



The Music Department Presents

The Twentieth Annual
Skidmore College String Festival

Miró Quartet with Lara Downes

Daniel Ching, violin
William Fedkenheuer, violin
John Largess, viola
Joshua Gindele, cello
Lara Downes, piano

Saturday, April 20th, 7:30PM
Arthur Zankel Music Center
Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall

PROGRAM

Sonata for two violins

Allegro vivo e con fuoco

Eugène Ysaÿe
(1858-1931)

Marlowe Jacques and Michael Emery, violins

Duo for Double Bass and Cello

Allegro

Gioacchino Rossini
(1792-1868)

Noanddi Manigat, bass
Jameson Platte, cello

Sonata No 3. in D minor Op. 108 for violin and
piano

Adagio

Un poco presto e con sentimento

Presto agitato

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Marlowe Jacques, violin
Seth Spital, piano

Sonata in A minor Op. 36 for cello and piano

Allegro Agitato

Edvard Grieg
1843-1907

Evan Weatherwax, cello
Hirry Huang, piano

Sonata No 9 in A major Op.47 for violin and
Piano

Adagio sostenuto – Presto

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Marlowe Jacques, violin
Michael Lowry, piano

INTERMISSION

Waltz No. 2 from Suite for Variety Orchestra

Dimitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)
(transcribed by Ewen Tsai)

Skidmore Cello Choir

William Yarranton
Olivia Lipman
Maddie Sokolowski

Keryn Math
Ruth Wilson
Lucas Gutierrez-Arnold
Kara Duffy
Olivia Standish

String Quartet in F major M.35
Allegro moderato
Assez vif, très rythmé

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Marlowe Jacques and Owen Ritzau, violins
Adam Warner viola, Zack Barnett, cello

String Quartet No. 1 in E minor "From my Life"
Allegro vivo appassionato

Bedřich Smetana
(1824-1884)

Jeff Cheung and Rebecca Merber, violins
Jack Crisan, viola, William Yarranton cello

Lyric for Strings

George Walker
(1922-2018)

Miró Quartet

Daniel Ching, violin
John Largess, viola

William Fedkenheuer, violin
Joshua Gindele, cello

Skidmore String Ensemble

Violins

Faye Mooney
Michael Emery
Lucinda Elizarraras
Kat Nazarov
Rebecca Merber

Selena Wu
Armin Ohadi
Josh Rodriguez
Della Huntley
Cinthya Sanchez

Violas

Emmanuelle Donaldson
Adam Warner
Stephani Emery

Cellos

Evan Weatherwax
Jameson Platte

Bass

Noanddi Manigat

Luke Baker

“Rounds” for Piano and Strings

Jessie Montgomery
(b. 1981)

with the Mirò Quartet and Lara Downes, Pianist

Lyric for Strings
George Walker

Lyric for Strings, originally titled Lament, was first composed as the second movement of Walker's String Quartet No. 1 in 1946 while he was a graduate student at the Curtis School of Music.

In 1990, Walker expanded the work for string orchestra, retitling it Lyric for Strings; this new arrangement subsequently became Walker's most performed composition. It is cast in a single movement and has a duration of approximately six minutes. The work is dedicated to Walker's grandmother, Melvina King.

Rounds
Jessie Montgomery

Rounds for solo piano and string orchestra is inspired by the imagery and themes from T.S. Eliot's epic poem Four Quartets. Early in the first poem, Burnt Norton, we find these evocative lines:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless; Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is, But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity, Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards, Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point, There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

(Text © T.S. Eliot. Reproduced by courtesy of Faber and Faber Ltd)

In addition to this inspiration, while working on the piece, I became fascinated by fractals (infinite patterns found in nature that are self-similar across different scales) and also delved into the work of contemporary biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber who writes about the interdependency of all beings. Weber explores how every living organism has a rhythm that interacts and impacts with all of the living things around it and results in a multitude of outcomes.

Like Eliot in Four Quartets, beginning to understand this interconnectedness requires that we slow down, listen, and observe both the effect and the opposite effect caused by every single action and moment. I've found this is an exercise that lends itself very naturally towards musical gestural possibilities that I explore in the work – action and reaction, dark and light, stagnant and swift.

Structurally, with these concepts in mind, I set the form of the work as a rondo, within a rondo, within a rondo. The five major sections are a rondo; section “A” is also a rondo in itself; and the cadenza – which is partially improvised by the soloist – breaks the pattern, yet contains within it, the overall form of the work.

To help share some of this with the performers, I’ve included the following poetic performance note at the start of the score:

Inspired by the constancy, the rhythms, and duality of life, in order of relevance to form:

Rondine – AKA Swifts (like a sparrow) flying in circles patterns
Playing with opposites – dark/light;
stagnant/swift
Fractals – infinite design

I am grateful to my friend Awadagin Pratt for his collaborative spirit and ingenuity in helping to usher my first work for solo piano into the world. — Jessie Montgomery, February 2022

The Artists

About the Quartet

The Miró Quartet is one of America’s most celebrated and dedicated string quartets, having been labeled by The New Yorker as “furiously committed” and noted by the Cleveland Plain Dealer for its “exceptional tonal focus and interpretive intensity.” For over twenty-five years the Quartet has performed throughout the world on the most prestigious concert stages, earning accolades from critics and audiences alike. Based in Austin, TX, and thriving on the area’s storied music scene, the Miró takes pride in finding new ways to communicate with audiences of all backgrounds while cultivating the longstanding tradition of chamber music. In their 2023-24 season, the Miró Quartet embarks on a new performance and recording project with pianist Lara Downes. *Here on Earth* features musical depictions of planet earth, its evolution, and the lives of its inhabitants, with works spanning a century of cultural shift that begins with Darius Milhaud’s *La Création du Monde*, performed in a new arrangement for piano and string quartet. Upcoming performances include the premiere of a new version of Kevin Puts’ *Credo* with the Naples Philharmonic, as well as performances for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and Premiere Performances in Hong Kong. Formed in 1995, the Miró Quartet was awarded first prize at several national and international competitions including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Competition. Deeply committed to music education, members of the Quartet have given master classes at universities and conservatories throughout the world, and since 2003 the Miró has served as the quartet-in-residence at the University of Texas at Austin Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music. In 2005, the Quartet became the first ensemble ever to be awarded the coveted Avery Fisher Career Grant. Having released many celebrated recordings, the Miró recently produced an Emmy Award-winning multimedia project titled *Transcendence*. A work with visual and audio elements available on live stream, CD, and Blu-ray, *Transcendence* encompasses philanthropy and documentary filmmaking and is centered around a performance of Franz Schubert’s *Quartet in G major* on rare Stradivarius instruments. The Miró records independently and makes its music available on a global scale through

Apple Music, Amazon, Spotify, Pandora, and YouTube. The Miró Quartet took its name and its inspiration from the Spanish artist Joan Miró, whose Surrealist works — with subject matter drawn from the realm of memory, dreams, and imaginative fantasy — are some of the most groundbreaking, influential, and admired of the 20th century.

Lara Downes

Recently honored as Classical Woman of the Year by NPR's Performance Today, American pianist (and NY Times crossword clue) **Lara Downes** has been called "a musical ray of hope" by NBC News, "a classical music instigator pushing the music forward with great gusto" by the NY Amsterdam News, and "an explorer whose imagination is fired by bringing notice to the underrepresented and forgotten" by The Log Journal.

An iconoclast and trailblazer, Lara occupies a unique position of visibility through her dynamic work as a sought-after soloist, a Billboard Chart-topping recording artist, and a beloved NPR personality as host of her popular video show Amplify with Lara Downes. She has garnered millions of fans spanning diverse communities: her devoted NPR viewers and 100,000+ weekly listeners to her nationally syndicated radio programs intersect with her live concert audiences and her followers on streaming platforms to form a broad and constantly expanding fan base.

Lara's musical roadmap seeks inspiration from the legacies of history, family, and collective memory, excavating a broad landscape of music to create a series of acclaimed performance and recording projects that serve as gathering spaces for her listeners to find common ground and shared experience. In the words of the renowned American conductor JoAnn Falletta, "Lara Downes is a perfect artist for our time, a champion of new and neglected music, an extraordinary communicator, a passionate advocate for our art form."

Lara's recent and upcoming onstage adventures include guest appearances with the orchestras of Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, Dallas, Louisville, Indianapolis and others, with recitals and residencies at Lincoln Center, Disney Hall, Ravinia, Tanglewood, the Gilmore Festival, Carolina Performing Arts, Washington Performing Arts, Caramoor, and Saratoga Performing Arts Center, among others.

Her creative collaborations embrace an eclectic range of artists including the Miró Quartet, musical multi-hyphenate Rhiannon Giddens, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Rita Dove, Broadway legend Brian Stokes Mitchell, author John McWhorter and violinist Daniel Hope. Her close partnerships with prominent composers span genres and generations, with premieres and commissions coming from Billy Childs, Valerie Coleman, Paola Prestini, Arturo O'Farrill, Jimmy Lopez-Bellido, Teddy Abrams, Clarice Assad, and many others.

A cultural visionary with a firm finger on the pulse of tomorrow, Lara is increasingly active as a curator and creative partner with institutions including Lincoln Center, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Brevard Music festival, and as Resident Artist for Classical KDFC in San Francisco and Classical KUSC in Los Angeles.

Her uniquely insightful approach to concept and curation have created an extensive and acclaimed series of chart-topping recordings on the Pentatone, Sony Masterworks and Sono Luminus labels, including her latest release Rhapsody in Blue Reimagined, featured on NPR's Morning Edition, in the Wall Street Journal and Downbeat Magazine; her 2023 release Love at Last, which was featured as an NPR Tiny Desk Concert,

and *America Again*, selected by NPR as one of "10 Albums that Saved 2016" and called "a balm for a country riven by disunion" by the Boston Globe.

Lara is the creator and host of *AMPLIFY with Lara Downes*, an NPR Music series now launching its fourth season, featuring intimate, profoundly personal video conversations with visionary Black artists and cultural leaders who are shaping our creative present and future. She is the creator and curator of *Rising Sun Music*, a recording series that shines light on the music and histories of Black composers over the past 200 years. Her work has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Sphinx Venture Fund, and the Center for Cultural Innovation, among others.

Lara's fierce commitment to activism and advocacy has led to her role as an Artist Ambassador for Headcount, a non-partisan organization that uses the power of music to register voters and promote participation in democracy.

Miró Quartet is represented by MKI Artists;
One Lawson Lane, Suite 320, Burlington, VT 05401
<http://www.americanstringquartet.com/>

Lara Downes is represented by Cadenza Artists - Info@cadenzaartists.com

Upcoming Events

Skidmore in Concert: Chorus
Thursday, April 26, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
String Ensembles
Friday, April 26, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Global Music Showcase
Saturday, April 27, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Concert Band
Sunday, April 28, 1:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Guitar Ensemble
Sunday, April 28, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Orchestra
Monday, April 29, 7:00pm