

DOVER QUARTET 2014-15 Bio

The Dover Quartet catapulted to international stardom following a stunning sweep of the Banff International String Quartet Competition last fall, becoming one of the most in-demand ensembles in the world. *The New Yorker* recently dubbed them “the young American string quartet of the moment,” and *The Strad* raved that the Quartet is “already pulling away from their peers with their exceptional interpretive maturity, tonal refinement and taut ensemble.” In 2013-14, the Quartet became the first ever Quartet-in-Residence for the venerated Curtis Institute of Music.

During the 2014-15 season, the Dover Quartet will perform more than 100 concerts throughout the United States, Canada, South America, and Europe. Highlights include concerts for the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C, Schneider Concerts at The New School in New York City, and Wigmore Hall in London. The Quartet will also perform together with the pianist Jon Kimura Parker, the violist Roberto Díaz, and the Pacifica Quartet. In addition, the Quartet will participate in week-long residencies for Chamber Music Northwest, the Phoenix Chamber Music Festival, the Chamber Music Society of Logan, and the Festival Internacional de Musica de Cartagena. The Quartet has been reengaged a remarkable number of times for return appearances throughout the United States, Canada, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Great Britain.

As a thrilled audience looked on, the Dover Quartet won not only the Grand Prize but all three Special Prizes at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition. The Quartet also won top prizes at the Fischhoff Competition and the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, and has taken part in festivals such as Chamber Music Northwest, Artosphere, La Jolla SummerFest, Bravo! Vail, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. During 2013-14 season, the Quartet acted as the Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-In-Residence at the Caramoor Festival. Additionally, members of the Quartet have appeared as soloists with some of the world’s finest orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Tokyo Philharmonic.

The Dover Quartet draws from the musical lineage of the Cleveland, Vermeer, and Guarneri Quartets, having studied at the Curtis Institute and Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music, where they were in residence from 2011-2013. The Quartet has been mentored extensively by Shmuel Ashkenasi, James Dunham, Norman Fischer, Kenneth Goldsmith, Joseph Silverstein, Arnold Steinhardt, Michael Tree, and Peter Wiley, and is dedicated to sharing their music with underserved communities and is an active member of Music for Food, an initiative to help musicians fight hunger in their home communities.

May 2014

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Quartet in G Major, Op. 76, No. 1

Allegro con spirito ~ Adagio sostenuto

Menuetto: Presto ~ Allegro ma non troppo

By the time Haydn returned to Vienna in 1795, after his second immensely successful visit to London, several new elements had become integrated into his writing. His new style reflected his experience of composing for public performances by highly accomplished musicians in large halls. Also the realization that he was widely regarded as the greatest living composer (Mozart had already died, and Beethoven had not yet made his mark) had imbued him with great boldness and self-assurance.

When Count Joseph Erdödy asked Haydn for a set of quartets, probably early in 1796, the sixty-four-year-old composer brought to the task his newly developed musical outlook, along with forty years of continuous growth and maturation in writing for the medium. Among the new features he incorporated into these quartets are more profound and emotional slow movements that move at an extremely deliberate pace and, as Haydn biographer H.C. Robbins Landon finds, “are also bathed in a curiously impersonal and remote melancholy.” The minuets, on the other hand, are now more like scherzos, faster in tempo and lighter in mood in comparison with the older, dignified minuet-style movements. Haydn also experimented with new formal schemes in the first movements of Quartets 5 and 6, instead of holding to the traditional sonata form. And the finales, which had tended to be light and humorous in character, became more serious and intellectually challenging.

Composed in 1796 and 1797, the six quartets of Op. 76 were dedicated to Count Erdödy and published in 1799.

The quartet opens with three powerful chords, a symbolic summons perhaps for the public concert audiences. The statement of the first theme, a single line of melody, is made by the cello alone, answered by the solo viola. After two further statements by isolated pairs of instruments, there follows a tutti continuation of the theme. Haydn then expands and extends this subject until a rapid, violent unison passage acts as the transition to the delightfully ingratiating second subject. The development begins with a viola statement of the first theme along with a countermelody in the second violin. The countermelody comes to play a major part in the development and then again in the recapitulation, where the first violin plays it as the cello repeats the principal theme.

In the Adagio sostenuto, the focal point of the entire quartet, Haydn molds and fashions three distinct musical gestures into a solemn movement of deep significance. The first, which proves also to be most important, is a sustained theme played in chorale style by all four instruments. The second idea is a dialogue between the cello and first violin conducted against repeated notes in the second violin and viola. And finally, the three lower instruments play short repeated notes, above which the first violin adds a long, unbroken stream of afterbeats--a passage that requires a keen rhythmic sense and intense concentration from all the players. Through the statement and varied repetition of this simply described material, Haydn creates a most moving and effective movement.

Although Haydn called the next movement Menuetto, the faster tempo, the single strong beat in each bar instead of three, and the much lighter character identify this movement as a scherzo, probably the first echt scherzo in the Haydn quartets. In another departure from tradition, the

following trio, with its roots in the old Austrian Ländler dance, is obviously intended to be played very much slower than the opening and concluding Menuetto parts.

Not light and fluffy like earlier Haydn finales, this last movement has the necessary weight and importance to balance what came before. Although the quartet is in G major, Haydn starts the last movement in a unison G minor. After a long trilled note ends the unison, the viola alone plays the tune, while the violins add a countermelody. Haydn develops this material and then makes the outlook grow even darker as he slows down the propulsive forward motion for the second theme, an ominous sounding transformation of the violin's countermelody from near the beginning of the movement. The development section tries to generate a more joyful spirit but never quite succeeds. Then, after coming to a complete stop, the recapitulation starts with the principal theme in the cheerful key of G major; the second theme, though, keeps its same dour expression. In the coda Haydn suddenly introduces a flip, happy tune. Some hear this as a successful attempt to achieve a sunny, cheerful ending. Others regret what they consider the trivialization of the work's final measures.

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Viktor Ullmann (1898 – 1944) **String Quartet No. 3**

Viktor Ullmann's String Quartet no. 3 was completed on January 18, 1943, in the final part of a career that began with him acknowledged as one of the great hopes of German musical life, and ended in his murder at the hands of racist fanatics.

In his early career, he studied and apprenticed under Schoenberg and Zemlinsky, and his early works, especially his Schoenberg Variations, Op. 3a (1926), attracted attention throughout Europe. A passionate humanitarian with a deep interest in literature, culture, and philosophy, Ullmann took a partial hiatus from composition to study the anthroposophical philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. In 1932 he and his second wife bought a bookshop in Stuttgart where they traded primarily in books on philosophy and humanism. Only months after the purchase of the bookstore, Hitler seized power and the Ullmanns fled to Prague.

In 1933 he began work on his most significant piece to date, an opera that would eventually become "The Fall of the Antichrist," a work he completed in 1935. This masterpiece would be the crowning achievement of his pre-war years, and yet it was to be the events of World War II that would spur him on to his very greatest artistic accomplishments.

Ullmann was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto outside Prague in 1942. He was one of a handful of extraordinary creative geniuses in the ghetto, including the composers Gideon Klein, Pavel Haas, and Hans Krasa. Never a particularly prolific composer in his earlier years, Ullmann composed a stunning volume of work during the two years he was in Theresienstadt, including piano sonatas, chamber music, and a second opera, "The Emperor of Atlantis."

Just hours before being deported to Auschwitz on October 16, 1944, some friends convinced him to leave his compositions behind. It is believed Viktor Ullmann was

murdered in the gas chamber at Auschwitz on October 18, 1944.

'For me Theresienstadt has been, and remains, an education in form. Previously, when one did not feel the weight and pressure of material life, because modern conveniences – those wonders of civilization – had dispelled them, it was easy to create beautiful forms. Here where matter has to be overcome through form even in daily life, where everything of an artistic nature is the very antithesis of one's environment – here, true mastery lies in seeing, with Schiller, that the secret of the art-work lies in the eradication of matter through form: which is presumably, indeed, the mission of man altogether, not only of aesthetic man but also of ethical man.

"All that I would stress is that Theresienstadt has helped, not hindered, me in my musical work, that we certainly did not sit down by the waters of Babylon and weep, and that our desire for culture was matched by our desire for life; and I am convinced that all those who have striven, in life and in art, to wrest form from resistant matter will bear me out.'

~ Viktor Ullmann, 1944

The Third Quartet can in many ways be seen as a culmination of Ullmann's development as a composer. In it one finds an exemplary balance of rigor and passion, a compelling formal logic, and a wealth of beautiful melodic writing. Although the work unfolds in a single musical span, its form can easily be divided into a traditional four-movement structure where each of the four movements is linked by sophisticated motivic inter-relations.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato* is primarily lyrical in character and full of wonderfully luxurious harmonic writing, lightened at one point by a waltz-like melody. The second, *Presto*, is ferocious and violent in much the same way as the second movement of Shostakovich's famous Eighth Quartet. If the first movement has introduced the protagonists of our story, then the second has brought us music fit for the vilest of villains. Before the third movement begins, Ullmann brings back a passionate and despairing reminiscence of the first movement- what was nostalgia in the first movement is now transformed into genuine despair. The third movement, *Largo*, is truly the work's heart of darkness, beginning with a fugue of desolate and unrelenting intensity. The waltz theme of the first movement here returns full of sadness.

Like the *Presto* before it, the character of the *Rondo Finale* is overwhelmingly antagonistic, violent and often terrifying, and is built from a horrific manipulation of the theme of the first movement. However, just when all is despair, Ullmann brings back the music of the first movement in the shape in which we first encountered it, but nostalgia is now replaced by defiance and regret is replaced by passion. A voice of passionate resistance from within the walls of the concentration camp at midnight of humanity's darkest hour? If ever any person wrote truly courageous music, it was surely Ullmann and this is surely that music.

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Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952)
Terra Memoria (2006)

Terra Memoria is my second piece for string quartet, the first being *Nymphea* which was written in 1987.

Twenty years have passed since *Nymphea* and my musical thinking has evolved much in that time, but my initial interest in string instruments has remained as vivid as ever. I love the richness and sensitivity of the string sound and, in spite of my spare contribution to the genre, I feel when writing for a string quartet that I'm entering into the intimate core of musical communication.

The piece is dedicated "for those departed". Some thoughts about this: we continue remembering the people who are no longer with us; the material - their life - is "complete", nothing will be added to it. Those of us who are left behind are constantly reminded of our experiences together: our feelings continue to change about different aspects of their personality, certain memories keep on haunting us in our dreams. Even after many years, some of these memories change, some remain clear flashes which we can relive.

These thoughts brought me to treat the musical material in a certain manner; some aspects of it go through several distinctive transformations, whereas some remain nearly unchanged, clearly recognizable.

The title Terra Memoria refers to two words which are full of rich associations: to earth and memory. Here earth refers to my material, and memory to the way I'm working on it.

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