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Mostly Music: Nov. 2, 2003

Mostly Music Staff

Mostly Music

at Northeastern Illinois University

presents

The Fry Street Quartet

Jessica Guideri, *violin*

Rebecca McFaul, *violin*

Russell Fallstad, *viola*

Anne Francis, *cello*

Sunday, November 2, 2003 ▪ 4:00 pm

The Refetoffs

5490 South Shore Drive

Chicago, IL.

Northeastern Illinois University

5500 North St. Louis Avenue

Chicago, Illinois 60625-4699

The Fry Street Quartet

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Rebecca McFaul, violin
Russell Fallstad, viola
Anne Francis, cello

Founded in 1997, the Fry Street Quartet took their name from the little street in Chicago where they were in residence at the time. They were mentored early on by the late Isaac Stern, who invited them to chamber music workshops at the Jerusalem Music Center and Carnegie Hall and chose them to perform their Carnegie Hall debut in his series at Weill Recital Hall in November 2001.

In July 2002 the quartet was sponsored by Carnegie Hall and the U.S. Department of State on a concert tour of the Balkan States, as ambassadors of the Carnegie Fellows Program. They toured with composer J. Mark Scearce's first quartet, "Y2K," which was written for them with a grant from Meet the Composer.

As testimony to the Fry Street's fast ascent in the string quartet world, the group was awarded first prize at the 2000 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition and the 2000 Millennium Grand Prize at the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition. In addition, the quartet was twice the recipient of a fellowship to the Aspen Music Festival's Center for Advanced Quartet Studies.

The Fry Street Quartet keeps a busy national touring schedule with concerts across the country. They have collaborated with some of the foremost musicians of our time, including members of the Cleveland, Mendelssohn and Ying Quartets. Their debut recording of works by Janacek and Beethoven was issued in December 2001.

In May of 2002, the Fry Street Quartet completed their three-year tenure in Chamber Music America's "Rural Residencies" program at Hickory, North Carolina, where they offered a sold-out chamber music series and played over 100 outreach concerts per year. In September 2002 they became the Faculty String Quartet in Residence at Utah State University.

The Fry Street Quartet is represented by **Hunstein Artist Services**.

Program

Quartet in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3 — Beethoven
- Allegro
- Andante con moto
- Allegro
- Presto

String Quartet No. 4 (1994) — Rorem
- I. Minotaur
- II. Child Holding a Dove
- III. Acrobat on a Ball
- IV. Still Life
- V. Seated Harlequin
- VI. Head of a Boy
- VII. Basket of Flowers
- VIII. Self Portrait
- IX. Three Nudes
- X. Death of Harlequin

Intermission

Quartet in g minor, op. 10 (1893) — Debussy
- Animé et très decidé
- Assez vif et bien rythmé
- Andantino, doucement expressif
- Très modéré; Très mouvemente

About the artists

Young American violinist, Jessica Guideri, performs extensively as soloist, chamber and orchestral musician. Since making her Carnegie Hall solo debut at age seventeen with the New York Youth Symphony, she has performed with such orchestras as the Queens and Westchester Symphonies and has been invited several times to appear as soloist with the Symphony Orchestra of Campinas in Brazil.

Ms. Guideri has been heard in recital in Taiwan and Italy and has received the William Kapell Memorial Career Development Award, as well as the performing arts award from the National Alliance for Excellence. She has given several solo recitals throughout the Metropolitan area including Steinway Hall, Lefrak Concert Hall, The Juilliard Theater and Paul Hall at the Juilliard School. Ms. Guideri has served as concertmaster for several orchestras including the Juilliard Orchestra, The New York Youth Symphony, The Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival Orchestra in Germany, The Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra and was formerly a member of the Long Island Philharmonic and the Prometheus Chamber Orchestra.

As a chamber musician, Ms. Guideri has performed to high audience acclaim in Alice Tully Hall, The Banff Music Center, and the Caramoor festival, as well as Merkin and Weill Concert Halls. She has participated in the Taos, Norfolk, Sarasota and Aspen Music Festivals, where she worked with members of the Takacs, Tokyo, Juilliard, Vermeer and Orion String Quartets.

Ms. Guideri received both the Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in violin performance from the Juilliard School, where her teachers included Dorothy Delay, Masao Kawasaki and Joel Smirnoff.

Rebecca McFaul, second violinist of the Fry Street Quartet, began her studies at the age of three with her mother. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree at the Oberlin Conservatory where she studied with Marilyn McDonald, and her Masters of Music degree at Northwestern University, where she studied with with Gerardo Ribeiro. At Northwestern, she was awarded a Civic Orchestra of Chicago Graduate Fellowship while serving as principal second violin. As a founding member of the Fry Street Quartet, she has traveled across the country and abroad to study with artists such as Isaac Stern, Alexander Schneider, Donald Weilerstein, Leon Fleisher, Wu Han and members of the American, Chicago, Cleveland, Emerson, Juilliard, Mendelssohn, Takacs and Vermeer String Quartets.

Ms. McFaul has been an active chamber musician with many groups including the Gabriel Piano Quintet and Corky Siegel's Chamber Blues. While she was with Chamber Blues she toured internationally, recorded on the Gadfly label and enjoyed singing back-ups with blues artist Corky Siegel occasionally. She also performs as a soloist and in recital. Rebecca performs on a 1926 Carl Becker violin.

Violin lessons began for Russell Fallstad at age five and he cultivated an early passion for chamber music, playing both violin and viola with a young quartet called the MacPhail Quartetino. Mr. Fallstad received both his Bachelor and Master degrees in music from Northwestern University as a student of Gerardo Ribeiro and was awarded a Civic Orchestra of Chicago Graduate Fellowship, playing under the baton of renowned artists such as Daniel Barenboim, Sir George Solti, Pierre Boulez and Zubin Mehta. While at Northwestern, Mr. Fallstad and his wife, violinist Rebecca McFaul co-founded the Fry Street Quartet.

Mr. Fallstad has played with many diverse chamber music ensembles, including the Gabriel Piano Quintet (as second violinist), Apollo's Fire (as Baroque violinist and violist) and with a Latin-jazz fusion group called "Macondo Stew" (amplified). Recently, Mr. Fallstad has had the pleasure of collaborating with great artists such as Lynn Harrell, Miriam Fried, the Mendelssohn String Quartet and Donald Weilerstein. A dedicated teacher, Mr. Fallstad has taught at prestigious music schools such as Northwestern University, DePaul University, The Music Institute of Chicago, the Western Springs School of Talent Education and the North Carolina School for the Arts. Mr. Fallstad has recently appeared as soloist with the Western Piedmont Symphony.

Cellist Anne Francis served as assistant to Paul Katz at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University while pursuing her Master of Music degree. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Richard Aaron and Alan Harris. Previous teachers include Bonnie Hampton and Bruce Uchimura. Before joining the Fry Street Quartet, Anne was a prizewinner in the Carmel National Chamber Music Competition, the Darius Milhaud Performance Prize Competition and the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition. She also appeared as guest artist with the Kalamazoo (MI) Bach Festival, the Fontana Summer Music Festival, the Swannanoa (NC) Chamber Music Festival and SummerFest La Jolla and performed as soloist with orchestras in Michigan and at the CIM. She has been a fellow at the Aspen Music Festival and School's Center for Advanced Quartet studies three times and participated in the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Workshop at Carnegie Hall in 1995, 1999 and 2001.

Program Notes

Quartet in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Composed in 1799.
Premiered in 1800 in Vienna.

"He was short, about 5 feet, 4 inches, thickset and broad, with a massive head, a wildly luxuriant crop of hair, protruding teeth, a small rounded nose, and a habit of spitting whenever the notion took him. He was clumsy, and anything he touched was liable to be upset or broken. Badly coordinated, he could never learn to dance, and more often than not managed to cut himself while shaving. He was sullen and suspicious, touchy as a misanthropic cobra, believed that everybody was out to cheat him, had none of the social graces, was forgetful, and was prone to insensate rages." Thus Harold Schonberg described Ludwig van Beethoven, the burly peasant with the unquenchable fire of genius who descended, aged 22, upon Vienna in 1792. Beethoven had been charged by his benefactor in Bonn, Count Waldstein, to go to the Austrian capital and "receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn." He did study for a short time with Haydn, then universally regarded as the greatest living composer, but young Ludwig proved to be a recalcitrant student, and the sessions soon ended, though the two maintained a respectful, if cool, relationship until Haydn's death in 1809.

In a world still largely accustomed to the reserved, genteel musical style of pre-Revolutionary Classicism, Beethoven burst upon the scene like a fiery meteor. The Viennese aristocracy took this young lion to its bosom. Beethoven expected as much. Unlike his predecessors, he would not assume the servant's position traditionally accorded to a musician, refusing, for example, not only to eat in the kitchen, but becoming outspokenly hostile if he was not seated next to the master of the house at table. The more enlightened nobility, to its credit, recognized the genius of this gruff Rhinelander, and encouraged his work. Shortly after his arrival, for example, Prince Lichnowsky provided Beethoven with living quarters, treating him more like a son than a guest. Lichnowsky even instructed the servants to answer the musician's call before his own should both ring at the same time. In large part, such gestures provided for Beethoven's support during his early Viennese years. For most of the first decade after he arrived, Beethoven made some effort to follow the prevailing fashion in the sophisticated city, but, though he outfitted himself with good boots, a proper coat and the necessary accouterments, and enjoyed the society of Vienna's best houses, there never ceased to roil within him the untamed energy of creativity. It was inevitably only a matter of time before the fancy clothes were discarded, as a bear would shred a flimsy paper bag.

The year of the completion of the six Op. 18 Quartets — 1800 — was an important time in Beethoven's development. He had achieved a success good enough to write to his old friend Franz Wegeler in Bonn, "My compositions bring me in a good deal, and may I say that I am offered more commissions than it is possible for me to carry out. Moreover, for every composition I can count on six or seven publishers and even more, if I want them. People no longer come to an arrangement with me. I state my price, and they pay." At the time of this gratifying recognition of his talents, however, the first signs of his fateful deafness appeared, and he began the titanic struggle that became one of the gravitational poles of his life. Within two years, driven from the social contact on which he had flourished by the fear of discovery of his malady, he penned the Heiligenstadt Testament, his *cri de cœur* against this wicked trick of the gods. These first Quartets stand on the brink of this great crisis in Beethoven's life.

The string quartet, perfected by Haydn, was the favorite form of musical entertainment in the salons of Vienna at the turn of the 19th century. As early as 1795, Count Anton Georg Apponyi had suggested to Beethoven that he undertake some works in the form, but the proposal did not bear fruit until three years later, when the Op. 18 set was begun. In 1798, Beethoven was closely associated with the noted composer and theorist Emanuel Alois Förster, perhaps as a student. (Beethoven later referred to him as his "old master.") Förster was one of the era's foremost composers of string quartets, and his influence may have inspired Beethoven to undertake his first works in the genre. Beethoven, at that time of his life still determined to impress the aristocracy, probably wished to have his name attached to the most elegant musical form of the day. At any rate, the Quartets were begun in mid-1798 (though some sketches apparently date back to the early 1790s), mostly composed the following year, and completed in 1800. They were first played by the ensemble of Ignaz Schuppanzigh either (reports differ) in the home of Förster or in the Viennese palace of Prince Karl Lobkowitz, to whom they were dedicated upon their publication in 1801. Lobkowitz was so pleased with the Quartets that he pledged Beethoven an annual stipend of 600 gulden. With their respectful renewal of the Classical style and technique of Haydn, the Quartets enjoyed a good (though, as was always the case with Beethoven's works when they were new, not unanimous) success, and were frequently heard during the composer's lifetime. Looking back on Op. 18 in 1811, a critic for the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* wrote, "In them the loveliest melodies appeal to the feelings, and the unity, the supreme simplicity, the particular and firmly sustained character in each individual piece making up those Quartets raise them to the level of masterworks, and join Beethoven's name with the revered names of Haydn and Mozart."

The 58 pages of Beethoven's sketchbooks for 1798 which are dedicated to the D major Quartet (Op. 18, No. 3) show the piece to have been in a largely finished state by that time, indicating that most of the original compositional work had

been done at an earlier time and thus making this Quartet Beethoven's earliest mature example of the genre. Though the Classical influence of Mozart and Haydn is pervasive throughout the work, the music is indelibly stamped with the personality of its young creator. The first movement, for example, opens with a melodic inspiration in the first violin whose careful balance and lyricism are indebted to Beethoven's forebears, yet whose harmonically unsettled initial gesture — an arching leap of a seventh — and jabbing dynamic contrasts point to the encroaching spirit of Romanticism. The violins in tandem announce the complementary theme, composed of a few brief, snapping motives accompanied by cascading scales in the cello. The development section is largely concerned with ingenious manipulations of the long-note motive from the main theme. The *Andante*, a full sonata form grown from a theme initiated in the opening measures by the second violin, is extended to a length seldom found in earlier Viennese quartets, and indicates a shift of expressive weight to the slow movement that was to become one of the significant characteristics of Beethoven's greatest masterworks. The third movement stands in the usual place of the minuet, but in its general demeanor and harmonic quirkiness (including a minor-mode excursion for the central Trio) it acquires an individuality not always associated with the old courtly dance form. The finale is a quicksilver sonata-form movement which achieves an admirable blend of showy ensemble virtuosity and light-hearted *joie de vivre*.

String Quartet No. 4 (1994)
Ned Rorem (1923-)

A prolific writer, composer and outspoken critic of the musical scene, Ned Rorem was born in Indiana to Quaker parents. He studied at Northwestern University, The American Conservatory, The Curtis Institute and the Juilliard School and received a Pulitzer Prize in 1976.

Rorem's musical output is prodigious: more than 400 art songs, six operas, three symphonies, three piano concertos, and dozens of works for keyboard, chorus and chamber groups.

He describes his Fourth String Quartet: "Yes. Picasso's paintings did impel this suite, yet to subtitle it "Picasso" seems nervy and irrelevant (nervy, in hitching my wagon to the great man's star; irrelevant, in that no music irrefutably depicts other than itself). But yes again, composers do often seek to conjoin their art with another art – with the poetry of song, for instance, and more exceptionally with the visual, by representing through sound their special Pictures at an Exhibition. "Most of the ten "pictures" are related thematically, and all are related – I pray – theatrically. The central piece is Self Portrait, which bears the interpretive suggestion: "with horror and indifference". While feeding solely off the given material, this movement means unequivocally to portray the schizoid temper of any artist – or, indeed, any human – whose hot urge for self-expression is met by the cold self-protection of his alter ego. Thus is it too, though more hidden and serene, in the nine other sections".

Notes by Rhys Samuel

A featured guest of the *Chicago Humanities Festival*, Ned Rorem will be interviewed on stage by music critic John von Rhein. The composer looks back on a life well-lived and considers his legacy, both musical and literary.

Sunday November 9, 2003
2:00 pm (free but ticket required) Chicago-based CUBE performs Rorem's Winter Pages; a quintet in 12 movements for violin, clarinet, bassoon, cello, and piano. Co-sponsored by Mostly Music at NEIU.
(Movement Five of this piece is titled *Dorchester Avenue* (Chicago) and the composer writes "Dorchester Ave., near 57th Street was home between the crucial ages of 7 and 17, and where I learned the piano.")

3:00 to 4:00 PM - Interview with Ned Rorem; Admission $5.

Where: Northwestern University School of Law: Chicago Campus,
Thorne Auditorium 375 E. Chicago Ave. / CHF Ticket Office (312)494-9509

Quartet in G minor, Op. 10
Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Composed in 1893.
Premiered on December 29, 1893 in Paris by the Ysaÿe Quartet.

By 1893, when he turned thirty, Claude Debussy had acquired a modest reputation in Paris as the composer of a number of songs, piano pieces and miscellaneous vocal and orchestral works, as a winner of the *Prix de Rome*, and as a bohemian musician much under the sway of the Symbolist poets Mallarmé and Regnier. His distinctive creative personality had already been demonstrated to the city's progressive circle of music lovers by the *Petite Suite*, the *Arabesques* and the *Suite Bergamasque* (from which comes his best-known piece, *Clair de Lune*), but the wider recognition of his genius began when the cantata *La Damoiselle élue* (*"The Blessed Damzel"*) was premiered at a concert of the Société Nationale on April 8, 1893. By that time, he had already begun sketching out an opera based on Maeterlinck's newly published drama *Pelléas et Mélisande*, a project that would take him a decade to complete, and written much of a ballet score inspired by Mallarmé's voluptuous poem *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (*"The Afternoon of a Faun"*). The other major endeavor of 1893 was a String Quartet, a curious undertaking, perhaps, for a composer of Debussy's decidedly impressionistic proclivities, but one which he apparently felt necessary to show that he could handle the Classical forms which had occupied much of his long study at the Conservatoire and as a *Prix de Rome* recipient — it is indicative in this regard that the Quartet is the only one of his works to which he formally assigned an opus number.

Though the Quartet is rich in melody and harmony, and evidences Debussy's ability to elicit glowing sonorities from his ensemble, it shows the young composer's discomfort in handling the form, relying on an episodic construction rather than on a motivically developed one. He threaded the whole together by the cyclical technique (i.e., the appearance of a theme in more than one movement) favored by César Franck, whose own String Quartet had appeared as recently as 1890. When his friend and colleague Ernest Chausson pointed out the deficiencies in Classical structure, Debussy promised to write him another quartet "with more dignity of form," but he never fulfilled the pledge. (Indeed, he wrote no more chamber music until the three sonatas that he composed at the end of his life.) The composition drew mixed reactions when it was premiered by the Quartet of the celebrated violinist Eugène Ysaÿe at a concert of the Société Nationale on December 29, 1893. One critic accused its exotic sonorities, notably the pervasive use of *pizzicato*, of being "strange and bizarre, with too many echoes of the streets of Cairo and the gamelan," the Balinese percussion ensemble that had overwhelmed Debussy when he first heard it at the Paris International Exposition of 1889. The noted composer Paul Dukas, however, hailed Debussy as "one of the most gifted and original artists of the young generation of musicians ... a lyricist in the full sense of the term." When Debussy submitted the score to his then-friend Maurice Ravel (the fastidious Ravel and the profligate Debussy later had a falling out, in some measure prompted by the public disputes over the relative merits of their respective String Quartets), he was advised, "In the name of the gods of music and of my own, do not touch a thing you have written in your Quartet." Opinion soon sided with Dukas and Ravel, and the Quartet was quickly embraced by chamber players following its publication by Durand in 1894; it has remained one of the most popular modern works in the repertory.

The Quartet opens with a distinctive, modally inflected motive (marked by a quick, three-note ornamental cell) that serves both as the melodic germ from which the first movement grows and as the motto theme that returns in later movements to unify the work's overall structure. The frequent recurrences of the motto throughout the opening movement, usually in transformations of sonority, harmony and mood, are separated by episodes of mildly contrasting character. The second movement is a free adaptation of the form and manner of a scherzo. The opening section posits a repetitive viola ostinato built from the motto theme around which swirl sparkling *pizzicato* effects for the other instruments. The center of the movement is occupied by a rhythmically augmented version of the motto theme first given by the violin above a rustling accompaniment. A modified return of the opening section rounds out the movement. The *Andantino*, sensual, lyrical, permeated with the sweet sensations of early spring, evokes a similar expressive and stylistic world to the one that Debussy conjured in the contemporaneous *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun."* The two-part introduction to the finale comprises a slow-tempo transformation of the motto and a quicker mock-fugal passage derived from the scherzo theme. The viola initiates the main part of the movement with a rapid motive that is tightly restricted in range. This phrase and further transformations of the motto theme occupy the remainder of the movement, which ends with a sun-bright flourish.

UPCOMING CONCERTS

Hyde Park Series

January 11, 2004 at 4:00 pm
Scandalous Strings
Vienna Waltz Ensemble
Location: The Quadrangle Club 1155 E. 57th Street

February 1, 2004 at 4:00 pm
La Belle Trio
Patrice Michaels, soprano, Lyon Leifer, flute
and Elizabeth Buccheri, piano
Location: Hyde Park residence

May 2, 2004 at 4:00 pm
The Carl Turner Young Award Winners' Concert
Pianists, Christina and Michelle Naughton, winners of the
Steinway Society of Chicago Competition
Location: Hyde Park residence

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