

IAS

INSTITUTE FOR  
ADVANCED STUDY  
ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Edward T. Cone Concert Series  
2020–2021

# Jasper String Quartet



Saturday, April 24, 2021 at 8:00 p.m. ET  
Virtual Concert, Live from Wolfensohn Hall



Institute for Advanced Study  
2020–2021 Edward T. Cone Concert Series  
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## JASPER STRING QUARTET

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Rachel Henderson Freivogel, cello  
J Freivogel, violin  
Karen Kim, violin  
Andrew Gonzalez, viola

### PROGRAM

**MIDDLEGROUND**

Shelley Washington (2016)

**STRING QUARTET NO. 14 IN C# MINOR, OP. 131**

Ludwig van Beethoven (1826)

*Funding for this concert is provided by the **Edward T. Cone Endowment**.*

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

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David Lang writes: The original idea for this concert came out of a recording I heard a while back, of the Jasper String Quartet. I have known this excellent young quartet for many years, and I have known them as both great interpreters of the icons of Western classical music past and also as great advocates for music being written right now. A few years ago they released a beautiful recording of Beethoven's *String Quartet No. 14 in C# Minor*—one of Beethoven's last and most unusual compositions—and I have been daydreaming about programming it on a concert ever since.

For the past few years here at the Institute for Advanced Study, our series has been dedicated to looking at different definitions of virtuosity in music. I thought that with the Beethoven I could make the case that this piece represents a certain kind of virtuosity in compositional architecture. The quartet has a powerful structure that is monumental and unique, both among the literature and among Beethoven's other works. The piece is divided into 7 movements of vastly different shapes and sizes—one movement is 14 minutes long, one movement is less than a minute. The movements flow so gracefully in and out of each other that you may not even be aware of their changing. There is some misdirection in these movements—some sound like introductions, some have false endings, and some have strange internal changes of pace. All to keep the music flowing forward, which it needs to, since the entire quartet can be over 40 minutes long.

In case you are wondering, these are unusual details in a string quartet. The form, as Beethoven inherited it from composers like Mozart and Haydn, was a lot better behaved. String quartets are supposed to have 3 or 4 movements, usually, each separated neatly and distinctly from each other by emotion and tempo and key. First and last movements are fast, with a slow movement and a dance movement somewhere in between them. They are most often under 30 minutes in length; Mozart rarely cracks 25.

Beethoven mostly follows the traditions of the string quartet format, for most of his career. But in the last few years of his life, his music

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

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starts morphing into something never before seen or heard. People speculate that as his deafness becomes more profound and as his sense of isolation from his society grows he begins to retreat into his own imagination—the rules and definitions and harmonies and forms he had worked in all his life began to matter less, and this leads his pieces to become more speculative, more interior, more rambling and mercurial.

*String Quartet No. 14* is a great example of how Beethoven breaks with the string quartet tradition. The piece starts slowly, not fast. Its movements are unpredictable in size and affect, and they flow into one another in a way that violates the formal traditions of having movements represent their own separate emotional worlds.

Perhaps the most amazing disorientation of the traditional string quartet format is that the fugue theme from the very opening of the quartet returns in the last movement, some 30 minutes later. It is as if Beethoven is asking himself, how long should a musical idea last? And how long is a listener supposed to remember it? For a phrase, for a movement, for a piece—forever? Before Beethoven no one had so blurred the separation of ideas that quartets in individual movements make possible, and here is a string quartet that defies every boundary that it can. Defying those boundaries sweetly, and emotionally, and grandly, and lushly, I might add.

I was thinking about how Beethoven allowed himself to become so defiant towards the rules he inherited. What gave him the permission to be so independent? That question led me to think that maybe there is another kind of virtuosity operating in this piece, and in all his later works as well. I would call it the virtuosity of age.

Beethoven was 56 when he wrote the C# minor quartet, just one year before his death, but after a long career of pushing boundaries in almost all of classical music's forms and formats. He was already deaf, already ill, already weakening in his body. He had already accomplished so much, and challenged so many of classical

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

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music's assumptions. Now, towards his end, he had the skill and the experience and the imagination to push the string quartet to a new definition of what it could become. *String Quartet No. 14* is lively, but introspective, often brooding, and its joy is often measured. Unlike most of the quartets Beethoven would have heard before, the end of his quartet is not definitively resolved. It is not heroic or miserable or triumphant or depressing. It just is.

To highlight Beethoven's virtuosity of age, I wanted to present a piece by a young composer, someone just getting started, someone full of energy and optimism and excitement. The concert begins with the piece *Middleground* by the young composer Shelley Washington. Shelley is currently a doctoral student in composition at Princeton University. The piece begins with energy, obsessively propulsive, using its driving rhythmic force to push it forward. You can hear a touch of folk fiddling, and it is full of drama, suddenly shifting to a beautiful slow tune, and then returning to the energy of the opening. The piece is honest, and elegant, and direct. If there is a virtuosity of youth this may be it.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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Jasper String Quartet is the Professional Quartet-in-Residence at Temple University's Center for Gifted Young Musicians and the Founder and Artistic Director of Jasper Chamber Concerts.

They have been hailed as “sonically delightful and expressively compelling,” (*The Strad*) and their recent recording of music by Aaron Jay Kernis and Claude Debussy was described by *Gramophone* as “flawless in ensemble and intonation, expressively assured and beautifully balanced.” *The New York Times* named their album *Unbound* as one of the 25 Best Classical Recordings of 2017.

The Quartet's recent commissions include works by Patrick Castillo and Reinaldo Moya, as well as *4 Seasons | 4 Composers*, a work bringing the brilliant muse of the seasons to the string quartet genre and comprising new works by Lera Auerbach, Christopher Theofanidis, Akira Nishimura, and Joan Tower.

The Jasper Quartet is passionate about connecting with audiences beyond the concert hall and has performed hundreds of outreach programs in schools and community centers. The Quartet received a Residency Partnership grant from Chamber Music America for the 2020–21 season and has received numerous Picasso Project grants from Public Citizens for Children and Youth to support its ongoing work with public schools in Philadelphia.

In the summer of 2021, the Quartet will teach on the faculty of the Saint Paul Chamber Music Institute and Credo, and will also direct the first High School String Quartet Seminar at the Brevard Music Center. The Jasper Quartet is Featured Artist-in-Residence at Swarthmore College for the 2020-22 academic years.

Formed at Oberlin Conservatory, the Jasper Quartet launched their professional career in 2006 as Rice University's Graduate Quartet-in-Residence. In 2008, the Quartet continued its training with the

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Tokyo String Quartet as Yale University's Graduate Quartet-in-Residence. In 2008, they won the Grand Prize and the Audience Prize in the Plowman Chamber Music Competition, the Grand Prize at the Coleman Competition, First Prize at Chamber Music Yellow Springs, and the Silver Medal at the 2008 and 2009 Fischhoff Chamber Music Competitions.

In 2010, the Quartet joined the roster of Astral Artists and was the 2010–12 Ensemble-in-Residence at Oberlin Conservatory. From 2009–2011, the Jaspers were the Ernst C. Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and Arts (Katonah, NY).

The Jasper String Quartet is named after Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada.

## SUPPORT THE ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

The Institute is pleased to make concerts and related talks featuring well-known performers and others from the music world freely available to the community. IAS is committed to providing our concerts free of charge, and we invite you to help us sustain that commitment by making a contribution to support the Edward T. Cone Concert Series. Your gift, along with the gifts of others who have enjoyed these concerts, will help us continue to develop and offer outstanding musical programs.

Checks may be sent to the Artist-in-Residence Program, Institute for Advanced Study, Einstein Drive, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. You can make a gift online at [www.ias.edu/giving-ias](http://www.ias.edu/giving-ias). For information about other ways to give, go to [www.ias.edu/support/ways-give](http://www.ias.edu/support/ways-give) or call the IAS Development Office at (609) 951-4409. Information about the Artist-in-Residence program and a schedule of the season's concerts may be found on the Institute's website at [www.ias.edu/events](http://www.ias.edu/events).

Friends of the Institute for Advanced Study have the opportunity to reserve tickets for in-person concerts before they are offered to the general public. If you would like to know more about the Friends of the Institute, information is available on the IAS website. Alternatively, you may contact Friends Liaison Pamela Hughes at [phughes@ias.edu](mailto:phughes@ias.edu) or (609) 306-7139. [www.ias.edu/support/friends-virtual](http://www.ias.edu/support/friends-virtual)



# INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

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The Institute for Advanced Study is one of the world's foremost centers for theoretical research and intellectual inquiry. Located in Princeton, N.J., the IAS is dedicated to independent study across the sciences and humanities. Founded in 1930 with the motto "Truth and Beauty," the Institute is devoted to advancing the frontiers of knowledge without concern for immediate application. From founding IAS Professor Albert Einstein to the foremost thinkers of today, the IAS enables bold, nonconformist, field-leading research that provides long-term utility and new technologies, leading to innovation and enrichment of society in unexpected ways.

Each year, the Institute welcomes more than 200 of the world's most promising researchers and scholars who are selected and mentored by a permanent Faculty, each of whom are preeminent leaders in their fields. Comprised of four Schools—Historical Studies, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Social Science—IAS has produced an astounding record of introducing new understanding and is responsible for undeniable progress across disciplines and generations, from the development of one of the first stored-program computers to the establishment of art history as a discipline in the United States. Among its present and past Faculty and Members are 35 Nobel Laureates, 42 of the 60 Fields Medalists, and 21 of the 24 Abel Prize Laureates, as well as many MacArthur Fellows and Wolf Prize winners.

## ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

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The Artist-in-Residence Program was established in 1994 to underscore the Institute's dedication to scholarly and artistic endeavors. Unrestrained curiosity, risk-taking, and even blind faith are concepts native to transformative research and the visual and performing arts. As part of the Artist-in-Residence program, a pioneering artist is appointed to join the Institute community and curate the Edward T. Cone Concert Series, pursue their creative and intellectual work, and exchange ideas with scholars from all disciplines. Composer David Lang was appointed as Artist-in-Residence in 2015. In 2020–21, Lang continues his VIRTUOUSITY program, an exploration of mastery, meaning, and experience.



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