

the PROGRAM1
JULY*Saturday*

8 PM

BRENTANO STRING QUARTETMark Steinberg, *violin*Serena Canin, *violin*Misha Amory, *viola*Nina Lee, *cello**Pre-concert talk with Dr. William Matthews, 7 PM**OH GESUALDO, DIVINE TORMENTOR* (1611/2004)**Bruce Adolphe (b. 1955)**Based on five Madrigals from *Book VI* (1611)

by Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613)

Deh, come invan sospiro

Beltà, poi che t'assenti

Resta di darmi noia

Già piansi nel dolore

Moro, lasso, al mio duolo

FROM THE FIFTH BOOK FOR STRING QUARTET (2011)**Stephen Hartke (b. 1951)**

:: INTERMISSION ::

STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR, OP. 59, NO. 1 (1806)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Allegro

Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando

Adagio molto e mesto

Thème russe: Allegro

GLOVSKY
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Notes
ON THE
PROGRAM

BY
Sandra Hyslop



*Gesualdo: Duke of Venosa
(1566-1613)*



Gesualdo's family estate at Venosa, near Naples, where he sequestered himself in comfort for the last decade of his troubled life. The "troubles" included—but were not limited to—the fact that he murdered his first wife and her lover, abused his virtuous second wife, and exhibited many other violent behaviors. He was widely known in his time as "il musical macellaio di Venosa" [the musical butcher of Venosa]. Igor Stravinsky, in a fit of understatement, described Gesualdo as "this great if disequibrated composer."

OH GESUALDO, DIVINE TORMENTOR

Bruce Adolphe (b. New York City, May 31, 1955)

Based on five Madrigals from *Book VI* (1611) by Carlo Gesualdo (b. Venosa, Italy, March 8, 1566; d. Gesualdo, Campania, Italy, September 8, 1613)

Composed 1611, arranged for string quartet 2004; 25 minutes

Gesualdo's reputation as a daring and adventurous composer rests largely on the six books of five-part madrigals that he composed during the years 1594-1611. In 1590 he had murdered his wife and her lover, a crime for which he was not charged, despite gruesome evidence of his guilt. For the next five years he continued to work and even acquired a second wife, finally retreating with her to his ancestral estate in the South of Italy. Living in sequestered comfort, he maintained a private consort of singers and instrumentalists to perform his music.

As a composer Gesualdo was revered by admirers from Monteverdi to Stravinsky for his startling harmonies and ingenious text-painting. For the past 400 years, his methods and styles have served as models for many other composers.

Under a commission from the Brentano String Quartet, the American composer Bruce Adolphe created *Oh Gesualdo, Divine Tormentor* from Gesualdo's vocal madrigals, transcribing and arranging the five-voice pieces into a work for the four instruments of a string quartet. Because text was so important to Gesualdo's Madrigals, the appreciation of Adolphe's transcription can be enhanced by reading the English translation of these exquisite pieces. Even with the loss of the beautiful Italian rhyme scheme, the texts are affecting.

Deh, come invan sospiro

Ah, how I sigh in vain, how I gaze in vain, because, cruel one, you bring joy to all, but to me you bring death alone. Wretched is my fate, that life for me should become death.

Beltà, poi che t'assenti

Beauty, since you are leaving, as you take my heart, take its suffering too. For a suffering heart can feel the pain of dying all too well, but a soul without a heart can feel no pain.

Resta di darmi noia

Cease troubling me, cruel and perfidious thought, for what you want can never be. Joy is dead to me, and no hope is allowed me of ever being happy again.

Già piansi nel dolore

Once I wept with sorrow, now my heart rejoices, because my beloved has said: "I too burn for you." So let my troubles be gone, and my sad tears henceforth be turned to sweet and happy song.

Moro, lasso, al mio duolo

I am dying, alas, of sorrow: and the one who might save me, alas, is killing me and will not help me. O, grievous fate, the one who might save me, alas, is bringing about my death.

(Translations by Susanna Howe, courtesy of Naxos Rights US, 2013)

FROM THE FIFTH BOOK FOR STRING QUARTET

Stephen Hartke (b. Orange, New Jersey, July 6, 1952)

Composed 2011; 6 minutes

The composer Stephen Hartke has written the following commentary about his 2011 composition for the Brentano String Quartet, *From the Fifth Book*:

From the Fifth Book was commissioned by the Brentano String Quartet for their *Fragments Project*, in celebration of their 20th Anniversary Season. The commissioned composers were asked to write a movement for quartet reflecting upon a fragmentary work by some of the most celebrated quartet composers including Mozart, Schubert and Schoenberg. I selected what appears to be a completed first movement to an unfinished quartet by Shostakovich conceived between his 8th and 9th quartets. One of the aspects of the Shostakovich quartets I most admire is that despite their abstract character, with nearly all their movements bearing nothing more than very plain tempo markings, the music almost always communicates a sense of disquiet and emotional preoccupation that far transcends the relative straightforwardness of the thematic content. Further, Shostakovich's structures, while equally plainspoken and rooted in the traditions of the string quartet, have a stream-of-consciousness character that I have chosen to follow in my piece.

It is a curious challenge to be asked to write a fragment in response to a fragment. My title, *From the Fifth Book*, is intended as a suggestion that this piece may, at some point, become the first movement of a complete string quartet entitled *The Fifth Book* (by which I mean my fifth book of madrigals). Or, it may remain, as Shostakovich's piece, a promise of something that never came to be.

—Stephen Hartke



Robert Millard

The composer Stephen Hartke

STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR, OP. 59, NO. 1 (1806)

Ludwig van Beethoven (b. Bonn, December 16, 1770; d. Vienna, March 26, 1827)

Composed 1806; 38 minutes

Late in 1805, Count Andreas Kirillovich Razumovsky (1752-1836), the Russian Ambassador in Vienna, commissioned three new string quartets from Beethoven. Written between May and November 1806, the works were eventually dedicated to the Count. Published as Opus 59, Nos. 1, 2, and 3, they are widely known as the “Razumovsky Quartets.”

The Vienna correspondent of the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, the most important music journal of its day, reported early in 1807 that “three new, very long, and difficult Beethoven quartets...are attracting the attention of all connoisseurs. They are profoundly thought through and admirably worked out, but not to be grasped by all.”

Indeed, Beethoven's new music proved bewildering to musicians and audiences. Even Beethoven's good friend and colleague the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh objected, complaining of the music's difficulty. Carl Czerny reported, “When Schuppanzigh [and his men] first played the Quartet in F, they laughed and were convinced Beethoven was playing a joke and that it was not the quartet that had been promised.” Beethoven—having written the three quartets with the Schuppanzigh Quartet's considerable talents in mind—was apparently



1803 portrait of Beethoven painted by Christian Horneman



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*Portrait of Prince Andrey Razumovsky painted in 1801
From the collection of the Hermitage Museum*

unperturbed. He had composed a difficult work that he had every expectation the Schuppanzigh Quartet would be able to perform. Their non-comprehension was not his problem, for, as he said to Schuppanzigh's colleague the Italian violinist Felix Radicati, he had composed the music "not for you, but for a later age."

The cello launches the F-major Quartet with a self-assured and spacious theme, which the violin immediately takes to a soaring height. (It was not only Schuppanzigh's violin sound for which Beethoven was writing. The cellist of the quartet, Joseph Linke, inspired Beethoven's two sonatas for cello and piano, Op. 102, and it was Linke who would perform in the premieres of many of Beethoven's quartets.) The rich harmonies, additional thematic materials, and contrapuntal inventions speak to Beethoven's mastery of the string quartet conversation. He balances formal structure with an air of spontaneity that sounds very modern.

The second movement's one-note opening theme seemed strange and even amusing to some of the musicians who first encountered it. This pianissimo, pizzicato cello theme sets up a witty and adventurous scherzo, a movement that unfolds with alternating dancing and singing treatments of the repeated note motif.

The profoundly affecting Adagio comprises two beautiful arioso themes introduced, in turn, by the cello and the first violin. From the two themes Beethoven weaves an intricate and delicate fabric, which he ties off with sparkling violin filigree. The Russian Theme of the fourth movement takes over immediately. Beethoven chose a traditional tune from a collection of Russian folk songs—probably as an homage to his patron—and used it as the rollicking principal theme for a sonata-allegro form final movement. It alternates with a contrasting, legato second theme. The Russian folk song makes one last appearance as a slow, soulful melody before the entire quartet ends with a bright flourish.

COMING NEXT

THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2 PM

LECTURE-PERFORMANCE

Stringed Instruments:
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Free, no tickets required.



The Julius Quartet

LECTURERS:

David Hawthorne, *bow maker*
Karl Dennis, *luthier*