

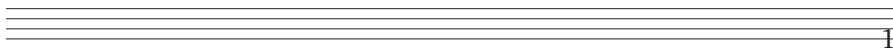
The April 1, 2021, concert is sponsored by
Valarie Koziol

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Dianne Henderson
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and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council
for assistance in presenting Music in the Afternoon.



Visit the artists' website at vianostringquartet.com



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Viano String Quartet

Lucy Wang, violin

Hao Zhou, violin


Aiden Kane, viola

Tate Zawadiuk, cello

Praised for their “huge range of dynamics, massive sound and spontaneity” (*American Record Guide*), the Viano String Quartet are First Prize winners of the 2019 Banff International String Quartet Competition. Formed in 2015 at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles, where they are Ensemble-in-Residence through the 2020-21 season, the quartet has performed in venues such as Wigmore Hall, Place Flagey, Konzerthaus Berlin, and Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

Since the 2020 COVID lockdown, the Viano String Quartet has been actively presenting virtual and socially distanced live concerts for various organizations, including the Dallas Chamber Music Society, the Schneider Series at the New School, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, the Friends of Chamber Music of Troy, the Salt Lake Chamber Music Society, and the Banff International String Quartet Festival. With their colleagues in the Calidore String Quartet, they presented a movement of the Mendelssohn Octet while distanced across countries in a film project “The Way Forward”. As part of the Banff International String Quartet Competition prize, the quartet will be in residence at the Meadows School of Music at the Southern Methodist University through the 2022-23 season. For two weeks each semester, they will perform side-by-side concerts, coach chamber ensembles, and initiate projects within the SMU community.

Their 2019-20 season saw performances on three continents, including debuts in Berlin, Paris, Bremen, Brussels, Vancouver, and Beijing among other cities. The quartet also gave several performances within Los Angeles at Boston Court, the Music Guild, and Zipper Hall, and produced a recording with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. They have collaborated with world-class musicians such as pianists Emanuel Ax and Elisso Virsaladze, violist Paul Coletti, violinist Noah Bendix-Balgley, and vocalist Hila Plitmann.



The quartet received the Grand Prize at the 2019 ENKOR International Music Competition and second prize at the 2019 Yellow Springs Chamber Music Competition. At the 2018 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition they received Third Prize, the Haydn Prize for the best performance of a Haydn quartet, and the Sidney Griller Award for the best performance of the compulsory work, Thomas Ades' *The Four Quarters*. They received the Silver Medal at the 2018 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and Third Prize at the 9th Osaka International Chamber Music Competition in 2017.

Committed to engaging with communities outside the concert hall, the Viano String Quartet has given presentations for school children and students of all ages through residencies in Bellingham, Washington—the “Play it Forward” residency, a collaboration between the Bellingham Festival of Music and the Whatcom Symphony to reach school children in the northern Washington State area—Northern Michigan University, and the Santa Monica Conservatory. In 2019 they gave multiple performances of “Over the Top”, a Musical Encounter Interactive presentation they scripted, developed and performed at the Colburn School for inner city school children.

The Vianos work primarily with members of the Colburn School faculty, including Martin Beaver, Scott St. John, Clive Greensmith, Paul Coletti and Fabio Bidini. They have received coachings from artists such as David Finckel, Gary Hoffman, Arnold Steinhardt, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and members of the Alban Berg, Brentano, Emerson, Miró, Shanghai, St. Lawrence, and Takács String Quartets. They have attended the Ravinia Steans Chamber Music Institute, the St. Lawrence String Quartet Seminar, the Festival d’Aix en Provence, the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, and the McGill International String Quartet Academy.

The name “Viano” was created to describe the four individual instruments in a string quartet interacting as one. Each of the four instruments begins with the letter “v”, and like a piano, all four string instruments together play both harmony and melody, creating a unified instrument called the “Viano”.

PROGRAM

Entr'acte

Caroline Shaw
(b.1982)

String Quartet No. 14 in D minor,
Death and the Maiden

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

1. Allegro
2. Andante con moto
3. Scherzo: Allegro molto
4. Presto

NOTES

In these Covidious times I suppose it is not surprising that my mind seems clogged with medical thoughts and ideas. In particular I was drawn to a phrase that I mistakenly thought was part of the doctor's Hippocratic oath: "do no harm." It is actually in a document by that same Hippocrates called *Of the Epidemics* so it will do equally well. Music lecturers and writers of program notes are not normally required to swear this same oath, but I have often thought it would be a good idea; I've certainly tried to follow this as a guiding principle, especially in these WMCT notes where there is no opportunity to judge how the audience is receiving what you write or to correct misconceptions. Any complicated suggestion of what you *may* hear in a piece can easily turn in the listener's mind into what you *ought* to hear with distressing results if writer and listener are on different tracks. Some years ago (in notes for another concert by a BISQC winning quartet) I discussed the usefulness of names, original or later additions, as a means of identifying classical works that otherwise have a grey sameness about them – opus numbers, keys, generic form names. What I didn't emphasize then was that titles can be a double edged sword if they insist too strongly that they capture the whole "meaning" of the work. A good example for this discussion might be the quartet on today's program: *Death and the Maiden*, that sounds pretty definitive. Well, let's examine the background history first. And perhaps I should now issue a spoiler alert – if you don't know the work and want to experience it without nudges from various people telling you what it "means", jump down to the discussion of Caroline Shaw's composition.

The Schubert quartet was written in March of 1824, following on from the popular Octet and an A minor string quartet. In a letter written in

comes to the conclusion that “the extent to which he intended to carry more than the notes of the original [song] across to the new medium [of the quartet] is a matter for the “nose” of each of us”.

So, is this quartet an early example of the currently fashionable autofiction with the tone reflecting the composer’s poor health and despair? Perhaps, but nobody feels that the generally sunny atmosphere of the Octet written at the same time needs similar biographical explanation. How about the work as a whole being shot through with images of death suggested by the text of the borrowed song? Perhaps, again, but as Newbould points out we don’t search for fishy meanings throughout the *Trout Quintet*, another work with a borrowed song in it. Let’s just admit that this quartet is open to a great number of different interpretations and that the label may not tell you everything that is in the jar.

Caroline Shaw’s *Entr’acte* was written in 2011 when she was a doctoral student at Princeton, and after she heard the Brentano Quartet play Haydn’s Op. 77 No 2 quartet. The musical impetus for the composition was a single moment in the Haydn – the “soulful” transition from minuet to trio - but it is the composer’s description of this whole group of works that is more relevant to our understanding. “I love the way,” she says, “some music suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice’s looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition.” *Entr’acte* uses the classical minuet and trio form and “riffs on it but takes it a little further.” Shaw has performed as a violinist in various string quartets with exposure to a wide repertoire of such pieces. Thomas May says this has led to her “vivid brand of dialogue with the past”. These “moments of hearkening back”, he continues, “are anything but pale imitation, nor do they unfold in the postmodern manner, as gestures of pastiche, irony, or deconstruction. What they suggest, rather, are the enigmatic afterimages of dreams being recalled and pieced together into alternate narratives”. Shaw, who likes to refer to herself as a “musician who writes music” rather than as a composer, has said that she loves unpredictability and her scores often encourage that. Amy Schroeder, a member of the Attacca Quartet points to an example in today’s work: “At the end [of *Entr’acte*], she gives the cello his/her notes, but then says to go on playing as if you are telling an old, forgotten story”.

-John Mayo

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