



Western
Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

**ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE
NEW ORFORD STRING QUARTET
PIZZICATO!**

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

6 p.m., von Kuster Hall

Jonathan Crow, *violin*

Andrew Wan, *violin*

Sharon Wei, *viola*

Brian Manker, *cello*

Divertimento in D major KV 136

Allegro

Andante

Presto

W. A. Mozart

(1756-1791)

Violin 1

Andrew Wan / Yanet Campbell

Jerry Ma / Jing Tao

Jillian Yang / Jacqueline Huang

Violin 2

Jonathan Crow / Zona Chen

Julian Trippel / Addy Sanchez

Erin Van Dyke / Frank Su

Viola

Sharon Wei / Ellis Yuen-Rapati

Miriam Elsayi / Meika Sonntag

Cello

Brian Manker / Eve Thompson

Nic Lago / Kara Lim

Bass

Iris Leck

Blueprint

Caroline Shaw

(b. 1982)

Commedia dell'arte

Innamorti

Colombina

Ghost 1

Zanni

Ana Sokolović

(b. 1968)

Intermission

String Quartet No. 10 in E flat major Op. 74

Poco Adagio - Allegro

Adagio ma non troppo

Presto

Allegretto con variazioni

L. v. Beethoven

(1770-1827)

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Tonight, the New Orford String Quartet presents the chamber music of two contemporary female composers, paired with historical gems of the Western art music canon. Although composed centuries apart, the four string compositions are united by their exceptional use of the *pizzicato* string technique. Pizzicato directs string players to pluck the strings with the pads of their fingers, in contrast to *arco*, which directs players to produce sounds by bowing.

Caroline Shaw, multifaceted and prize-winning musician, performs as a violinist and vocalist, and has expertise in producing and composing. Her work *Blueprint* was commissioned for the Aizuri Quartet. Shaw notes that her composition alludes to both the woodblock printing technique architectural blueprints for structural design, and explains that the work originated as a harmonic reduction or “blueprint” for Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 18, No. 6. *Blueprint* features pizzicato to a significant degree. At times, the pizzicato weaves seamlessly in and out of a predominantly *arco* texture; elsewhere, the musical lines played with the bow are abruptly punctuated by simultaneous plucking in all four parts. Shaw writes that “chamber music is ultimately about conversation without words. We talk to each other with our dynamics and articulations, and we try to give voice to the composers whose music has inspired us to gather in the same room and play music. *Blueprint* is also a conversation—with Beethoven, with Haydn (his teacher and the “father” of the string quartet) . . .”

While Belgrade-born **Ana Sokolović** is based in Montreal, she speaks of her music as “grounded in the rhythmic universe of Balkan folkore . . . coloured with playful images and inspired by differing artistic disciplines,” particularly those for the stage. Her *Commedia dell’arte* draws on the 16th and 17th century Italian theatre tradition of the same name which utilized stock characters and plots that make fun of scandalous social situations. The four movements selected for this performance are inspired by particular character types: Innamorati, Colombina, Ghost 1, and Zanni. Although pizzicato technique is featured prominently in Innamorati (a pair of lovers) and Zanni (the trickster servant), it is far from the only specialized string technique on display in tonight’s program. Keep an eye and ear out for sounds produced by slapping, scratching, knocking, sliding!

According to celebrated American violinist Sonya Monosoff, pizzicato technique can be traced back as early as the 17th century, but did not become a regular feature in orchestral repertoire until **Ludwig van Beethoven** put it to use for dramatic purposes. His *String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat Major, Op. 74*, was nicknamed the “Harp” quartet due to its prominent use of pizzicato, resembling the sound of a harp. In the first movement, arpeggiated pizzicato figures are passed from the paired viola and cello to the first and second violins. In the later half of the movement, the cello, viola, and second violin perform scalar arpeggios in pizzicato style, accompanied by sustained notes at first and then rapid improvisatory-like passagework in the first violin. After a lyrical second movement, the energetic scherzo leads directly into a theme and variations finale. This work—glorious music that is by turn spirited, tender, bold, eloquent—is a favourite in the repertoire.

– Notes by Tegan Niziol

NEW ORFORD STRING QUARTET

Four musicians with equally stellar pedigrees formed the New Orford String Quartet with the goal of developing a new model for a touring string quartet. Their concept – to bring four elite orchestral leaders and soloists together on a regular basis over many years to perform chamber music at the highest level – has resulted in a quartet that maintains a remarkably fresh perspective while bringing a palpable sense of joy to each performance. The Toronto Star has described this outcome as “nothing short of electrifying.

Consisting of the concertmasters and principal cellist Montreal, and Toronto Symphonies as well as Western’s Professor of Viola, the New Orford String Quartet has seen astonishing success, giving annual concerts for national CBC broadcast and receiving unanimous critical acclaim, including two Opus Awards for Concert of the Year, and a 2017 JUNO Award for Canada’s top Chamber Music Recording. Recent seasons have featured return engagements in Chicago, Montréal, and Toronto, as well as their New York City debut on Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series.

The original Orford String Quartet gave its first public concert in 1965, and became one of the best-known and most illustrious chamber music ensembles. After more than 2,000 concerts on six continents, the Orford String Quartet gave its last concert in 1991. Two decades later, in July 2009, the New Orford String Quartet took up this mantle, giving its first concert for a sold-out audience at the Orford Arts Centre. The New Orford has since gone on to perform concerts throughout North America and lead residencies at the University of Toronto, Schulich School of Music and Syracuse University. They were Artists-in-Residence at University Club of Toronto and are currently Artists in Residence at Mount Royal University and Western University. They are Artistic Directors of the Prince Edward County Music Festival

The New Orford is dedicated to promoting Canadian works, both new commissions and neglected repertoire from the previous century. New Orford String Quartet projects have included performances of major Canadian string quartets from the 20th century including works by Glenn Gould, Sir Ernest MacMillan, Kelly Marie Murphy, Dinuk Wijeratne, Jacques Hétu, R. Murray Schafer, and Claude Vivier, as well as commissions of new works from composers such as Francois Dompierre, Gary Kulesha, Airat Ichmouratov and Tim Brady. The Quartet thrives on exploring the rich chamber music repertoire; recent collaborations include those with pianists Marc-André Hamelin and Menahem Pressler.

The Quartet regularly tours in the major cities of North America, including Washington, D.C., Toronto, and Los Angeles; at the same time, the members feel strongly about bringing this music to areas that don’t often hear it, and as a result perform frequently in remote rural locations and smaller Canadian communities. This season they will perform in cities including Vancouver, Victoria, Banff, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary, Winnipeg, Brandon, London, Picton, and Toronto.

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