



MIDDLEBURY
PERFORMING ARTS SERIES
P R E S E N T S

Jupiter String Quartet *Jasper String Quartet*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2022

7:30 PM ET

MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, ROBISON HALL



JASPER STRING QUARTET

J Freivogel, Violin
Karen Kim, Violin
Andrew Gonzalez, Viola
Rachel Henderson Freivogel, Cello

JUPITER STRING QUARTET

Nelson Lee, Violin
Meg Freivogel McDonough, Violin
Liz Freivogel, Viola
Daniel McDonough, Cello

Program

String Quintet in C Major, D. 956

Allegro ma non troppo
Adagio
Scherzo. Presto – Trio. Andante sostenuto
Allegretto – Più allegro

Franz Schubert

(1797–1828)

Jupiter String Quartet; Rachel Henderson Freivogel, Cello

String Quartet (Ragamala)

Fantasia (Bihag)
Scherzo (Malkauns)
Recitativo (Basant)
Rhondo (Jög)

Reena Esmail

(b. 1983)

Jasper String Quartet

☞ *Intermission* ☞

Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20

Allegro moderato con fuoco
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro leggierissimo
Presto

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809–1847)

Jasper String Quartet and Jupiter String Quartet

A replay of this performance is available on demand until 7:30 PM ET on Sunday, December 4, 2022 at

<http://go.middlebury.edu/Jupiter-Jasper/>

*Tonight's Performing Arts Series event is made possible thanks to
the Paul Nelson Performance Endowment and the Committee on the Arts.*

Program Notes

SCHUBERT String Quintet in C Major, D. 956

Note by Geoff Thomason, courtesy of the L. A. Philharmonic

This is one of Schubert's very last compositions. The autograph has disappeared, but from a letter of October 2, 1828 to the Leipzig publisher Probst, in which Schubert refers to the work having been finished and given an initial play-through "in the last few days," we can assume a date of September 1828.

That Schubert should have included a second cello in his quintet rather than the second viola of Mozart's quintets is of less importance than why he should have turned to the medium to begin with. The last of Schubert's quartets, the G major D. 887 of June 1826, is a work conceived on such an expansive scale that it is difficult to imagine how Schubert could have continued in the same vein without stretching the medium to the breaking point. The progression from quartet to quintet therefore became a means of coping with that expansion of scale which is the hallmark of Schubert's late works and, as with Mozart, of escaping its egalitarian demands.

Like Mozart, Schubert relishes the quintet's potential for concertante interplay and experiments in tone color. The scoring allows for the exploitation of two homogenous blocks of timbre, centered around a pivotal viola, with the first cello enjoying the limelight as much as the first violin. Schubert complements this inherent timbral contrast with the often disturbing juxtaposition, again characteristic of his late works, of lyrical passages against others which are violent, unsettled, or downright disruptive. The slow movement demonstrates this most clearly; so does the gear change from the Scherzo to its trio, or the emergence of the second group in the first movement apparently out of thin air. This is even true of the last movement, which some have criticized as lightweight, forgetting that the departure from the quartet medium can signal a relaxation of its intellectual demands if needs be.

ESMAIL String Quartet (Ragamala)

Note by Reena Esmail (composer)

During the year I spent in India, I began to notice a beautiful thing that would happen at concerts. When the artist would announce the raag to be sung or played that evening, immediately, and almost subconsciously, many of the cognoscenti in the audience would begin humming the characteristic phrases or 'pakads' of that raag quietly to themselves, intoning with the drone that was already sounding on stage. It had a magical feeling – as if that raag was present in the air, and tiny wisps of it were already starting to precipitate into the audible world in anticipation of the performance. It felt like a connection between the audience and the

performer, as they prepared themselves to enjoy what was to come. Each movement of this quartet opens in exactly the same way, and it is inspired by those quiet intonations.

After the opening phrases, each movement diverges into its own distinct character. The first movement is a Fantasie inspired by the beautiful raag Bihag which layers phrases over one another to create large shapes separated by the silence of pure drones. The second movement is a vivacious and rhythmic setting of a Malkauns taan, which to the western ear, always seems to be pulling to a dominant rather than a tonic. The third movement is in the contemplative Basant – a raag that signifies the season of spring in Hindustani music. And the fourth movement is in the complex and multi-faceted Jōg, a single raag which seems to contain western notions of both ‘major’ and ‘minor’ within it.

In Hindustani music, the elaboration of a single raag can often take an hour. I didn’t mean for this piece to exhaust these raags, but rather provide little snapshots of particular features and characters of each raag that I find beautiful and special about each one.

MENDELSSOHN Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20

Note by Eric Bromberger, courtesy of the L. A. Philharmonic

It has become a cliché with a certain kind of critic to say that Mendelssohn never fulfilled the promise of his youth. Such a charge is a pretty tough thing to say about someone who died at 38 – most of us would think Mendelssohn never made it out of his youth. And such a charge overlooks the great works Mendelssohn completed in the years just before his death: the Violin Concerto, the complete incidental music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Elijah*. But there can be no gainsaying the fact that the young Mendelssohn was a composer whose gifts and promise rivaled – perhaps even surpassed – the young Mozart’s. The child of an educated family that fully supported his talent, Mendelssohn had by age 9 written works that were performed by professional groups in Berlin. At 12 he became close friends with the 72-year-old Goethe, at 17 he composed the magnificent Overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and at 20 he led the performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* that was probably the key event in the revival of interest in Bach’s music.

Mendelssohn completed his Octet in October 1825, when he was 16. One of the finest of his early works, the Octet is remarkable for its polished technique, its sweep, and its sheer exhilaration. Mendelssohn’s decision to write for a string octet is an interesting one, for such an ensemble approaches chamber-orchestra size, and a composer must steer a careful course between orchestral sonority and true chamber music. Mendelssohn handles this problem easily. At times this music can sound orchestral, as he sets different groups of instruments against each other, but the Octet remains true chamber music – each of the eight voices is distinct and

important, and even at its most dazzling and extroverted the Octet preserves the equal participation of independent voices so crucial to chamber music.

Mendelssohn marked the first movement *Allegro moderato, ma con fuoco*, and certainly there is fire in the very beginning, where the first violin rises and falls back through a range of three octaves. Longest by far of the movements, the first is marked by energy, sweep, and an easy exchange among all eight voices before rising to a grand climax derived from the opening theme. By contrast, the *Andante* is based on the simple melody announced by the lower strings and quickly taken up by the four violins; this gentle melodic line becomes more animated as it develops, with accompanying voices that grow particularly restless.

The Scherzo is the most famous part of the Octet. Mendelssohn said that it was inspired by the closing lines of the *Walpurgisnacht* section near the end of Part I of Goethe's *Faust*, where Faust and Mephistopheles descend into the underworld; he apparently had in mind the final lines of the description of the marriage of Oberon and Titania:

Clouds go by and mists recede,
Bathed in the dawn and blended;
Sighs the wind in leaf and reed,
And all our tale is ended.

This music zips along brilliantly. Mendelssohn marked it *Allegro leggierissimo* – “as light as possible” – and it does seem like goblin music, sparkling, trilling, and swirling right up to the end, where it vanishes into thin air.

Featuring an eight-part fugato, the energetic *Presto* demonstrates the young composer's contrapuntal skill. There are many wonderful touches here: at one point sharp-eared listeners may detect a quotation, perhaps unconscious, of “And He Shall Reign” from the “Hallelujah” Chorus of Handel's *Messiah*, and near the end Mendelssohn skillfully brings back the main theme of the Scherzo as a countermelody to the finale's polyphonic complexity. It is a masterstroke in a piece of music that would be a brilliant achievement by a composer of any age.

Biographies

Jasper String Quartet

J Freivogel, Violin

Karen Kim, Violin

Andrew Gonzalez, Viola

Rachel Henderson Freivogel, Cello



Celebrating its 16th anniversary in 2022, the Jasper String Quartet is recognized as one of the leading American string quartets on the performance stage today. A recipient of

Chamber Music America’s prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award, the quartet has been hailed as “sonically delightful and expressively compelling,” (*The Strad*) and described by *Gramophone* as “flawless in ensemble and intonation, expressively assured and beautifully balanced.” *The New York Times* named their album *Unbound* as one of the 25 Best Classical Recordings of 2017.

The Jasper String Quartet is the Professional Quartet-in-Residence at Temple University’s Center for Gifted Young Musicians. In addition, the Quartet is the Founder and Artistic Director of Jasper Chamber Concerts. The Jasper Quartet is committed to celebrating the diverse array of compositional voices writing for string quartet on every program.

In the fall of 2022, the quartet will record the complete string quartets of Vivian Fung for the Sono Luminus label. Other highlights of the 2022–23 season include premiere performances of new commissions by Ingrid Arauco and Reinaldo Moya, and residencies at Michigan State University and Shenandoah Conservatory.

In the 2022–23 season, the Jasper Quartet also continues in their seventh season as Artistic Directors of Jasper Chamber Concerts. Jasper Chamber Concerts is dedicated to encouraging curiosity, community, and inclusivity through world-class chamber music performances, with concerts held in the Chestnut Hill Skyspace, a uniquely elegant venue designed by renowned artist James Turrell and architect James Bradberry.

In February 2021, the Quartet released their latest album recorded with the Jupiter String Quartet of music by Osvaldo Golijov, Felix Mendelssohn, and Dan Visconti to great critical acclaim. *The Whole Note* called the album a “simply thrilling performance – vibrant, pulsating and dynamic” and *Music City Review* said “the performances captured are artistically nuanced, executed with gorgeous technique and plenty of personality.”

The Jasper Quartet is passionate about connecting with audiences beyond the concert hall and has performed hundreds of outreach programs in schools and community centers. The Quartet received a Residency Partnership grant from Chamber Music America for the 2020–21 season and has received numerous Picasso Project grants from Public Citizens for Children and Youth to support its ongoing work with public schools in Philadelphia. The Fischhoff National Chamber Music Association recognized the Quartet’s “outstanding and imaginative programming for children and youth in the United States” with their 2016 Educator Award.

The Quartet regularly serves as Featured Artists-in-Residence for Swarthmore College and teaches on the faculty of the Saint Paul Chamber Music Institute.

Formed at Oberlin Conservatory, the Jasper Quartet launched their professional career in 2006 while studying with James Dunham, Norman Fischer, and Kenneth Goldsmith as Rice University’s Graduate Quartet-in-Residence. In 2008, the Quartet continued its training with the Tokyo String Quartet as Yale University’s Graduate Quartet-in-Residence. In 2008, the Jaspers swept through the competition circuit, winning the Grand Prize and the Audience Prize in the Plowman Chamber Music Competition, the Grand Prize at the Coleman Competition, First Prize at Chamber Music Yellow Springs, and the Silver Medal at the 2008 and 2009 Fischhoff Chamber Music Competitions. They were also the first ensemble honored with Yale School of Music’s Horatio Parker Memorial Prize, an award established in 1945, and selected by the faculty for “best fulfilling... lofty musical ideals.” In 2010, they joined the roster of Astral Artists after winning their national auditions.

The Quartet was the 2010–12 Ensemble-in-Residence at Oberlin Conservatory and, in conjunction with Astral Artists, was awarded a 2012 Chamber Music America grant through its Residency Partnership Program for work in Philadelphia schools. From 2009–2011, the Jaspers were the Ernst C. Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and Arts (Katonah, NY).

The Jasper String Quartet is named after Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada.

The Jasper String Quartet appears by arrangement with Marianne LaCrosse; CTM Classics.

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Jupiter String Quartet

Nelson Lee, Violin

Meg Freivogel McDonough, Violin

Liz Freivogel, Viola

Daniel McDonough, Cello



The Jupiter String Quartet is a particularly intimate group, consisting of violinists Nelson Lee and Meg Freivogel, violist Liz Freivogel (Meg's older sister), and cellist Daniel McDonough (Meg's husband, Liz's brother-in-law). Now enjoying their 20th year together, this tight-knit ensemble is firmly established as an important voice in the world of chamber music. *The New Yorker* claims, "The Jupiter String Quartet, an ensemble of eloquent intensity, has matured into one of the mainstays of the American chamber-music scene."

The quartet has performed across the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, and the Americas in some of the world's finest halls, including New York City's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, London's Wigmore Hall, Boston's Jordan Hall, Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes, Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center and Library of Congress, Austria's Esterhazy Palace, and Seoul's Sejong Chamber Hall. Their major music festival appearances include the Aspen Music Festival and School, Bowdoin International Music Festival, Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, Rockport Music Festival, the Banff Centre, Virginia Arts Festival, Music at Menlo, Maverick Concerts, Caramoor International Music Festival, Lanaudiere Festival, West Cork (Ireland) Chamber Music Festival, Skaneateles Festival, Madeline Island Music Festival, Yellow Barn Festival, Encore Chamber Music Festival, the inaugural Chamber Music Athens, and the Seoul Spring Festival, among others.

Their chamber music honors and awards include the grand prizes in the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition in 2004. In 2005, they won the Young Concert Artists International auditions in New York City, which quickly led to a busy touring schedule. They received the Cleveland Quartet Award from Chamber Music America in 2007, followed by an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2008. From 2007–2010, they were in residence at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's (CMSLC) Chamber Music Two and, in 2009, they received a grant from the Fromm Foundation to commission a new quartet from Dan Visconti for a CMSLC performance at Alice Tully Hall. In 2012, the Jupiter Quartet members were appointed as artists-in-residence and faculty at the University of Illinois, where they continue to perform regularly in the beautiful Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, maintain private studios, and direct the chamber music program.

The Jupiter String Quartet feels a particular connection to the core string quartet repertoire; they have presented the complete Bartok string quartets at the University of Illinois and the complete

cycle of Beethoven string quartets at the Aspen Music Festival and School, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Lanaudiere Festival in Quebec. Also strongly committed to new music, they have commissioned string quartets from Nathan Shields, Stephen Andrew Taylor, Michi Wiancko, Syd Hodkinson, Hannah Lash, Dan Visconti, and Kati Agócs; a quintet with baritone voice by Mark Adamo; and a piano quintet by Pierre Jalbert.

The Jupiters place a strong emphasis on developing relationships with future classical music audiences through educational performances in schools and other community centers. They believe that, because of the intensity of its interplay and communication, chamber music is one of the most effective ways of spreading an enthusiasm for “classical” music to new audiences. The quartet has also held numerous masterclasses for young musicians, including most recently at Northwestern University, Eastman School of Music, the Aspen Music Festival, Encore Chamber Festival, Madeline Island Music Festival, and Peabody Conservatory. [Before leaving Middlebury, the quartet will read through and offer feedback on new works by student composers in Fletcher Professor of Arts Su Lian Tan’s MUSC309 class.]

The quartet’s latest album is a collaboration with the Jasper String Quartet (Marquis Classics, 2021), produced by Grammy-winner Judith Sherman. This collaborative album features the world premiere recording of Dan Visconti’s *Eternal Breath*, Felix Mendelssohn’s *Octet in E-flat, Op. 20*, and Osvaldo Golijov’s *Last Round*. The *Arts Fuse* acclaimed, “This joint album from the Jupiter String Quartet and Jasper String Quartet is striking for its backstory but really memorable for its smart program and fine execution.” The quartet’s discography also includes numerous recordings on labels including Azica Records and Deutsche Grammophon.

Highlights of the Jupiter Quartet’s 2022–23 season include performances presented by Cleveland Chamber Music Society, Chamber Music Monterey Bay, Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival, Northwestern University’s Winter Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music in Napa Valley, BIG Arts with the Jasper Quartet, and many others, as well as a residency at Middlebury College with the Jasper Quartet. Jupiter will also perform residency concerts at the Krannert Center at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana.

Early exposure to chamber music brought these four musicians together. Meg and Liz grew up playing string quartets with their two brothers and they came to love chamber music during weekly coachings with cellist Oliver Edel, who taught generations of students in the Washington, D.C. area. Nelson’s parents are pianists (his father also conducts) and his twin sisters, Alicia and Andrea, are both musicians. Although Daniel originally wanted to be a violinist, he chose the cello because the organizers of his first string program declared that he had “better hands for the cello,” and is happy that he ended up where he did.

The quartet chose its name because Jupiter was the most prominent planet in the night sky at the time of its formation and the astrological symbol for Jupiter resembles the number four.

They are also proud to list among their accomplishments in recent years the addition of seven quartet children: Pablo, Lillian, Clara, Dominic, Felix, Oliver, and Joelle. You may spot some of these miniature Jupiters in the audience or tagging along to rehearsals, along with their grandparent babysitters.

The Jupiter String Quartet appears by arrangement with Jensen Artists.

www.jupiterquartet.com

www.jensenartists.com



Our thanks to the 2022–2023 members
of the Performing Arts Series Society (PASS)
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Middlebury College sits on land which has served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples since time immemorial. The Western Abenaki are the traditional caretakers of these Vermont lands and waters, which they call Ndaकिनna, or "homeland." We remember their connection to this region and the hardships they continue to endure.

We give thanks for the opportunity to share in the bounty of this place and to protect it.