

The Red Bank  
Chamber Music Society

*presents*

The Attacca Quartet

Haydn • Rogerson • Schubert • Grieg

Amy Schroeder, violin

Keiko Tokunaga, violin

Luke Fleming, viola

Andrew Yee, cello

Sunday Afternoon

June 7, 2015 • 4:30 PM

Trinity Church Auditorium

Red Bank, NJ

PROGRAM NOTES

# PROGRAM

## String Quartet No. 42 in C Major, Op.54 No.2

Franz Joseph Haydn

- I. Vivace
- II. Adagio
- III. Menuetto: Allegretto
- IV. Finale: Adagio

## String Quartet No.2 (2013)

Chris Rogerson

- I. Canzonetta: Sweetness (Moderato)
- II. Intermezzo: Dance (Presto)
- III. Chorale: Stillness (Spacious)

# INTERMISSION

## String Quartet No.12 in C Minor, D.703 ("Quartett-Satz")

Franz Schubert

Allegro assai

## String Quartet No.1 in G Minor, Op.27

Edvard Grieg

- I. Un poco andante
- II. Romanze: Andantino
- III. Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato
- IV. Finale: Lento

# Notes on the Program

**Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)**

**String Quartet No. 42 in C Major, Op.54 No.2 (1788)**

(~20 minutes)

In 1761 Haydn was hired by the wealthy Esterházy family and put in charge of all musical activities at their opulent court. Under the terms of his contract, all of his compositions during that period became the property of the Esterházy family. But in 1779 his contract was renegotiated, and he was now free to accept commissions from patrons outside the court and to publish his work independently.

In the summer of 1788 he wrote a set of three string quartets and sent them off for publication in Paris, entrusting them to a violinist in the Esterházy court named Johann Tost. Little else is known of Tost, and there is more than a slight suspicion that he penned the dedication himself somewhere along the way to the publisher in an act of shameless self-promotion.

In any event, the C Major string quartet we hear today is one of Haydn's most elegant and charming, though we can hear it push the boundaries of musical style from Classical tradition into the Romantic era. The audiences of his day must have been surprised by the unfamiliar dramatic pauses, asymmetric phrase lengths, and range of emotional intensity that would be hallmarks of Beethoven a decade later.

The opening *Vivace* is brisk and lively, built up from short melodic fragments separated by emphatic silences. All four movements feature long singing lines and virtuosic embellishments in the first violin part, none more so than in the expressive gypsy-inflected sadness of the second movement *Adagio*. The *Adagio* ends on a held note which proceeds *attacca* (that is, without pause) into the third movement.

The third movement is a courtly minuet marked *Allegretto* (light and cheerful), with a more darkly dramatic middle *Trio* section. The closing *Finale* opens *Adagio* (slowly) with an extended duet of the first violin and cello (the cello reaching high into its tonal range), with the two middle voices providing a steady harmonic pulse; a brief *Presto* (very fast) section ends with an unexpected return to the opening *Adagio* as a coda that closes the quartet.



**Chris Rogerson (b. 1988)**  
**String Quartet No.2 (2013)**

(~24 minutes)

Hailed as a “confident, fully-grown composing talent” (*The Washington Post*), Chris Rogerson has been praised for the “virtuosic exuberance” and “haunting beauty” (*The New York Times*) of his music. He has received commissions and performances from such orchestras as the Atlanta Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, New Jersey Symphony, Grand Rapids Symphony, and New World Symphony, and chamber ensembles including the Brentano Quartet, Dover Quartet, Attacca Quartet, and JACK Quartet. His music has been heard at Carnegie Hall, the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, and Symphony Center in Chicago.

His second string quartet was commissioned by the Buffalo (NY) Chamber Music Society and was premiered by the Attacca Quartet in October 2013. Here is his brief program note:

I composed my second string quartet from the beginning of 2013 until mid-summer. The first movement is song-like in character, with melody and accompaniment, and is based on Stephen Dunn’s moving poem “Sweetness”; the second is a light, fleeting dance; and finally, the last movement explores a spacious chorale. Each section of the work explores the topic of overcoming pain and loss, and is a reflection on the hope that emerges in the wake of tragedy.

The concert reviewer had this to say of the work at its premiere:

In many ways, Rogerson’s work was the centerpiece of the night. After the composer came onto the stage and said a few words, the piece began the second half of the concert. There were a lot of ideas packed into the score. On one hand you could talk about its density, how tightly woven (or closely knit, your choice) the first movement was and dwell on the piquant rhythms, acerbic textures, and oddly danceable momentum driven by those factors, but the bottom line goes directly to how consistently interesting it was. For fans of late 20th century music it was not a difficult piece to listen to; in fact, there was much that was beguiling. It would be interesting to hear it a second time.

*Biographical highlights and detailed information can be found at [chrisrogerson.com](http://chrisrogerson.com)*

*Chris is the Composer-in-Residence for the Amarillo Symphony for 2014-2016; as part of the residency, orchestra commissions a work to be premiered each season in addition to performing existing compositions. In 2015, he serves as the Composer-in-Residence for the Ocean Reef Chamber Music Festival, which has commissioned a piano trio. This season also includes performances by the Charlotte Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Spokane Symphony, Rogue Valley Symphony, Opus One Piano Quartet, and Prism Saxophone Quartet. Other recent commissions have come from the Chicago Sinfonietta, the Buffalo Chamber Music Society, and Orchestra 2001 in Philadelphia.*

*In 2012, Chris was honored with a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. A Theodore Presser Career Grant recipient, he has also won the ASCAP*

*Morton Gould Young Composer Award, two BMI Student Composer Awards, the Aspen Music Festival Jacob Druckman Award, a New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, and prizes from the National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts, the National Association for Music Education, the New York Art Ensemble, and Third Millennium Ensemble.*

*Born in 1988, Chris studied at the Curtis Institute of Music and the Yale School of Music with Jennifer Higdon, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Martin Bresnick, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University. Chris is represented by Young Concert Artists, Inc., and is a co-founder and artistic director of Kettle Corn New Music, a new music presenting organization in New York City.*



## **Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)**

### **String Quartet No.12 in C Minor, D.703 (“Quartett-Satz”) (1820)**

(~10 minutes)

Between 1810 and 1826 Schubert wrote some thirty works for string quartet, of which fifteen bear the formal title “String Quartet”. He began work on his twelfth string quartet in early December 1820, but after completing the first movement he abandoned further work on it, except for sketching out the exposition of a following *Andante* movement.

As with the bulk of Schubert’s work, this quartet movement (*Quartett-Satz*) was not published in his lifetime. After his death the manuscript eventually found its way into the hands of Johannes Brahms, who had discovered and championed Schubert’s work in the 1860s. In an 1863 letter to a friend Brahms wrote:

My love for Schubert is a very serious one, probably because it is no fleeting fancy. Where is genius like his, which soars heavenwards so boldly and surely, where we see the few supreme ones enthroned. He is to me like a son of the gods, playing with Jupiter’s thunder, and also occasionally handling it oddly. But he plays in a region, at a height, which others can never soar to [ . . . and] now I hope that we shall presently be able to chat about this darling of the gods.

Schubert’s *Quartett-Satz* had its posthumous premiere in Vienna in 1867. The score, edited by Brahms, was finally published in 1870.

He left no record of his reasons for leaving the quartet “unfinished” – we don’t even know that he considered it as such. He may have simply put it aside in favor of another musical idea and never returned to it, or he may have thought that the first movement was so complete in itself he couldn’t possibly follow it up with another of equal quality that would improve what he had already written.

The work consists of a single sonata-form movement marked *Allegro assai* (very fast).



## Edvard Grieg (1843 – 1907)

### String Quartet No.1 in G Minor, Op.27 (1878)

(~32 minutes)

Those familiar with Grieg's piano concerto (1868) or with his incidental music and suites from *Peer Gynt* (1875) will hear echoes of them in his G minor string quartet, not as quotation but as inspired by the same sources in traditional Norwegian folk music. We hear motifs from both works – tonal modulations, repeated rhythmic figures, and familiar melodic fragments – reflecting Grieg's lifetime ambition "to create a national form of music, which could give the Norwegian people an identity."

Grieg was not particularly fond of "program music" – music that relies on references outside itself – though much of his writing is strongly evocative of mood and place. But he had much experience in writing songs and incidental music to dramatic works, musical compositions that inherently rely on stories being told in words.

In 1876 he set six of Ibsen's poems to music for voice and piano as Opus 25, and it is the first of those songs – *Spillemænd* ("fiddlers" or "minstrels") – whose melody and story form the core motif of the string quartet he completed in 1878. The poem tells of a love-struck young man passing a waterfall who bargains with a violin-playing troll to learn the magical songs that will win the heart of his beloved, only to see her marry his brother instead and leave him broken-hearted and playing to no one but himself. Though Grieg never asserted that there was a story behind his string quartet, we can clearly hear the contrast of three moods – the youth's hopeful yearning for artistic mastery, the troll's seductively sinister offer of musical virtuosity, and the youth's regret over the price he paid to acquire it for himself – driving all four movements of the work.

The listener must decide for himself whether the following description conveys Grieg's musical intention, or if some other images and story-line help to unify the experience of this splendid quartet.

The first movement opens slowly with a brief and ominous declamation of the *Spillemænd* melody in the form of an introduction, played in unison by all the instruments. The real first theme of the movement then appears as a darkly agitated figure at a much faster tempo, suggestive of the rushing waterfall and the sinister troll. The second theme is introduced in a sweeter major key with the first violin lyrically restating the *Spillemænd* motif. After considerable development of both themes, the movement concludes with a thematic recapitulation and, towards the end, a restatement of the *Spillemænd* theme by the cello against a ghostly accompaniment by the other strings. This is immediately followed by a final coda, restating that theme at a rapid pace, first *presto* and then *prestissimo*, ending the movement on a forceful minor chord.

The second movement is titled *Romanze* and is marked *Andantino* (lightly walking). It opens with a lilting slow waltz theme, suggesting the song of the naive young man passing the stream. A darker, more agitated section follows, evoking an image of the troll who seduces him with promises of magical artistic powers. Thereafter the movement alternates between lighter and darker moods, with changes in tempo and dynamics, ending in a mood of tranquility.

The third-movement *Intermezzo* is marked *Allegro molto marcato* (very fast, with the notes stressed). It opens in a dramatic minor key section that builds on a new, highly syncopated theme. A livelier middle section takes over with a new theme introduced by solo cello and is soon joined by all in a style very much like a Norwegian village wedding dance, suggesting the marriage of the young man's sweetheart to his brother in Ibsen's poem. The movement closes with a repeat of the brooding first section.

The last movement Finale begins slowly with a restatement of the *Spillemænd* theme from the first movement. After this brief introduction it changes tempo to *Presto al Saltarello*, a fast "leaping" Italian dance that sounds much like a Tarantella. The whirling *saltarello* may be intentionally evocative of the magical powers of ecstatic enchantment that the youth has bought from the troll with the forfeit of his happiness, a price that is recalled as the Finale ends with a slow restatement of the opening *Spillemænd* theme, followed by an exciting ascent by the first violin against chords in the other strings. The final notes are unison G in all the strings, letting the ambiguity of a bright major key or a brooding minor harmony linger in the ear.

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# ARTISTS

First Prize winners of the 7th Osaka International Chamber Music Competition in 2011, top prizewinners and Listeners' Choice Award recipients in the 2011 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, and winners of the Alice Coleman Grand Prize at the 60th annual Coleman Chamber Ensemble Competition in 2006, the internationally acclaimed Attacca Quartet has become one of America's premier young performing ensembles. Praised by *Strad* for possessing "maturity beyond its members' years," they were formed at the Juilliard School in 2003, and made their professional debut in 2007 as part of the Artists International Winners Series in Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. From 2011 to 2013 they served as the Juilliard Graduate Resident String Quartet, and for the current 2014-2015 season the Attacca Quartet has been the Quartet in Residence for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The Attacca Quartet recently completed a recording project of the complete works for string quartet by John Adams (released on Azica Records in March 2013). In his review for the *New York Times*, Steve Smith praised this "vivacious, compelling set," describing the Attacca Quartet's playing as "exuberant, funky, and... exactly nuanced." The *Boston Globe* also praised the release, stating: "Few [recent recordings] are as consequential as 'Fellow Traveler,' ...superb performances." The album was the recipient of the 2013 National Federation of Music Clubs Centennial Chamber Music Award. The Attacca Quartet has been honored with both the Arthur Foote Award from the Harvard Musical Association and the Lotos Prize in the Arts from the Stecher and Horowitz Foundation.

2014-2015 marks the fifth season in New York and the second season in Ontario of "The 68," an ambitious project in which the Attacca Quartet will perform all sixty-eight of Haydn's string quartets on a special series they have created and self-produce. In April 2015 they released their second album with Azica Records, their own arrangement of Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Christ*. Other recent highlights include: appearances in Madrid performing all of John Adams's works for string quartet, including his *Absolute Jest* for String Quartet and Orchestra, soloing with the Spanish National Orchestra under the composer's direction; tours of Ireland and Japan; a four-concert run at the Melbourne Festival in Australia; numerous concerts in New York and across the United States, Canada, and Latin America.

The Attacca Quartet has engaged in extensive educational and community outreach projects, serving as guest artists and teaching fellows at the Lincoln Center Institute, Vivace String Camp in New York and Animato Summer Music Camp at Florida International University in Miami. Since 2006, they have performed in yearly benefit concerts supporting the Parkinson's Disease Foundation's efforts. The members of the Attacca Quartet currently reside in New York City. They are represented by Baker Artists, LLC.

You are invited to visit their website,

<http://attaccaquartet.com>