

University of Maryland School of Music Presents

# TRADITIONS

Fellowship Ensemble: Thalea String Quartet



November 13, 2020 . 5PM  
GILDENHORN RECITAL HALL  
*at The Clarice*



SCHOOL OF  
MUSIC

University of Maryland School of Music Presents

## TRADITIONS

### Fellowship Ensemble: Thalea String Quartet

Christopher Whitley, *violin*

Kumiko Sakamoto, *violin*

Luis Bellorín, *viola*

Titilayo Ayangade, *cello*

String Quartet Op. 20 No. 4 (1772) ..... Joseph Haydn

(1732-1809)

- I. Allegro di molto
- II. Un poco adagio affettuoso
- III. Allegretto alla zingarese
- IV. Presto scherzando

*Sivunittinni* (2015) ..... Tanya Tagaq

(1975-)

### INTERMISSION

*Five Folksongs in Counterpoint* (1951) ..... Florence B. Price

(1887-1953)

- I. Calvary
- II. Oh My Darlin' Clementine
- III. Drink to Me with Thine Own Eyes
- IV. Shortnin' Bread
- V. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

*"Thalea never failed to deliver a stirring performance"*

- Calgary Herald

The **Thalea String Quartet** is dedicated to bringing timeless music to audiences from all walks of life. From living rooms to concert stages around the world, the Thalea String Quartet aims to connect with audiences on a musical, emotional and personal level, from first time listeners to string quartet aficionados. They are devoted to building a new and diverse audience for chamber music through innovative programming and community engagement.

Formed in 2014 at the Zephyr International Chamber Music Festival in Courmayeur, Italy, the Thalea String Quartet has been praised for their "vibrant performance" and "sincere expressivity" (SF Classical Voice). The quartet has performed recitals across Europe, China, the United States and Canada, and has appeared at the Kennedy Center, Massey Hall and Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall. They were the first quartet-in-residence at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music from 2015-17. They served as the Young Professional String Quartet at the Butler School of Music, where they were mentored by the highly acclaimed Miró Quartet. They also served as associated artists at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Waterloo, Belgium, where they were mentored by the Artemis Quartet. Thalea currently serves as the Graduate Fellowship String Quartet at the University of Maryland School of Music. The Thalea String Quartet were top prize winners at both the 2018 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and the 2018 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition. They were named the Ernst Stiefel Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts for the 2019-20 season.

The Thalea String Quartet prides itself on the diversity of its collaborations. They have performed Mendelssohn's Octet in its original manuscript form with the award-winning Borromeo Quartet and shared the stage with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw in performances of works for voice and string quartet. They have performed alongside Geoff Nuttall of the St. Lawrence String Quartet, violist Jodi Levitz and composer Mason Bates. They were invited to participate in the 2017 KRONOS Festival, where they performed works from the Kronos

Quartet’s “50 for the Future” project. Committed to collaborating with artists of all backgrounds, the Thalea String Quartet has collaborated with San Francisco-based dance theatre company the Joe Goode Performance Group at the Yerba Buena Center and appeared with acclaimed Canadian band BADBADNOTGOOD at the iconic Massey Hall. Most recently, the quartet has enjoyed a rich collaboration with acclaimed pianist Michelle Cann with whom they have toured a brand new arrangement of Florence Price’s Piano Concerto.

The members of the Thalea String Quartet are dedicated educators. They bring their unwavering commitment to teaching and community engagement to their frequent educational and community performances around the world. Additionally, the quartet has built a robust virtual education portfolio that allows them to regularly visit students from pre-school to post secondary institutions.

Christopher Whitley (violin) is originally from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Kumiko Sakamoto (violin) is from Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, Luis Bellorín (viola) is from Naperville, Illinois, and Titilayo Ayangade (cello) is from Cincinnati, Ohio. Christopher performs on the 1700 “Taft” Stradivari, generously on loan by the Canada Council for the Arts Musical Instrument Bank.

Learn more about the Thalea String Quartet on the [School of Music website](#).

## Joseph Haydn: String Quartet Op. 20, No. 4

Joseph Haydn’s collection of Op. 20 quartets represent an early milestone in the history of the string quartet genre. By the early 1770s, having published over twenty works for string quartet, Haydn had already proved himself to be a pioneer of the form. But it was the six Op. 20 quartets, published in 1772, that truly cemented Haydn in the history books as the “Father of the String Quartet.” With the Op. 20 quartets, “Papa” Haydn broke all of the rules—tearing up the “rulebook” that he himself had established over the previous decade. Each of the six quartets featured structural innovation, emotional depth and compositional complexity never before seen in chamber music. No longer was the first violinist the star of the show! The set of six quartets featured a new equality of voices that has inspired composers to this very day. Haydn’s brilliance can be seen as planting the seed for the future works of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Bartók.

The D major quartet, No. 4, is perhaps the most popular quartet in the set. Filled with joy, beauty and folksy flair, the piece also features dramatic silences, extreme dynamic ranges and a thrilling inventiveness. The first movement offers a soft, gentle theme beset by uncertainty. Each effort to begin is interrupted by silence. Outbursts in the first violin contrast with the quiet piano dynamics of the main theme, which develops into great moments of intensity and virtuosity from each member of the quartet. The second movement, a theme and variation, begins with a heart-wrenching theme full of yearning dissonance. Haydn’s genius is on display as he masterfully manipulates and transforms the theme material over a set of three variations, before returning to the theme in an emotionally expansive and operatic conclusion. After the high drama of the second movement it’s time to have a little fun! Inspired by the Roma musicians Haydn encountered in Hungary, the Minuet and Trio movement is titled “alla zingarese” or in the “Gypsy” style. Rambunctious and free-spirited, the first section of the movement is mirrored by an elegant and refined cello solo in the trio section. The final movement again takes inspiration from folk music, with its sprightly virtuosity and high energy, before disappearing like a puff of smoke.

### Tanya Tagaq (arr. Jacob Garchik): *Sivunittinni*

*Sivunittinni* is the product of a collaboration between genre-defying Inuk vocalist Tanya Tagaq and intrepid new music pioneers the Kronos Quartet. Transcribed from a series of vocal recordings, the piece challenges each member of the ensemble to recreate the richly textured and powerfully expressive timbres of Inuit throat singing.

From Tagaq:

“*Sivunittinni*, or ‘the future ones,’ comes from a part of a poem I wrote for my album, and is the perfect title for this piece. My hope is to bring a little bit of the land to future musicians through this piece. There’s a disconnect in the human condition, a disconnect from nature, and it has caused a great deal of social anxiety and fear, as well as a lack of true meaning of health, and a lack of a relationship with what life is, so maybe this piece can be a little bit of a wake-up.”

The piece makes use of a variety of non-conventional bow techniques to represent highly specific vocalizations like breathing, growling and gasping. The instrumentalists trace circles with their bows to evoke “bubbling,” “percolating” and feelings of anxiety. In a climactic moment, the quartet is asked to create the sound of “sawing through bone.” With *Sivunittinni*, Tagaq creates a powerful and impactful work, with dramatic and gripping instrumental techniques seldom heard from a classical string quartet.

This piece was commissioned for Fifty for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire, a project of the Kronos Performing Arts Association. The score and parts are available for free online. [kronosquartet.org](http://kronosquartet.org)

### Florence B. Price: *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint*

The music of Florence B. Price, a composer woefully underappreciated in her time, has received a welcome surge of interest over the past half-decade. A pioneering African American female composer who worked in the first half of the 20th century, Price composed hundreds of pieces, graduated with honors from an esteemed American conservatory and was the first African American woman to have a symphony performed by a major American symphony orchestra. All this while facing discrimination, the threat of racist violence and prejudice from audiences and performers alike.

None of her incredible accomplishments saved her music from dwindling into obscurity for nearly fifty years. When a trove of her unpublished works were discovered in Price’s abandoned former home, musicologists re-discovered the gold mine that is Price’s body of work. Price’s music combines the most revered traditions of Western classical music with the rich tradition of African-American folk music, spirituals and ragtime, to create music that is engaging, complex and deeply moving.

Price’s *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint* perfectly demonstrates the composer’s mastery of European and American musical traditions. Each movement features a classic American tune or spiritual, which Price transforms with counterpoint, a technique mastered by J.S. Bach that involves layering of individual musical lines, creating a highly intricate musical texture. The first movement, “Calvary,” is the most complex and dissonant of the set, taking the listener on an expansive musical journey. “Clementine” takes a classic folk song from sweet, to rambunctious, to celebratory in a matter of minutes. “Drink to Me With Thine Own Eyes,” originally an English hymn, is soft and heartfelt, with hints of the music of French Impressionist composers Debussy and Ravel. “Shortnin’ Bread” bursts on the stage with a delightful viola solo and rushes to a close before the final and perhaps most soulful movement, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” Beginning with a mournful cello solo, the well known tune takes on many different guises before ending the piece with climactic and celebratory fireworks.

# UMD SCHOOL OF MUSIC PERFORMANCES

## BACH CANTATA SERIES: BWV 72

THU, NOV 19 • 1:30PM

### WATCH ON **VIMEO**

Written for the third Sunday after Epiphany, *Alles nur nach Gottes Willen* (Everything according to God's will alone), BWV 72, was first performed on Sunday, January 27, 1726. This particular cantata was written early in Bach's tenure at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, and is structured in six movements—a fiery opening chorus, recitative and aria for alto, recitative for bass, aria for soprano and, of course, the obligatory closing chorale. The text, written by Salomon Franck—a frequent collaborator of Bach—celebrates God's plan for the faithful. It urges Christians to trust in Jesus Christ, as is tradition when observing Epiphany, the feast which commemorates, among other things, the visit of the Three Magi to Christ.

## STUDENT DEGREE RECITALS

ONGOING

### WATCH ON **VIMEO**

Although guests are not able to come to the building, many student degree recitals are being livestreamed this year. Check out The Clarice's Vimeo channel to watch recent and upcoming student degree recital livestreams. Please note that only the streams that the students have chosen to make publicly available will be listed.

Check the School of Music [calendar](#) often to find additional events and performances as they are added.

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