELIAN STRING QUARTET
UBC Graduate Quartet in Residence, 2021-2022

Conor Stuart, violin
Samantha Kung, violin
Caroline Olsen, viola
Kitty Chan, cello

String Quartet in B-flat major "Sunrise", op. 76 no. 4 (1798)

Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Adagio
- III. Menuetto
- IV. Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

String Quartet no. 4 in a minor, op. 25 (1909)

Wilhelm Stenhammar
(1871-1927)

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Adagio
- III. Scherzo
- IV. Aria variata

We acknowledge that the University of British Columbia is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

JOSPH HAYDN

String Quartet op. 76 no. 4 “Sunrise” (1797)

When Haydn returned to Vienna in 1795 after his second London visit, he was at the height of his fame, free from his longstanding duties as Kapellmeister for the Esterházy family, and he had more commission offers for new works than he could possibly produce. He could therefore afford to pick whatever projects he preferred. In early 1796 Haydn accepted a commission from Count Joseph Erdődy for a set of six string quartets; while Haydn had dealt with the Erdődy family before and they offered a lucrative commission of 100 ducats (roughly equivalent to \$25,000 CAD in modern currency), the main impetus for Haydn’s agreement seems to have been his contract agreements with publishers. Haydn had recently signed a contract with London’s Longman & Clementi, which would entitle him to a £150 fee (roughly equivalent to \$40,000 CAD in modern currency) for the quartets on top of his commission fee, and he also had a longstanding contract with Vienna’s Artaria which would bring him additional money. Therefore, Haydn not only stood to make a handsome profit, but was assured that with British and Viennese editions from major publishers, the quartets would see immediate distribution across Europe. Haydn had completed the entire set by 1797, and when the exclusivity period specified with the Erdődy commission lapsed in 1799, the quartets went straight to print with strong advertising campaigns from both publishers. The quartets were immediately and overwhelmingly popular with ensembles, critics and audiences alike, and this popularity has continued apace for their over 200 years of existence.

The fourth quartet of the set owes its name to the rising 1st-violin theme that begins the work, one of Haydn’s most attractive and beguiling melodies. Besides its inherent memorability, this theme permeates the entire movement – every single section or motive in the movement is derived from this opening theme in some fashion. For example, the ‘second theme’ played by the cello is a simple inversion of the opening violin theme. As a result, a feeling of constant development and momentum prevails, and the sonata-allegro form arises as a seemingly organic outgrowth of the theme. The second movement shows similar economy of means; out of a simple five-note motif (itself another offshoot of the initial first-movement theme) Haydn weaves an elaborately melancholy fantasia. The expressive use of silence, fermatas, and timbral effects in this movement would come to further prominence in the music of Beethoven. At the time of composition of the op. 76 quartets tant as Haydn’s student and was launching his Viennese career as a composer and virtuoso, and both composers were unquestionably keeping up with each other’s work. Therefore, it is quite possible that this movement reflects not only Haydn’s influence on Beethoven, but perhaps also Beethoven’s influence on Haydn. The following Menuet is genially playful, and the increasingly off-kilter rhythmic effects nod to the nascent scherzo form. The Trio section returns to more melancholy harmonic territory, with pedal drones that faintly suggest rustic bagpipes. The theme of the Finale has been suggested to be in the character of an English folk-song, perhaps as a nod to Haydn’s successes in London. In any case the rondo-form picks up increasing energy as the movement proceeds, before bursting into sudden accelerations, precipitating a dramatically breathless conclusion.

WILHELM STENHAMMAR

String Quartet no. 4 in a minor, op. 25 (1909)

In 1898, Wilhelm Stenhammar’s musical career seemed to be on a steady rise. He was acknowledged as Sweden’s leading pianist, his First Piano Concerto had been a success across Europe, and his new opera *Tirfing* was a critical and popular success at its Swedish premiere. Yet Stenhammar was undergoing a major artistic crisis – always self-critical, he felt his music was

becoming too derivative and Wagnerian. This resulted in a long creative silence and the withdrawal of his First Symphony, which was to have been dedicated to the Finnish composer (and Stenhammar's friend) Jean Sibelius. Stenhammar wrote to Sibelius to apologize:

“You should know that you are in my thoughts daily ever since I heard [your] symphony... I have also just written a symphony. At least it is called a symphony, and only in accordance with the understanding that you perhaps have forgotten should it be dedicated to you. However, nothing came of it. It is ... superficial. I yearn to reach my inner self. And you can wait until I have arrived there. The great day when this happens, I will print your name in large letters on the title page.”

In 1904 Stenhammar finally returned to composition, and began several compositional projects simultaneously, including this Quartet. It went through a long and careful gestation before its eventual 1910 première. Stenhammar was clearly pleased with it, as it received the long-promised dedication to Sibelius which was to be reserved for his best work. The critical consensus has agreed with this judgment, holding it as the emergence of Stenhammar's mature style and as perhaps his single finest work.

Much like Haydn's op. 76 no. 4, the first movement begins with an atmospheric flourish from the first violin, in which all the main musical material of the movement is embedded. Stenhammar's approach to form is quite novel: 'development' ideas occur throughout the work, even at the very beginning, while the nominal development and coda sections also present thematic recapitulations. As a result, the movement unfolds in an organic sweep.

The second movement is built on two disarmingly simple tunes; Stenhammar overlays these with lush, chromatic harmonies. While the opening is spare and haunting in texture, Stenhammar builds towards a climax in the reprise where the textures become as rich and full as the harmonies on which they are built, before an ending which returns to the mysterious atmosphere of the opening.

The extended Scherzo third movement plays sophisticated games with tonality underneath its vigorous rhythmic surface, beginning in the 'wrong' key of d minor and continually wandering off into other keys. The contrasting Presto section presents a strict fugue, disguised as a rustic dance where the participants keep entering in the wrong place. After a relatively straightforward reprise of the opening Scherzo, Stenhammar's tonal gambits intensify: the Presto returns in the unexpected key of F major and lurches crazily through keys, while the final return of the Scherzo arrives in a completely unexpected c# minor and never quite makes its way back home before the movement dissolves into a hushed chord which merges directly into the finale without pause.

The finale is an extended set of variations on an old Swedish folk-tune, *Och riddaren han talte till unga Hillevi* (And the knight he spoke to young Hillevi). This melody, which is simple and expressive, yet flits ambiguously between several keys while remaining nominally in a minor, clarifies what we have just heard in the preceding movements. Now Stenhammar's tonal games and restless modulations are revealed as anticipations of the basic structure of the folk-tune. In the variations, Stenhammar moves through a wide range of textures and moods, yet the theme remains clear throughout. The movement (and the work as a whole) culminates in an astonishingly florid display of part-writing, as the four voices swirl in vast waves of arpeggios around each other, the music moves into a luminous climax in C# major, and the theme is sounded at the extremes of register. This climax fades almost imperceptibly back to the opening theme of the first movement and a hushed final cadence, which gently brings the entire work full circle.

- Programme notes by Conor Stuart