

Jean Sibelius

(1865-1957)

String Quartet in D minor, Op. 56 "Intimate Voices" (1909) (28:56)

- 1** I Andante - Allegro molto moderato (6:17)
- 2** II Vivace (2:26)
- 3** III Adagio di molto (9:38)
- 4** IV Allegretto (ma pesante) (5:42)
- 5** V Allegro (4:53)

Igor Stravinsky

(1882-1971)

Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914) (7:15)

- 6** I (0:52)
- 7** II (2:00)
- 8** III (4:23)

Maurice Ravel

(1875-1937)

String Quartet in F major (1902-3) (28:42)

- 9** I Allegro moderato — Très doux (8:34)
- 10** II Assez vif — Très rythmé (6:07)
- 11** III Très lent (8:57)
- 12** IV Agité (5:04)

DAEDALUS QUARTET

Min-Young Kim, violin I: Sibelius, Stravinsky; violin II: Ravel
Kyu-Young Kim, violin I: Ravel; violin II: Sibelius, Stravinsky
Jessica Thompson, viola • Raman Ramakrishnan, cello

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Program Notes by members of the Daedalus Quartet

The three string quartets on this album were composed in Europe between 1902 and 1914. In keeping with the fertile intellectual climate (and unstable political climate) of the time, each represents some sort of experiment by the composer. Sibelius was turning to a more intimate world than his customary symphony; Stravinsky was breaking away from the style of his Primitive Period; and Ravel, as a 27-year-old student at the Paris Conservatory, was seeking his fortune. In the order presented here, the Stravinsky is a taut and tangy palate cleanser between the Sibelius and Ravel main courses.

Jean Sibelius

String Quartet in D minor, Op. 56 "Intimate Voices"

When Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) began work on his *String Quartet, Op. 56 "Voces Intimae"* in 1908, it was the Finnish composer's first foray into the genre after two decades of orchestral writing. After early chamber works that mainly served to develop his technique, Sibelius had truly found his voice as a symphonist. His thoughts on the symphony are well illustrated in a conversation that took place upon meeting Gustav Mahler in 1907. Sibelius said that what he admired in the symphony was "its style and severity of form, and the profound logic that created an inner connection between all the motifs." Mahler retorted, "No, no! The symphony must be like the world. It must contain everything."

What precipitated Sibelius's turn toward the more intimate genre of the string quartet? 1908 was a difficult year for the composer. In addition to the financial troubles that had plagued him throughout his life (due more to his spending

habits than lack of professional success), Sibelius suffered from throat pain, the cause of which was found to be a tumor that took several surgeries to remove. Instead of taking his inspiration from nature and the physical world, as he did so often in his symphonies and tone poems, Sibelius's brush with mortality focused his thoughts inward — thus “Intimate (or Inner) Voices.”

Still, Sibelius did not completely put aside his “orchestral” habits while writing his quartet. As in his symphonies, he strives here for motivic and thematic integration. The first movement's opening theme — stepwise motion, followed by a leap of a fourth — sows the seeds for much of what occurs in later movements. The *Vivace* second movement, in fact, is based almost entirely on material from the first (so much so that Sibelius referred to it as the “first-and-a-half” movement). The *Adagio* is, both formally and emotionally, the center of the work. It seems to describe a struggle between the physical world and the world beyond and is filled with great warmth. The following *Allegretto (ma pesante)* brings the listener firmly back to earth, and the *Allegro* finale is an energetic, perhaps demonic, *rondo*.

Igor Stravinsky Three Pieces for String Quartet

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) wrote his *Three Pieces for String Quartet* in 1914, one year after the premiere of his ballet, *The Rite of Spring*. While the *Three Pieces* certainly did not create the same shock waves that the ballet did, they signaled a major turning point in Stravinsky's compositional style. Stravinsky was one of those rare composers who constantly sought to reinvent himself, leading to several distinct compositional styles in the course of his 50-year career. With *The*

Rite of Spring he reached the height of his early style, sometimes called his Primitive, or Russian, period. By 1920 Stravinsky had turned quite clearly to his Neo-Classical style. However, in 1914, he was searching for a new voice, and he treated his foray into the string quartet genre as an opportunity to experiment. The *Three Pieces* are miniature studies in moods and styles. Each is distinct in character, and when Stravinsky orchestrated them in 1929, he gave them the titles, “Dance,” “Eccentric,” and “Canticle.” “Dance” makes extensive use of ostinato (frequent repetition of small motivic fragments), but in a very different manner from his earlier works. The movement is compact and tightly controlled — and so brief, that its effect is almost humorous; it foreshadows Stravinsky's Neo-Classical style. “Eccentric” contains odd, off-balance gestures which stop and start, and was inspired by the clown Little Tich. In “Canticle,” Stravinsky foreshadows the austere, religious style that he adopted in the last stage of his compositional career. The music is hushed and chant-like, bringing the *Three Pieces* to a serene and introspective close.

Maurice Ravel String Quartet in F major

By most accounts, the *String Quartet in F* of Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) should not have become part of the standard repertoire. As a young man, Ravel tried and failed to win the prestigious Prix de Rome no less than five times. When he submitted the first movement of the *Quartet* for another composition prize at the Paris Conservatory, where he was a student of Gabriel Fauré, the work garnered decidedly mixed reactions: one judge found it “laborious,” another complained that it “lacked simplicity.” This academic failure resulted in Ravel's expulsion from the

DAEDALUS QUARTET

Min-Young Kim, violin • Kyu-Young Kim, violin
Jessica Thompson, viola • Raman Ramakrishnan, cello

The **Daedalus Quartet** takes its name from the mythical Greek inventor, artist, and architect celebrated for creating the art of sculpture, designing the Labyrinth, and above all for regaining his freedom by devising wings that made it possible for him to fly. The Daedalus Quartet (pronounced DED-a-lus) was founded in the summer of 2000, and one year later captured the Grand Prize of the 2001 Banff International String Quartet Competition, quickly establishing itself as among America's outstanding string quartets.

The Daedalus Quartet was named by Carnegie Hall to participate in the ECHO (European Concert Hall Organization) Rising Stars program, through which it made debuts during the 2004-2005 season at the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), the Megaron (Athens), the Festspielhaus (Baden-Baden), Symphony Hall (Birmingham), the Palais des Beaux Arts (Brussels), Philharmonie (Cologne), the Cité de la Musique (Paris), the Mozarteum (Salzburg), and the Musikverein (Vienna), as well as at Weill Recital Hall for Carnegie Hall's "Distinctive Debuts" series. A re-engagement to perform at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall followed.

The Daedalus Quartet was appointed by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center as the Chamber Music Society Two quartet for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 seasons, leading to numerous performances at Lincoln Center, including collaborations with artist members of the Society and other Chamber Music Society Two artists, as well as participation in many of the Society's educational programs. The ensemble was appointed Columbia University's Quartet-

Conservatory. Even Fauré, the "dear teacher" to whom Ravel dedicated his quartet, found fault with the work. (He found the last movement to be too short and poorly balanced.)

Looking back, it seems that Ravel's early struggles may have been the result of his misunderstood genius, coupled with a touch of artistic insecurity on the part of those who derided his work. The *String Quartet*, Ravel's first important chamber work, is strikingly mature and deeply personal, although Ravel acknowledged Claude Debussy's "spiritual influence" on the piece (Debussy having written his quartet a decade earlier, in 1893). The piece is thematically quite unified, with motifs undergoing transformations between as well as within movements. Ravel's fascination with (and mastery of) instrumental color is evident throughout the work, and he employs a wide variety of techniques to achieve the desired effects: extensive pizzicato in the second movement, playing *sul tasto* (over the fingerboard) and *con sordino* (with mutes) in the third, and tremolo in the fourth.

As it turns out, not everyone who heard Ravel's *String Quartet* responded critically. When asked for his opinion, Debussy reassured the young composer, enjoining him, "In the name of the gods of music, and in mine, do not touch a single note of what you have written in your *Quartet*." A century later, we are thankful that Ravel listened.

in-Residence for the 2005-2006 season.

Other major engagements in the United States have included the Library of Congress, the Houston Friends of Music, Stanford Lively Arts, the La Jolla Music Society, Music in the Park (Saint Paul), the Corcoran Gallery (Washington), the Gardner Museum (Boston), New York University, the University of Kansas Lied Center, the Friends of Chamber Music in Portland, Ore. and Kansas City, the Raleigh Chamber Music Guild, the University of Washington, the University at Buffalo, Purdue Convocations, and the Chamber Music Society of the North Shore (Chicago). They have performed Erwin Schulhoff's Concerto for String Quartet with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Festival appearances include the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center, the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts (as Ernst Stiefel Quartet in Residence), the Bard Music Festival, the Next Generation Festival in Pennsylvania, the Skaneateles Festival, Music Mountain, and the Music Festival of the Hamptons. Other festival appearances have included the Bard Music Festival, the Next Generation Festival in Pennsylvania, the Skaneateles Festival, Music Mountain, and the Music Festival of the Hamptons. Their performances have been featured at a Haydn festival presented by the Lincoln International Chamber Music Festival in the United Kingdom, and an Elliott Carter festival co-presented by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the University of Minnesota.

The Daedalus Quartet has won wide acclaim for their performances of contemporary music, including works by Elliott Carter, George Perle, György Kurtág, and György Ligeti. Among the works they have premiered is David Horne's *Flight from the Labyrinth*, commissioned for the quartet by the Caramoor Festival.

The Daedalus Quartet is active in music education for adults and children alike. In addition to their work with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the quartet has served as a resident ensemble of the Lincoln Center Institute, performing for school children throughout the New York metropolitan area. Great Performers at Lincoln Center has presented the quartet in Robert Kapilow's "What Makes It Great" series, and they have twice been recipients of educational residency grants from Chamber Music America.

The members of the quartet hold degrees from Juilliard, Curtis, the Cleveland Institute, and Harvard University. Brother and sister violinists Kyu-Young Kim and Min-Young Kim, who alternate on first violin, and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan grew up in East Patchogue, Long Island; they met violist Jessica Thompson, a Minneapolis native, at the Marlboro Music Festival.

www.daedalusquartet.com

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