



Music on the Hill — Not Even Clouds —

February 20th, 2021, 7:00 pm

Maureen Nelson, violin
Kathryn Bennett, violin
David Auerbach, viola
Richard Belcher, cello

String Quartet in C Major, Op. 20 No. 2

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Moderato
Capriccio: Adagio
Menuetto: Allegretto
Fuga a 4 soggetti: Allegro

No Stars, Not Even Clouds

Dame Gillian Whitehead (b. 1941)

Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 27

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Un poco andante - Allegro molto ed agitato
Romanze: Andantino
Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato - Più vivo e scherzando
Finale: Lento - Presto al saltarello

Program Notes

by Dr. Stephanie Thorpe

String Quartet in C Major, Op. 20, No. 2 Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Composed in 1772, Opus 20 was Haydn's third set of six quartets written between 1769 and 1772. Musicologist William Drabkin calls this quartet "one of the supreme achievements of the Classical period. Every movement, possibly every measure offers something to admire." Known as the "Sun" quartet due to a publisher's choice of a sun illustration on the first printed edition, the quartet opens with a sprightly motive in the cello line that is complemented harmonically by the violins and viola. The melody quickly shifts into a higher register by the violins which are answered by the cello in lively contrapuntal movement.

The second movement, titled Capriccio, begins in a stark quasi-recitative unison. An arioso section is initiated by the cello with a pleading melody that implores the audience with its lamentation. Blustery interruptions occur throughout this movement, closing with an extended cadential section in the first violin that seamlessly segues into the third minuet movement. Haydn cleverly blurs the bar lines in the opening portion of the movement, creating rhythmic tension. Later sections of the movement more clearly denote the menuetto rhythm. The final fugal movement is equally borne by each stringed instrument complexly woven together, modulating through several key areas before ending in C Major.

No Stars, Not Even Clouds Dame Gillian Whitehead (b. 1941)

Dame Gillian Karawe Whitehead is a prolific composer from New Zealand who spent her formative years in Europe following her studies at the University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington, and Sydney University. Whitehead's compositional style is decidedly modern, with elements of improvisation, and more recently acknowledges her Maori heritage.

Two of the musicians in our Music on the Hill concert, Maureen Nelson and Richard Belcher, were founding members of the Grammy nominated Enso Quartet. Chamber Music New Zealand commissioned Whitehead's "No Stars, Not Even Clouds" for the Enso Quartet in 2012. Whitehead composed the quartet in memory of a close friend, Juanita Ketchel, who was diagnosed with cancer and died during the short timeframe in which the piece was composed. The title comes from a story Ketchel wrote years ago.

The composer states, "The piece draws on traditional quartet forms, opening with a phrase which I realised only retrospectively echoes the same shape and rhythm that pervades Torua, written for violin and piano in the immediate aftermath of the February 2011 earthquake in Christchurch. Both pieces draw on the Otago accent of the korimako or bellbirds that seem to sing vociferously every time I sit down to write."

Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 27
Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

A founder of the Norwegian nationalist school of music through his heritage, consistent use of Norwegian folk tunes and rhythms in his music, as well as his association with Norwegian composer, Rikard Nordraak. In reference to Nordraak, Grieg stated that, "through him, I first learned to know the northern folk tunes and my own nature." Often described as a miniaturist, Grieg did not often compose in larger compositional forms. Composed in 1878, Quartet No. 1 in G Minor remains one of his most influential works of the late 1800s, rivaling those of his musical contemporaries.

Grieg borrows from his own music to produce themes for this quartet, using a portion of his song, "Spillemaend." Intensely passionate in timbre and texture, the opening movement is evocative of 19th century romanticism and early modernism/impressionism. The second movement, entitled Romanza, opens with a lilting melody in the cello line quickly joined by the other instruments. The playful quality is quickly replaced by an agitato section unfolding sinuously around the lyrical opening motives.

Starkly contrasting both in melody and harmony, the third Intermezzo movement features the characteristics of a scherzo in the style of an authentic Norwegian folk dance. The finale begins with a melancholy theme that quickly transitions into the Italian dance-form, the saltarello, meaning to jump. Grieg's occasional explosions of modern harmonic textures, densely chromatic motives, and daring modulations denote his progressive and nationalistic musical syntax in a typically conservative genre of composition.

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Musician Bios



Maureen Nelson

Maureen Nelson, violin, became a full-time member of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra in 2016. As former founding member and first violinist, she led the Grammy-nominated Enso String Quartet for nearly two decades, captivating audiences from major concert stages of the world, regularly concertizing throughout North America and abroad. Founded at Yale University in 1999, the quartet has been described by Strad magazine as "thrilling" and praised by the Washington Post for its "glorious sonorities...half honey, half molten

lava." The quartet quickly went on to win top prizes at the Concert Artists Guild competition and the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Classical Voice praised the ensemble as "one of the eminent string quartets of our era." Along with a busy touring and teaching schedule, Maureen made numerous critically acclaimed recordings on the Naxos label with the Enso.

A native of Pennsylvania, Maureen was enrolled in Temple University's Center for Gifted Young Musicians at the age of 12, and began attending the Curtis Institute of Music shortly thereafter. As a winner of the Greenfield Competition, Maureen appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra when she was 16. While studying in Germany, she was concertmaster of the Detmolder Kammerorchester and has been a member of the Houston-based River Oaks Chamber Orchestra since 2010. Much of her inspiration came from teachers Shmuel Ashkenasi, Jascha Brodsky and Yumi Ninomiya Scott.



Kathryn Bennett

Kathryn Bennett has performed and toured frequently with both the Minnesota Orchestra and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, recently spending three seasons as a member of the Minnesota Orchestra first violin section. A native of Connecticut, Kathryn first moved to Minneapolis to study at the University of Minnesota with Sally O'Reilly. Other primary teachers include Yair Kless, Nelli Skolnikova, and Jorja Fleezanis. Kathryn is a member of IRIS ensemble and the Minnesota Bach Ensemble and performs chamber music frequently at

LOFTrecitals and Lakes Area Music Festival events. In addition to performing locally, she has toured with Milwaukee Symphony, A Far Cry, and the Verbier Chamber Orchestra. Kathryn has participated in various music festivals including Tanglewood, Verbier, Spoleto USA, Lakes Area Music Festival, and the Sun Valley Symphony. Kathryn lives in St. Louis Park with her husband, Kevin—a percussionist in the Minnesota Orchestra—and their newly born son.



David Auerbach

Violist David Auerbach will begin his third consecutive one-year position with the Minnesota Orchestra this fall. Since moving to the Twin Cities in the fall of 2007, David has cultivated a fulfilling and varied performing and teaching career. He is the principal violist of the Minnesota Opera Orchestra, and has performed regularly with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, as well as many other local orchestral and chamber ensembles. He also frequently performs elsewhere in the country, including with the chamber orchestra A Far Cry, which is based in Boston. A dedicated chamber musician, David has participated in the music festivals of Ravinia, Kneisel Hall, and Norfolk, and he has performed with chamber groups several times in Carnegie's Weill and Zankel Recital Halls. David joined the faculty of the University of St. Thomas in 2012, and also maintains a private teaching studio.

David earned a DMA from Stony Brook University in 2007, where he was a scholarship student of Katherine Murdock.

Additionally, he received a Masters Degree from the Juilliard School under the tutelage of Samuel Rhodes, and a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with majors in Music Performance (studying with Sally Chisholm) and Molecular Biology.



Richard Belcher

New Zealand cellist Richard Belcher joined the SPCO in 2019 after a twenty-year career as founding cellist of the Grammy-nominated Enso String Quartet. With the quartet he earned highly critical accolades from recording and concertizing in many of the world's major concert halls such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Kennedy Center in the United States, as well as abroad in Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand.

Richard is the Artistic Director of Music on the Hill in Mankato, Minnesota, and since 2008 has been Principal Cellist of River Oaks Chamber Orchestra in Houston, Texas. He has taught and performed at many festivals including St. Bart's, Festival d'Aix en Provence, Prussia Cove, Madeline Island, Campos do Jordao International Winter Festival, SummerFest La Jolla, and the San Miguel de Allende International Chamber Music Festival.

In demand as a teacher and chamber music coach, Richard has previously served as Adjunct Faculty at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and has given numerous masterclasses around the world.

Richard moved to the United States in 1998 to study with Aldo Parisot at Yale University, and it was while there that he founded the Enso String Quartet. Richard's other principal teachers include Norman Fischer, Marc Johnson, and Alexander Ivashkin. He plays an N.F. Vuillaume cello made in 1856, and is married to Cecilia Belcher, Assistant Principal 2nd Violin of the Minnesota Orchestra.