November 12, 2015 at 8:00pm
Pre-concert talk by Ruth Ochs at 7:00pm
Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall

ARCANTO QUARTET

Antje Weithaas, *violin*
Daniel Sepec, *violin*
Tabea Zimmermann, *viola*
Jean-Guihen Queyras, *cello*

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685 – 1750)
Die Kunst der Fugue (The Art of Fugue) BWV 1080
Contrapunctus 1
Contrapunctus 2
Contrapunctus 9 a 4 alla Duodecima

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810 – 1856)
String Quartet No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 41
Introduzione. Andante espressivo - Allegro
Scherzo. Presto
Adagio
Presto

— INTERMISSION —

BEDŘICH SMETANA (1824 – 1884)
String Quartet No. 1 in E Minor, “Z mého života” (“From My Life”)
Allegro vivo appassionato
Allegro moderato à la Polka
Largo sostenuto
Vivace

ABOUT THE ARCANTO QUARTET

Antje Weithaas, Daniel Sepec, Tabea Zimmermann, and Jean-Guihen Queyras founded the **Arcanto Quartet** in 2002 after several years of playing chamber music together in various combinations. The four musical soul mates, who also share a close personal friendship, quickly took the chamber music world by storm with their spirited playing, fueled by the joy of bringing music to life.

The Arcanto Quartet's highly successful concert debut took place in 2004 in Stuttgart. Since then, the quartet has performed all over the world, including New York's Carnegie Hall, the Vancouver Recital Society, the Palau de la Música in Barcelona, the Théâtre du Châtelet and the Cité de la Musique in Paris, the Philharmonie Berlin and the Vienna Konzerthaus. They have played at the Rheingau Music Festival and the Helsinki, Edinburgh and Montreux Festivals, and also toured Israel, Japan and North America.

So far the quartet has released five highly acclaimed CDs on Harmonia Mundi, among them a recording of Schubert's String Quintet with Jean-Guihen Queyras' student Olivier Marron, and a recording of Mozart's String Quartet K. 421 and the Clarinet Quintet together with Jörg Widmann.

Highlights of the 2015/16 season include performances at the festivals in Edinburgh, Schwetzingen, Lugano and Aix, at the Philharmonie Cologne, Mozarteum Salzburg and a tour of North America which will include, in addition to Princeton, concerts at Carnegie Hall, in Montréal, Chicago and Vancouver. Their musical partners in this season will be the young cellist Maximilian Hornung and Jörg Widmann.

STUDENT VOICES

An important part of our mission is to engage and educate Princeton students. As part of our Creative Reactions Program, we have asked students to tell us their thoughts about the artists we are presenting. We will be sharing them with you throughout our programs this year.

Antje Weithaas has played with Germany's leading orchestras. She has also played with numerous internationally renowned orchestras such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Symphony, and the leading orchestras of the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and Asia. She has worked with illustrious conductors including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Neville Marriner, and Christian Zacharias. Since the 2009/10 season, she has been artistic director of the Camerata Bern. She has been a professor of violin at the Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler" Berlin since 2004.

"The 4 best friends that make up the Arcanto String Quartet are living the promises that all Princeton seniors make to their friends. Despite each one being individually successful and highly in demand by various orchestras and as soloists across Europe, the four made a pact to get together and continue to play music as a quartet. 11 years and 5 albums later, the group shows no signs of stopping.
I am looking forward to getting a group of pals together and watching another tight-knit gang honor their promises to 'keep in touch!' after graduation.

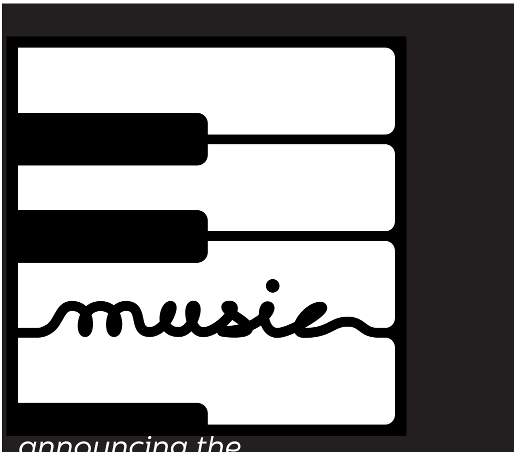
– Stephanie Cook, Princeton Class of '18"

Daniel Sepec studied with Dieter Vorholz in Frankfurt and Gerhard Schulz in Vienna. Since 1993, Daniel Sepec has been leader of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, and he has regularly performed as a soloist with the orchestra under conductors such as Daniel Harding, Frans Brüggen, and Trevor Pinnock. Attracted to the richness of expression in Baroque music, he regularly leads the Balthasar-Neumann-Ensemble, a period instrument ensemble, under the baton of Thomas Hengelbrock. As a soloist he has appeared with the Academy of Ancient Music under Christopher Hogwood and the Orchestre des Champs-Elysées under Philippe Herreweghe. For his internationally acclaimed recording of Beethoven Sonatas with Andreas Staier, Sepec used the composer's recovered violin, lent to him by the Beethoven House in Bonn. In 2014 he started with a professorship at the Musikhochschule Lübeck.

Tabea Zimmermann studied with Ulrich Koch at the Freiburg Musikhochschule and with Sándor Végh at the Salzburg Mozarteum. Between 1982 and 1984, she won competitions in Geneva, Budapest, and Paris. As a soloist, she regularly works with the most distinguished orchestras, from the Berlin Philharmonic to the Israel Philharmonic. She has recorded all the classics of the viola repertoire. A devoted performer of contemporary music, she premiered Ligeti's Sonata for Solo Viola, a piece dedicated to her, as well as viola concertos by Sally Beamish, Wolfgang Rihm, and Heinz Holliger. Tabea Zimmermann is also in high

demand as a chamber musician, and works with well-known artists such as pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, violinist Christian Tetzlaff and clarinettist Jörg Widmann. Following professorships in Saarbrücken and Frankfurt am Main, she has taught at the Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler" in Berlin since 2002 where she lives with her three children.

Jean-Guihen Queyras enjoys an enviable reputation as a musician of exceptional versatility and integrity, equally as a soloist with orchestras, chamber musician and solo performer. He has performed with many of the world's great orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Philharmonia, Orchestre de Paris, NHK Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Tonhalle Zurich, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Budapest Festival Orchestra and Orchestre de la Suisse-Romande under conductors such as Iván Fischer, Philippe Herreweghe, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Sir Roger Norrington. He was Artist-in-Residence with the Hamburg-based chamber orchestra Ensemble Resonanz, and this season he is in residence at the Wigmore Hall. In the spring of 2016, he will premier Thomas Larcher's "Cerha," a commissioned work for solo cello and string orchestra.



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For more information, visit princetonuniversityconcerts.org

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

By Peter Laki, ©2015

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (Eisenach, 21 March 1685 – Leipzig, 28 July 1750)
Die Kunst der Fugue ("The Art of Fugue") BWV 1080 (1742 – 1749)

Johann Sebastian Bach practiced "the art of fugue" his entire life, but when he started work on a collection with that name in his late fifties, he obviously wanted to summarize, and possibly surpass, all the accomplishments of a long and prolific career. Published posthumously in 1751, *Die Kunst der Fuge* contains 20 movements (titled *Contrapuncti*), the last of which is incomplete, breaking off abruptly after measure 239. (Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel inserted a note at that point: "The composer died over this fugue, where the name BACH is brought in as a countersubject.") Neither the printed edition nor Bach's manuscript indicates for what instrument(s) the work had been intended; one hears it most often either on keyboard or with string ensembles (quartet or chamber orchestra).

Similarly to the other comprehensive contrapuntal masterwork of Bach's later years, *The Musical Offering*, a single theme underlies the entire cycle. The theme of *The Art of Fugue* is simpler, lacking the chromaticism of the "Royal Theme" from the *Offering*. This simplicity makes the theme susceptible to an variety of treatments, from different kinds of canons (with strict, literal imitation among the voices) as well as fugues of various types, where the theme is handled with more freedom and is combined with a wide range of countersubjects.

The first *Contrapunctus*, which serves as an introduction to the whole work, is the textbook example of a fugue, with the contrapuntal entries, episodes, and *strettos* (entries brought closer together) all presented with exemplary clarity. There is, in any case, a surprise near the end, with a sudden silence followed by the brief coda. In the second *Contrapunctus*, Bach changed the order in which the voices enter (in the first fugue it was alto-soprano-bass-tenor, now it is bass-tenor-alto-soprano), which has some consequences for the way the counterpoint is going to work. In addition, the countersubject moves in dotted rhythm, instead of in even eighth-notes as before. The ninth *Contrapunctus* is a double fugue, which means that it is based on two different fugue subjects. The first subject is developed separately before the second (which is actually the main subject going through the entire work) appears. This main theme is played in long notes against the faster motion of the new subject; this has reminded some commentators of a chorale fantasy, where a hymn tune is similarly surrounded by more active complementary voices. Others have described this movement as light and joyful in character.

ROBERT SCHUMANN

(Zwickau, Saxony, 8 June 1810 – Endenich, nr. Bonn, 29 July 1856)

String Quartet No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 41 (1842)

Schumann wrote all three of his string quartets within a space of two months in the summer of 1842 – his "chamber-music year" that also saw the birth of his Piano Quintet and Piano Quartet, among other works. This extreme productivity may have been due to a "manic" phase in the manic-depressive disorder from which he suffered; if so, the world owes to that disorder some of the finest music of the Romantic era.

Schumann and his close friend Mendelssohn (to whom these quartets were dedicated) understood the late Beethoven quartets better than anyone at the time and responded to them in their own works. For instance, Schumann's A Minor quartet has definite connections to Beethoven's quartet in the same key (Op. 132); both begin with slow introductions using imitation among the voices, and both make the otherwise unusual first move from the home key to F major – a descent and a darkening of the tone, instead of a rise to brighter regions. Later in Schumann's movement, a wide array of key areas are visited, with a broad range of textures and emotions to match; yet Schumann avoided Beethoven's wild tempo fluctuations. (Unlike Beethoven, he did not bring back the slow introduction.) For Schumann, the string quartet did not involve "going to the edge" or even "over the edge" as it did for the older composer; it was, rather, an exercise in classicism, a tribute and homage to an already venerable genre of chamber music. Schumann was to return to the main idea of the second-movement scherzo in his short piano piece "The Wild Rider" from his *Album for the Youth* (1849). In the quartet, the idea is presented in a fuller form and in a much more difficult setting. There is a middle section in a new key, meter and tempo; Schumann called it "Intermezzo" rather than "Trio," to emphasize that this is only a brief respite after which the "wild ride" resumes.

As has often been remarked, the third-movement Adagio (which revisits the key of F major) took its first three notes from the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Later, however, the melody takes a typically Schumannesque turn when it is taken over by the cello. After a central dramatic episode, the expressive melody returns and the movement ends with a gentle coda.

The vigorous Presto finale keeps repeating its principal motif (a characteristic repeated note and subsequent leap) almost maniacally over and over again. Both the first and the second themes are constructed from this material, which is developed both contrapuntally and with chordal accompaniment. Then, in the final portion of the movement, the music suddenly slows down and we hear a simple melody over a drone and a series of extremely soft, long-held chords before the principal motif returns with the final dash to the finish line.

BEDŘICH SMETANA

(Litomyšl, Bohemia, 2 March 1824 – Prague, 12 May 1884)

String Quartet No. 1 in E Minor, *Z mého života* ("From My Life") (1876)

As a public figure, Bedřich Smetana devoted his life to the creation of a Czech musical idiom in music, a goal he pursued with his operas and his set of symphonic poems, *Má Vlast* ("My Fatherland"). But when it came to expressing his most private feelings, he turned to chamber music, like so many great composers both before and after him. When his daughter Bediška died in childhood, he wrote his dark and tempestuous Piano Trio in G Minor. When, at the height of his creative powers, he suddenly lost his hearing and was forced to withdraw from active life, he composed the string quartet *Z mého života* ("From My Life"). Then, shortly before his death, Smetana wrote a second string quartet, the aphoristic character of which reflected his deteriorating health. By then, "[he] was able to compose only in snatches," as the Czech musicologist Marta Ottlová put it some years ago.

In a letter to his friend Josef Srb, Smetana related each of the E Minor quartet's four movements to events or emotions in his own life.

> The first movement depicts my youthful love of art, my romantic moods, an indescribable longing for something which I could not express in words, and a foreboding of unhappiness to come...
>
> The second movement is like a polka and reminds me of the happy days of my youth, when I composed dance tunes and was known as a passionate lover of dancing. The middle "trio" section brings back memories of aristocratic circles in which I used to move many years ago.
>
> The *largo sostenuto* recalls my first love and happiness with the girl who later became my first wife.
>
> The finale describes my joy in discovering that I could treat elements of Bohemian national music in my work. My joy in following this path was checked by the terrible catastrophe of my sudden deafness... The long, insistent note is the fateful ringing in my ears of the high-pitched tones which announced the beginning of my deafness. I permitted myself this little joke because it was so disastrous to me... It left me with the outlook of a sad future, only a passing hope of recovery, a brief reminder of my love of art, and finally a sensation of nothing but pain and regret.

Right up to the "little joke," the program fits the musical structure like a glove: the enthusiasm of youth, the passion for dance, and the love for Kateřina, his first wife, correspond effortlessly to the opening Adagio, the second-movement polka, and the third-

movement Largo, respectively, just as the triumph of musical nationalism finds a natural expression in the exuberant finale. All of this is also perfectly in keeping with the classical conventions of the string quartet. But in the sustained high E shortly before the end of the quartet, those conventions break down completely, and the tragic program takes over. Smetana called this moment a "little joke" because of the liberty he was taking with conventions to make a special point, for which his only precedents would have been the witty surprises found in Joseph Haydn's music.

Yet, as Smetana said, there is a "foreboding of unhappiness" already in the first movement, and one hears it at the very opening, in the lengthy and dramatic viola solo. Only the melodious secondary theme seems to express the composer's youthful longings. The entire movement oscillates between two opposite emotions, polarizing the usual contrast between a sonata movement's themes to the extreme.

The second movement, too, takes something to the extreme – in this case, the idea of the dance. This is not simply a polka but a kind of "polka-fantasy," with intentionally exaggerated melodic and rhythmic gestures that makes the dance appear larger than life. A fanfare-like melody, consisting entirely of the notes of the major triad, is marked pointedly as "quasi Tromba" (like a trumpet). The middle section embodies the very idea of tenderness just as the main section does the notion of a boisterous dance.

Kateřina's portrait, in the third movement, is drawn by means of an exquisite cello solo, which introduces a lyrical melody played by the first violin. Even here, though, we find some dramatic accents to remind us that Smetana lost his first wife tragically when she died of tuberculosis in 1859, after ten years of marriage.

The finale opens with a string of melodies, in turn exuberant and jovial, signalling unadulterated happiness and contentment for the first time in the piece. It is this radiant outpouring of joy that is cruelly interrupted by that famous E note, followed by a recapitulation of the two main themes from the first movement: the first, in its original dramatic form, the second, transformed from idyllic to despondent, bringing the work to an unusual and utterly tragic conclusion.

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