

The Red Bank
Chamber Music Society
presents

Adam Barnett-Hart, Violin
Brendan Speltz, Violin
Pierre Lapointe, Viola
Brook Speltz, Cello

The Escher String Quartet

Haydn • Janáček • Schubert

Sunday Afternoon

April 7, 2024 • 4:30 PM

Trinity Church Auditorium

Red Bank, NJ

ADVANCE NOTES

PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 53 in D major, Op. 64 no. 5 "The Lark" (1790)

Franz Joseph Haydn

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Adagio cantabile
- III. Menuetto. Allegretto
- IV. Finale. Vivace

String Quartet No. 2 "Intimate Letters" (1928)

Leoš Janáček

- I. Andante - Con moto - Allegro
- II. Adagio - Vivace
- III. Moderato - Andante - Adagio
- IV. Allegro - Andante - Adagio

INTERMISSION

String Quartet No. 14 in D minor, D810, "Death and the Maiden"
(1824)

Franz Schubert

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Scherzo: Allegro molto
- IV. Presto

In Dedication



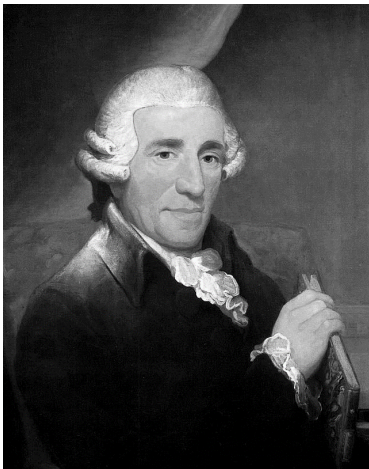
This concert is dedicated to the memory of **Wolfgang Schlosser**, who passed away on March 3, 2024. Wolfgang was a member of the Red Bank Chamber Music Board of Trustees for many years and led efforts in selecting the musicians and programs for our concerts. We will sorely miss his enthusiasm, good taste, and cheerful manner.

Program Notes

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

String Quartet No. 53 in D major, Op. 64 no. 5 “The Lark” (1790)

(~20 minutes)



Franz Joseph Haydn is often credited as the “Father of the String Quartet,” a title to which his massive output of 68 string quartets gives credence. Even so, Haydn may or may not have been first composer to write for this combination of players, and, surprising though it may be, there were a number of composers who were even more prolific in the genre than he. What makes Haydn so deserving of this title is how over the course of his long career he almost singlehandedly transformed the string quartet from background, party music to the most serious genre in chamber music composition.

His earliest ten quartets (Op. 1 and Op. 2) follow the conventions of that time; they are light, uncomplicated, and, for the most part, unmemorable. (That said, even in these works, Haydn cannot help himself from producing some wonderfully inspired moments.) But in his next twelve (Op. 9 and Op. 17), it becomes increasingly clear that Haydn had other plans for the string quartet, for many of these are fully developed, musically rich compositions. Op. 20 was the true revolution in string quartet writing. The daring and inventiveness Haydn showed in his writing prompted music historian Ron Drummond to write: “The six string quartets of Op. 20 are as important in the history of music, and had as radically a transforming effect on the very field of musical possibility itself, as Beethoven's Third Symphony would 33 years later.” From that point on, every quartet we have from Haydn is a true

musical gift. He displays his vast range of abilities in them, writing in a language ranging from deceptive simplicity to poignant beauty, and even devilish trickery.

The high tessitura and chirping, trilling, and twittering figurations of the opening melody of the String Quartet No. 53 in D major, Op. 64 no. 5 “The Lark” (1790) all seem perfectly tailored to the work’s nickname. But this quartet, one of Haydn’s best known and often played chamber works, actually got its name—as did virtually all of Haydn’s other named quartets—from publishers who, long after Haydn’s death, were simply trying to give these works extra selling power. This particular quartet is by far the most famous of twelve quartets (Opp. 54, 55, and 64) dedicated to the Hungarian violinist and merchant Johann Tost, who helped find them a publisher. Like in his earlier quartets, whose first violin writing was tailored for Luigi Tommasini (the concertmaster of the Esterházy Orchestra where he was employed) Haydn clearly had a very specific style of violin playing in mind in composing the “Tost” Quartets, which tend to be on the more playful and rustic side.

Moving past the famous first movement from which the “Lark” takes its nickname, the lyrical, limpid slow movement is a warm, lyrical love song, more akin to an aria, or even a love scene from an opera. Pairs of instruments within the group interact around the first violin’s introduction of and embellishments upon the movement’s simple theme. This is contrasted by the muscular romp that is the Minuet (a scherzo in all but name) – angular sforzandos in the “wrong” place give the movement an off-kilter, even drunken quality, and make the heartfelt loveliness of the second movement all the more nostalgic. One of Haydn’s most famous movements, the Finale of Op. 64 no. 5 is a lightning-quick *moto perpetuo*, particularly dazzling in its fugato middle section. Historically, tempos of this movement have ranged from a more conservative, elegant display of violin figuration and counterpoint to a lightning quick, dazzling showpiece, a testament to the genius of the writing that it works so well in both contexts. The works of Turina are highly flavored by the folk music of his native region of Spain, Andalusia. He first studied piano and composition in Seville, then enrolled in the Madrid Conservatory, and from 1905 to 1914, lived in Paris, where he was a pupil of d’Indy and Moszkowski, and a friend of Debussy and Ravel. He was a fine pianist and conductor, an important educator and a serious critic.

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Leoš Janáček (1854 - 1928)
String Quartet No. 2 "Intimate Letters" (1923)

(~26 minutes)



It is hardly a stretch to claim that the Czech composer Leoš Janáček developed one of the most unique and personal compositional styles of any composer. Inseparable from and informed by the speech patterns of his native Czech tongue, the rhythmic eccentricities and near-schizophrenic character shifts found in his music make Janáček's music instantly recognizable. A knowledge of the history behind his final, autobiographical composition, the **String Quartet No. 2 "Intimate Letters"** (1928), is of particular importance to understanding the spiritual connection Janáček's music had to his life.

Janáček's second string quartet is a work borne out of an intense passion that eventually developed into a deep spiritual kinship. In the summer of 1917, the 63-year-old Leoš Janáček visited a spa in the Bohemian countryside. There he met a 26-year-old Kamila Stösslová, with whom he fell instantly in love. Both were in loveless marriages of convenience, but Janáček's initial advances were met more with flattered indifference than anything else. However, over the course of over 700 letters, Janáček managed to form a bond with her that eventually did cross over into something far more than mere friendship. The resulting work of musical symbolism took form in his second string quartet. Janáček had initially titled the work "Love Letters," before he thought better of what rumors such a title might start, bringing damage to Kamila's reputation. It was ostensibly composed to fulfill a two-quartet commission from the Bohemian Quartet; Janáček had written the first of these five years earlier with his first string quartet, based on Tolstoy's "Kreutzer Sonata."

An excerpt from one of Janáček's letters to Kamila beautifully demonstrates how close each note of this piece was to his heart: "You stand behind every note, you, living, forceful, loving. The fragrance of your body, the glow of your kisses – no, really of mine. Those notes of mine kiss all of you. They call for you passionately..." The viola—given an uncharacteristically prominent part throughout the quartet and especially in the first movement—represents Kamila herself, who was said to have had a very deep, husky voice. The quartet opens with Janáček's impression of the first time he saw Kamila; it is no less than an explosion, and is immediately followed by fearful reproach. This entire movement vacillates between the joy and triumph of newfound love and the uncertainty of its reciprocation.

In the second movement (particularly its opening), Janáček depicts the serenity of the spa where he and Kamila first met, while the third is Janáček's eerily beautiful lullaby for the child he and Kamila would never have. In it, things move along fairly peacefully until a massive C major chord sends the first violin to the highest reaches of the instrument as the cello plays its lowest note. Janáček wrote that this searing passage represented his feelings when Kamila finally told him in one of her letters that she also loved him—a moment when “the earth opened up.” The last movement is both a summation and celebration—of love, sadness, strength, weakness, and, ultimately, life. In what has been called Janáček's “manifesto on love,” he gave the love of his life a proper farewell.

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

String Quartet No. 14 in D minor, D810, “Death and the Maiden” (1824)

(~40 minutes)



“Think of a man whose health can never be restored, and who from sheer despair makes matters worse instead of better. Think, I say, of a man whose brightest hopes have come to nothing, to whom love and friendship are but torture, and whose enthusiasm for the beautiful is fast vanishing; and ask yourself if such a man is not truly unhappy.” So wrote Franz Schubert to a friend on March 31, 1824. He had been sick for at least a year, he had no money, and he had endured the failure of yet another of his operas. It was only through the support of his circle of friends that Schubert managed to get by for most of his life, almost never receiving any return on what little of his music he was able to get published. Miraculously, this unhappy man continued to compose one masterpiece after another. Some works, such as the Octet in F major, radiated joy and optimism; *Death and the Maiden*, begun in 1824 and completed two years later, is another matter entirely.

The opening statement – all four instruments cry out in unison, then two hold fast while two tumble downward – must surely rank among the most recognizable moments in all of chamber music. As the music turns to a pianissimo chorale, a recurring rhythmic pattern is established of a triplet followed by a single note; the triplet will be a dominant motif throughout the movement and in fact the entire work. The dark, powerful opening theme is answered by a soft lyrical contrast, suggesting a conversation between the title characters – the frightened maiden and the gentle,

beckoning specter of death – which intensifies as this expansive movement unfolds.

Seven years prior to beginning his famously named quartet, Schubert wrote the music for “Der Tod und das Mädchen.” In the song, the Maiden begs for Death to pass her by, while Death assures her that he is a friend whose arms offer “soft sleep.” Schubert adapted his piano accompaniment for use as the theme of the second movement of the string quartet that bears its name. The theme, a somber march in G minor, lasts for 24 measures and ends on a G major chord. Following this lengthy introduction are five variations, each of which seems to express different emotions.

Back in D minor and fraught with dramatic leaps from fortissimo to pianissimo, the scherzo catches the listener off guard from the first note, which falls not on the downbeat but at the end of a triplet. This relatively brief movement has been described as the “dance of the demon fiddler.” It is designed as a classical minuet featuring a trio section where the music finally turns to a major key, although the mood is more wistful than optimistic.

As if the tension could not get any higher, the finale in the form of a tarantella threatens to send the music hurtling right off the rails. The tarantella is a breakneck Italian dance in 6/8 time which was, according to tradition, a treatment for madness and convulsions brought on by the bite of a tarantula spider. What better image for the hurtling triplets that drive the primary theme? Musicologist Walter Cobbett noted that the chorale-like secondary theme for this movement is derived from another song of Schubert's, “Der Erlkönig,” in which a terrified child calls to his father to protect him from the deadly touch of the Elf-king. The father is unable to see the spirit, and ultimately finds his son is dead in his arms. The frenetic pace of the music continues to accelerate toward a prestissimo coda which begins in D major but suddenly and definitively returns to D minor for a fittingly tragic conclusion.

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Der Tod und das Mädchen (Death and the Maiden)

Original German	English Translation
<i>Das Mädchen:</i> Vorüber! Ach, vorüber! Geh, wilder Knochenmann! Ich bin noch jung! Geh, lieber, Und rühre mich nicht an. Und rühre mich nicht an.	<i>The Maiden:</i> Pass me by! Oh, pass me by! Go, fierce man of bones! I am still young! Go, rather, And do not touch me. And do not touch me.
<i>Der Tod:</i> Gib deine Hand, du schön und zart Gebild! Bin Freund, und komme nicht, zu strafen. Sei gutes Muts! ich bin nicht wild, Sollst sanft in meinen Armen schlafen!	<i>Death:</i> Give me your hand, you beautiful and tender form! I am a friend, and come not to punish. Be of good cheer! I am not fierce, Softly shall you sleep in my arms!

Video Recording Schedule

The recording of the Escher Quartet concert is scheduled to be broadcast on the Brookdale Community College cable channel:

- Verizon FiOS – Channel 46
- Comcast – Channel 21

Note: the Brookdale channel is only available via Verizon and Comcast in the Monmouth County area.

Broadcast Schedule

- June 2, 2024, 4:30 PM
- June 3, 2024, 2:00 PM
- June 3, 2024, 7:30 PM
- June 7, 2024, 7:30 PM
- June 8, 2024, 7:30 PM

The recording will premiere on YouTube starting Sunday, January 7, at 4:30. You can access the YouTube recording at www.rbcms.org



This program is made possible in part by funds from Monmouth Arts, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners.

Artists

The **Escher String Quartet** has received acclaim for its profound musical insight and rare tonal beauty. A former BBC New Generation Artist and recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the quartet has performed at the BBC Proms at Cadogan Hall and is a regular guest at Wigmore Hall. In its home town of New York, the ensemble serves as season artists of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

The 2023-2024 season finds the Escher Quartet embarking upon a major project—performances of the complete cycle of quartets by Bela Bartók, culminating in a single concert performance of all six at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The first-ever performance of all six Bartók quartets in chronological order was given by the Emerson String Quartet in March 1981, also at Alice Tully Hall, in honor of Bartók's centenary year.

Beyond Bartók, the Escher's will return to many of the illustrious music centers and organizations in America, such as the Kennedy Center, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Phoenix Chamber Music Society, Duke University, Coleman Chamber Music Association, and Savannah Music Festival, among others.

The Escher Quartet has made a distinctive impression throughout Europe, with recent debuts including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Berlin Konzerthaus, London's Kings Place, Slovenian Philharmonic Hall, Les Grands Interprètes Geneva, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and Auditorium du Louvre. The group has appeared at festivals such as the Heidelberg Spring Festival, Budapest's Franz Liszt Academy, Dublin's Great Music in Irish Houses, the Risør Chamber Music Festival in Norway, the Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival, and the Perth International Arts Festival in Australia. Alongside its growing European profile, the Escher Quartet continues to flourish in its home country, performing at the Aspen Music Festival, Bravo! Vail, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Bowdoin Music Festival, Toronto Summer Music, Chamber Music San Francisco, Music@Menlo, and the Ravinia and Caramoor festivals.

The 2022-2023 season saw the release of two albums - string quartets by Pierre Jalbert and the Escher's studio recording of the complete Janacek quartets and Pavel Haas quartet no. 2 with multi award winning percussionist Colin Currie (BIS Label). Recordings of the complete Mendelssohn quartets and beloved romantic quartets of Dvorak, Borodin and Tchaikovsky were released on the BIS label in 2015-18 and received with the highest critical acclaim, with comments such as "...eloquent, full-blooded playing... The four players offer a beautiful blend of individuality and

accord” (BBC Music Magazine). In 2019, DANCE, an album of quintets with Grammy award winning guitarist Jason Vieaux, was enthusiastically received. In 2021, the Escher’s recording of the complete quartets of Charles Ives and Samuel Barber was met with equal excitement, including “A fascinating snapshot of American quartets, with a recording that is brilliantly detailed, this is a first-rate release all around” (Strad Magazine). The quartet has also recorded the complete Zemlinsky String Quartets in two volumes, released on the Naxos label in 2013 and 2014.

Beyond the concert hall, the Escher Quartet is proud to announce the creation of a not-for-profit organization, ESQYRE (Escher String Quartet Youth Residency Education). ESQYRE’s mission is to provide a comprehensive educational program through music performance and instruction for people of all ages. In addition, the quartet has held faculty positions at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX and the University of Akron, OH.

Within months of its inception in 2005, the ensemble came to the attention of key musical figures worldwide. Championed by the Emerson Quartet, the Escher Quartet was invited by both Pinchas Zukerman and Itzhak Perlman to be Quartet in Residence at each artist's summer festival: the Young Artists Program at Canada’s National Arts Centre; and the Perlman Chamber Music Program on Shelter Island, NY.

The Escher Quartet takes its name from the Dutch graphic artist M.C. Escher, inspired by Escher’s method of interplay between individual components working together to form a whole.



American violinist **Adam Barnett-Hart** has attracted worldwide attention for his sensitive musicianship and inspired artistic decisions. As the founding first violinist of the Escher Quartet, he has performed in many of the most prestigious venues and festivals around the world, including Alice Tully Hall and the 92nd Street Y in New York, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Ravinia and Caramoor Festivals, the Wigmore Hall in London, the Louvre, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. With the Escher Quartet, he was recently awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant and served as a BBC New Generation Artist from 2010-2012.

As a soloist, Barnett-Hart made his debut performing the Brahms Concerto in Alice Tully Hall with the Juilliard Symphony in 2002. He continues to solo with such

orchestras as the Colorado Symphony, the Wichita Falls Symphony, the Riverside Symphony, the Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Jefferson Symphony. He also regularly tours Korea as concertmaster of the Sejong Soloists.

Barnett-Hart studied with Pinchas Zukerman and Joel Smirnoff at the Juilliard School.



NYC-based violinist **Brendan Speltz**, second violinist of the world renowned Escher String Quartet, has toured the globe with groundbreaking ensembles such as Shuffle Concert, the Manhattan Chamber Players, A Far Cry, and the Harlem Quartet. As founder of FeltInFour Productions, Mr. Speltz has produced innovative concert events across the New York City area that have been described by The New Yorker as “Thrilling, poignant, unexpected, and utterly DIY.” Most recently, Mr. Speltz co-created a cross-disciplinary presentation of Steve Reich’s Different Trains with aerial dance troupe ABCirque which was sponsored by Meyer Sound Labs.

In NYC he has performed as guest with the New York New Music Ensemble, Mark Morris Dance Group, American Ballet Theatre, the American Symphony, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and as a founding member of the conductorless string orchestra Shattered Glass. He received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern California and his Master’s degree from the Manhattan School of Music. Mr. Speltz plays a 1925 Carl Becker violin.



Pierre Lapointe is the violist of the Escher Quartet, founding the group in 2005 with violinist Adam Barnett-Hart, violinist Wu Jie, and cellist Andrew Janss. The Escher Quartet was a member of The Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two) from 2006 to 2009 and continues to perform extensively in the United States and all over the world. In 2012 he completed a thesis on Alexander von Zemlinsky’s Second Quartet to earn a doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music and finished almost simultaneously a recording project of all four of Zemlinsky’s string quartets with the Escher Quartet on the Naxos label.

Before devoting himself entirely to the viola, he played the violin and studied composition. In 2002 he performed his first string quartet to great acclaim on the show Young Artists of CBC Radio in Canada. He also received a prize in 2004 from the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec for his work at the Gatineau Music

Conservatory and was granted a gold medal by the University of Ottawa in 2000 for his undergraduate studies in composition and violin performance. His main teachers were Yaëla Hertz Berkson, Calvin Sieb, and Lawrence Dutton. Since 2015, Mr. Lapointe has been teaching chamber music at the Southern Methodist University of Dallas, and he is presently one of its adjunct professors.



Praised for his “fluid virtuosity” and “soulful melodies,” Los Angeles native **Brook Speltz** has been inspired since childhood by the long tradition of deep musical mastery of artists such as Jascha Heifetz, Pierre Fournier, and the Guarneri String Quartet. As of 2015, he is the new cellist of the internationally renowned Escher String Quartet and a season artist of the Chamber Music Society. He has performed as a soloist, chamber musician, and recitalist throughout the US, Canada, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. First Prize winner of the prestigious Ima Hogg Competition, he has performed with the Houston Symphony, Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, and International Contemporary Ensemble, and is a regular performer at England’s IMS Prussia Cove and on tour with Musicians from Marlboro. Chamber music tours with Itzhak Perlman and Richard Goode caused him to be nominated for the inaugural Warner Music Prize, a newly established prize presented by Warner Music and Carnegie Hall. He has also toured with the cello rock band Break of Reality, whose cover of music from Game of Thrones has received over 19 million views online. The band’s recent US tour raised funds and awareness for music programs in public schools all around the country. After studying with Eleanor Schoenfeld, Mr. Speltz attended the Curtis Institute of Music with Peter Wiley and The Juilliard School with Joel Krosnick. He performs on an 1857 J.B. Vuillaume on loan from his father, a cellist and his first inspiration in a family of professional musicians.

