

Chamber Music Corvallis presents:
Thalea String Quartet

April 21st, 2023

7:30 pm, First Presbyterian Church



Christopher Whitley • *1st violin*

Kumiko Sakamoto • *2nd violin*

Lauren Spaulding • *viola*

Alex Cox • *cello*

Chamber Music Corvallis receives support from the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency supported by the State of Oregon.



Program

Carrot Revolution (2015)

Gabriella Smith
(b.1991)

String Quartet No. 5 ("Parks") (2005)
Klap Ur Hands

Daniel Bernard Roumain
(b.1971)

Abbey Road Suite
You Never Give Me Your Money
Sun King
Mean Mr. Mustard
Polythene Pam
She Came in Through the Bathroom Window
Golden Slumbers
Carry That Weight
The End
Her Majesty

The Beatles / arr. Alex Vittal
(b.1984)

Intermission

String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Opus 96, "American"
Allegro ma non troppo
Lento
Molto vivace
Finale: vivace ma non troppo

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Program Notes

Carrot Revolution was commissioned by the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia for their exhibition *The Order of Things*, in which they commissioned three visual artists and myself to respond to Dr. Barnes' distinctive 'ensembles,' the unique ways in which he arranged his acquired paintings along with metal objects, furniture, and pottery, juxtaposing them in ways that bring out their similarities and differences in shape, color, and texture. While walking around the Barnes, looking for inspiration for this string quartet, I suddenly remembered a Cézanne quote I'd heard years ago (though which I later learned was misattributed to him): 'The day will come when a single, freshly observed carrot will start a revolution.' And I knew immediately that my piece would be called *Carrot Revolution*. I envisioned the piece as a celebration of that spirit of fresh observation and of new ways of looking at old things, such as the string quartet – a 250-year-old genre – as well as some of my even older musical influences (Bach, Perotin, Gregorian chant, Georgian folk songs, and Celtic fiddle tunes). The piece is a patchwork of my wildly contrasting influences and full of weird, unexpected juxtapositions and intersecting planes of sound, inspired by the way Barnes' ensembles show old works in new contexts and draw connections between things we don't think of as being related.

– Gabriella Smith (composer)

Daniel Bernard Roumain's works for string quartet have, to date, each been inspired by iconic figures of the civil rights movement. From Malcolm X to Adam Clayton Powell, DBR has used the medium of the string quartet to examine these historic leaders, representing each through his unique compositional blend of driving rhythm, percussiveness, and emotionally charged lyricism. Each movement of DBR's fifth string quartet, "Parks," uses a highly specific compositional style to reflect on the life of Rosa Parks. The middle movement, "Klap Ur Hands," invites the members of the string quartet to stomp and clap, a loose, groovy accompaniment to looping strains of bluesy string riffs.

– Christopher Whitley

I was first exposed to The Beatles' *Abbey Road* in my later teenage years after I had begun learning the electric bass as a hobby to go alongside my main instrument, the viola, and it was a revelatory experience for me. I loved the entire album immediately, but the long form of the B-side in particular struck me as particularly brilliant on so many levels. In this arrangement, a true labor of love written and re-written countless times over seven years, I have sought to remain as true as

possible to the original recording, including capturing individual personality quirks in the original recording. I believe that we collectively love The Beatles both because of the quality and originality of their songs, but even more so for their musical personalities and public personas. I hope this performance brings you closer to The Beatles and their peerless *Abbey Road*.

– Alex Vittal (arranger)

Antonín Dvořák is known for his ability to express musical nationalism, incorporating strong elements of his native Bohemian (i.e. Czech or Slavonic) folk music and dance and narrative forms in his works. He brought this spirit for musical nationalism to the United States, where he served as director of the National Conservatory in New York from 1892–1895. Works from this period include the New World Symphony and the "American" String Quartet. Dvořák encountered American folk music in the form of Native-American drumming and African-American spirituals, the latter of which he regarded as profoundly original music that might serve as a basis for a national style. While Dvořák himself denied that he intentionally incorporated any American elements, the "American" String Quartet in particular bears the stamp of the time and place of its composition.

Ironically, Dvořák composed the "American" Quartet while on holiday in the predominantly Bohemian farming community of Spillville, Iowa. A spirit of relaxation and perhaps joyful homecoming inspired him to swiftly compose the quartet within a few weeks. Flowing, spacious, and bright, the music seems to reflect his disposition, if not, as some claim, the expanse of the American plains. The most pervasive aspect of the quartet supporting these qualities, as well as reflecting Dvořák's general preoccupation with folk idioms, is the use of the pentatonic or five-note scale, which is common in folk music around the world. Whatever influences or expressive intentions lay behind this choice, it imbues the quartet with a personality and a continuity that is distinctive and strongly evocative. The most particular trace of the quartet's rural, American origin, however, is birdsong. The third movement Scherzo features the song of the Scarlet Tanager, a bird that Dvořák heard and transcribed while hiking the countryside. After an initial statement of a sprightly, rustic theme, the first violin sings the birdsong high in the treble range. The instantaneous evocation of dance, the outdoors, and the piercing simplicity of nature's own music define a pure moment of folk music as high art.

—Kai Christiansen

The Thalea String Quartet

The Thalea String Quartet brings their signature vibrancy and emotional commitment to dynamic performances that reflect the past, present, and the future of the string quartet repertoire while celebrating diverse musical traditions from around the world. Fueled by the belief that chamber music is a powerful force for building community and human connection, the Thalea String Quartet has performed across North America, Europe, and China, and has appeared at the Kennedy Center, Massey Hall, and Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall.

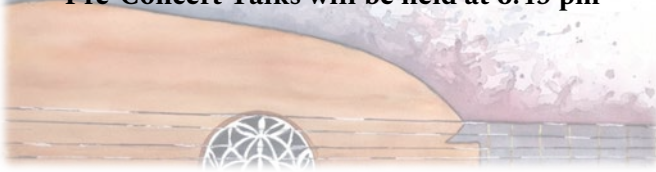
Committed to shaping and contributing to the future of the string quartet repertoire, the Thalea String Quartet has premiered dozens of new works and have collaborated on new commissions with composers including Paola Prestini, Anthony R. Green, Akshaya Avril Tucker, and Tanner Porter. Winners of the 2021 Ann Divine Educator Award from the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the members of the Thalea String Quartet have been celebrated for their innovative approach to education and community engagement. Pioneers of virtual educational programming, TSQ has developed a variety of digital content, including two digital video series for students of all ages and the CHAMPS Virtual Chamber Music Seminar, which brought together students from across North America for an eight-week intensive study of the music of Florence B. Price, Joseph Haydn, and Antonín Dvořák. The members of the TSQ have presented masterclasses and workshops at institutions across North America, including the Berkeley College of Music, the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, and San Francisco State University. They have presented lectures and led discussions at institutions including the University of Maryland, Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, and Wayne State Medical School in Detroit, where they presented a workshop on non-verbal communication to first year medical students alongside the Emerson String Quartet.

The Thalea String Quartet is the Doctoral Fellowship String Quartet at the University of Maryland. Christopher Whitley (violin) is originally from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Kumiko Sakamoto (violin) is from Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada; Lauren Spaulding (viola) is from San Antonio, Texas; and Alex Cox (cello) is from South Palm Beach, Florida.

64th Season Preview | 2023–2024

Fridays at 7:30 pm at First Presbyterian Church

Pre-Concert Talks will be held at 6:45 pm



Carion Wind Quintet

November 3, 2023

Valencia Baryton Trio

December 1, 2023

Spanish Brass

January 19, 2024

Marion Anderson String Quartet

February 23, 2024

Haerim Liz Lee and Alex Brown

Violin and Piano

April 12, 2024

*Artists and dates are subject to change. Check our website for updates to the concert schedule and pre-concert talk programming.

Watercolor by Gay Hall, "Theorbo Reborn" (2023)