

THURSDAY, JULY 6 :: 7:30 PM

A Far Cry

Violin: Alex Fortes, Annie Rabbat, Lilit Hartunian, Nick Tavani,
Jae Cosmos Lee, Adrian Anantawan, Emilie-Anne Gendron,
Max Tan, Ross Snyder

Viola: Caitlin Lynch, Celia Hatton, Rimbo Wong,
Ashe Gordon

Cello: Michael Unterman, Nathaniel Taylor, Mina Kim

Bass: Lizzie Burns, Karl Doty

ARUM DEM FAYER (AROUND THE FIRE) (2020)
Oswaldo Golijov (b. 1960), arr. string orchestra

BANNER FOR SOLO STRING QUARTET AND
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA (2014)
Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

THE GLITTERING WORLD (2022)
Juantio Becenti (b. 1983)
Alex Fortes, *soloist*

:: INTERMISSION ::

STRING QUARTET NO. 12, IN F MAJOR, OP. 96, B. 179
(*AMERICAN*) (1893)
Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), arr. by A Far Cry for string orchestra
Allegro ma non troppo
Lento
Molto vivace
Finale: Vivace ma non troppo

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ARUM DEM FAYER (AROUND THE FIRE)

Oswaldo Golijov (b. La Plata, Argentina, December 5, 1960) arr. String Orchestra
Composed 2020; 6 minutes

For his latest composition for string quartet, Golijov worked with a large whiteboard alongside the piano he composes upon. There he drafted a list of guiding principles for the piece: clarity, line, light, elegance, grace, delight, rhythm, air in the harmonies, counterpoint, make believe (representation) and child wonder. The result evolved into a five-movement quartet titled *Um Día Bom* (A Good Day), depicting “a life from morning to midnight and beyond, but as if told to children.” This was premièred October 7, 2021 in Boston.

“The third movement, *Arum dem Fayer* (Around the Fire),” Golijov says, “is a traditional Yiddish song that also talks about the bliss of being together around a small fire. In my version, the song appears and disappears, as a ghost, in the midst of a slow processional and restrained tears. Schubert’s motif in the slow movement of *Death and the Maiden* [quartet] is in the background throughout the first section. A different manifestation of Death interrupts the processional in a short and furiously baroque appearance that opens the door to three funny and mischievous dance variations on the B section of the Yiddish song. The movement closes with the re-emergence of the opening processional. I wrote this movement in memory of Guillermo Limonic, who loved singing in Yiddish, and died of Covid in the early days of the pandemic.”

“My spiritual home is chamber music, especially string music,” says Argentinean-American composer Oswaldo Golijov, the Festival’s 2018 composer-in-residence. Golijov, a Romanian Jew by birth, but born in Argentina, lived for six years in Israel and for the greater part of his life in Massachusetts. He brings a musical language that is infused with an ever-widening influence from many sources. The ingredients include folk music from many traditions — the Western repertory from many eras, the Judeo-Christian liturgy, tango and other Latin American dance forms — all of which remain in a state of flux in a highly individual musical voice with a meaningful musical message.



Credit: Yonni Golijov

BANNER FOR SOLO STRING QUARTET AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Jessie Montgomery (b. New York, December 8, 1981)
Composed 2014; 8 minutes



Photo Credit: Juyang Chen

New York-based composer, violinist and educator Jessie Montgomery grew up in the city’s Lower East Side in the 1980s and ‘90s. A Juilliard graduate, she feels grounded in the tradition of classical performance: “I feel very connected to European classical music because of the way I have learned how to play the violin.” Still, being a New Yorker by birth and a long-time resident, Montgomery also embraces a wider perspective. “I’m African American, so I think about black people and black music.” With music played around the world, Montgomery is currently composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Jessie Montgomery writes: “*Banner* is a tribute to the 200th anniversary of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, officially declared the American National Anthem in 1814. Scored for solo string quartet and string orchestra, *Banner* is a rhapsody on the theme of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Drawing on musical and historical sources from various world anthems and patriotic songs, I’ve attempted to answer the question: ‘What does an anthem for the 21st century sound like in today’s multi-cultural environment?’

“In my 2009 *Anthem: a tribute to the historical election of Barack Obama* . . . I wove together the theme from *The Star-Spangled Banner* with the commonly named Black National Anthem *Lift Every Voice and*

Sing . . . *Banner* picks up where *Anthem* left off by using a similar backbone source in its middle section but expands further, both in the references, and also in the role-play of the string quartet as the individual voice working both with and against the larger community of the orchestra. The structure is loosely based on traditional marching band form where there are several strains or contrasting sections, preceded by an introduction, and I have drawn on the drum

line chorus as a source for the rhythmic underpinning in the finale. Within the same tradition, I have attempted to evoke the breathing of a large brass choir as it approaches the climax of the ‘trio’ section. A variety of other cultural anthems and American folk songs and popular idioms interact to form various textures in the finale, contributing to a multi-layered fanfare.”

THE GLITTERING WORLD

Juantio Becenti (b. Aneth, UT, Navajo Nation, 1983)
Composed 2022; 16 minutes

Juantio Becenti writes: “*The Glittering World* is based on the mythological narrative of how the Navajo People came to be. According to the Navajo origin story, proto-humans emerged from a genesis-like void (described as little more than mist) and ascended from various mono-colored underworlds. With each migration, these beings became increasingly more complex and ‘more human,’ forced to deal with their own nature as they moved from world to world. Each previous world they survived was destroyed by some facet of their own nature that they had to reconcile with and overcome, or, likewise, also be destroyed. Each world is represented by a single color until these proto-humans, now demi-gods with their accumulated knowledge, emerge into the ‘Glittering World’ or ‘The World of Many Colors.’ These precursors of the ‘Surface Dwelling People’ (Navajo People) were tasked with laying the ceremonial groundwork with which to guide the Navajo People in their pursuit of harmony and beauty in all things in this current world.”

“In *The Glittering World*, I am attempting to highlight the idea of a diminishing world moving into the next by using various musical languages that, while in the moment may seem different, even incompatible, are fundamentally related. Each movement, or ‘world,’ gradually disintegrates into the next with their own various themes. Throughout the piece, works from various composers who have influenced me are quoted – some overtly, and some less so. I have always felt that using musical languages in this manner propels the music forward in ways it otherwise wouldn’t, in essence a reflection of a Glittering World. The ensemble is contrasted by a solo violin which, while not properly pitted against the larger ensemble as in a concerto, does add color and contrast and even commentary, almost like an individual witnessing these various changes.”



Photo Credit: Donovan Quintero, *Navajo Times*

“Writing music is an intuitive process,” says Diné (Navajo) composer Juantio Becenti. “You can study it all you want, but if you don’t intuitively know what works, and what doesn’t, you’re never going to write anything good.” Becenti came to this conclusion after two unproductive semesters of formal instruction. Nevertheless, the need to create was there from the start. “It’s really strange. I just had that desire, almost since I can remember,” Becenti told the *Navajo Times* a decade ago.

The technique to put the inspiration down on paper was kindled from an early age by music theory books from the school library, by after-hours piano practice on the school piano, subscriptions to CD-of-the-month clubs and by much listening while following music scores. Becenti’s first commission, a string quartet, came at age 15 from the Moab Music Festival. Other commissions followed, with performances by Dawn Avery, the St. Petersburg String Quartet, Chatter and Claremont Trio among others. Tonight’s performance is a new commission premièred this past spring by A Far Cry.

STRING QUARTET NO. 12, IN F MAJOR, OP. 96, B. 179 (AMERICAN)

Antonín Dvořák (b. Nelahozeves, Bohemia, September 8, 1841; d. Prague, May 1, 1904);
 arr. by A Far Cry for string orchestra
Composed 1893; 27 minutes

“Why did not Dvořák come to us earlier if he can write such music here in America?” asked the critic of the *New York Daily Herald* after the première of Dvořák’s new F major String Quartet. The work soon acquired the nickname, *American*, and began to be requested by concert promoters everywhere. Boston’s Kneisel Quartet, who gave the première in Boston on New Year’s Day, 1894, repeated the performance 12 days later at Carnegie Hall. Within one year they had given 50 performances. The *American* had already become the most popular of Dvořák’s 14 quartets.



DVOŘÁK AT SPILLVILLE

Postcard marking Dvořák’s 1893 visit to Spillville, Iowa



Dvořák wrote the piece in Spillville, a rural community of Czech immigrants in Iowa, the hometown of the violin student Josef Jan Kovarík whom Dvořák had employed as his secretary. Dvořák, his wife, six children, sister, maid and Kovarík arrived in Spillville on June 5, 1893. What he found was a small settlement of 380 Czechs (the population has risen to 385 in the 2020 census!). These settlers maintained the cultural traditions of the old country and communicated with one another in their native language. Dvořák was happier here than at any other time in his three-year stay in the States as Director of the National Conservatory in New York. Within three days he was hard at work on the new string quartet. His early morning walks through the woods by the Little Turkey River brought the sounds of birdsong – something he had missed in New York. He even incorporated the song of a small red bird with scarlet wings (a scarlet tanager) into the third movement of the new quartet.

Dvořák sketched the quartet in just three days and wrote it out fully in another 12. Always a quick worker when inspiration was running high, Dvořák began work on a string quintet three days later and completed the work by the beginning of August. It, too, is sometimes referred to as the *American*. “The influence of America must be felt by everyone who has any ‘nose’ at all,” Dvořák wrote during his summer in Spillville. In the opening movement of the quartet, listeners hear everything from the melancholy grandeur of the broad plains to the poignancy of plantation songs. The slow movement may combine the intensity of Dvořák’s homesickness with the deep emotion of the spirituals he heard sung by his New York student Henry Burleigh. In the quiet, chorale-like theme in the finale, there are said to be echoes of the little organ that Dvořák used to play in the Spillville church. Above all, though, it’s the contentedness and happiness of being in the countryside among friends that seems to be reflected in the music of the *American*’ quartet.

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