MODfest 2021
Honorary Adene and Richard Wilson Concert

Attacca Quartet

Innovative Textures:
Music of Flying Lotus, Rogerson, and Shaw

Saturday, February 6, 2021
7:00 PM

Recorded at the Bardavon 1869 Opera House
on Friday, January 29, 2021
The Honorary Adene and Richard Wilson Concert
is presented as part of

MODfest 2021

Radical Imagination

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The concert is supported by the
Helen Forster Novy 1928 Fund
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PROGRAM

Clock Catcher
Remind U
Pilgrim Side Eye

Flying Lotus (b. 1983)
Arranged by Nathan Schram

String Quartet No. 3
  I. Mov’t I
  II. Lullaby
  III. Interlude
  IV. Prisoners

Chris Rogerson
(b. 1988)

Three Essays
  First Essay: Nimrod
  Second Essay: Echo
  Third Essay: Ruby

Caroline Shaw
(b. 1982)

Live Question & Answer Session to follow
Moderated by Yves Dharamraj
While traveling in Algeria, my host, Rostom invited a few of his friends who lived nearby in Beni Isguen, the gateway to the vast Sahara. At one point, one of his friends said to me almost casually, “You are lucky to travel. We are prisoners here. We can’t go anywhere.” This was a striking and sobering moment and a reminder that many, many people around the world either do not have the means or are simply unable to leave their country of birth even if they desperately wanted to. Rostom and his friends proceeded to describe in detail for me the perils of leaving Algeria for Europe—how difficult the crossing of the Mediterranean is, and so on. The first movement has a nervous energy. The second movement is a short lullaby: perhaps hope that those who want a new place to live may find a peaceful place to sleep. Finally, after a short dream-like intermezzo, the last movement, Prisoners, is a simple but stern movement, and often the voices in the quartet struggle to break free from one another. - Rogerson

This commission of Chris Rogerson’s String Quartet No. 3 has been made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund.
I fell in love with playing string quartets when I was about 10, and it’s been a love and obsession ever since. It’s an amazing way to converse musically with others, and you can really get a sense of someone’s personality through reading a quartet with them for the first time. I keep coming back to string quartets – despite the vast sonic possibilities now in the 21st century – because of the compactness and efficiency of it, and for the dialogue one can have with past quartet repertoire, both the hits and the hidden gems. One of the joys of writing is designing, destroying, and solving the puzzles of the language. It sometimes feels like designing my own game environment and then solving the problems that crop up.

The First Essay (“Nimrod”) began as a simple exercise in translating the lilt and rhythm of one of my favorite authors, Marilynne Robinson, into music. She writes beautifully and bravely on notions of the human soul, weaving delicately in and out various subjects (politics, religion, science) in each of her rich, methodical essays. Usually, my music is inspired by visual art, or food, or some odd physics quirk, but this time I wanted to lunge into language, with all its complex splintering and welding of units and patterns! The piece begins with a gentle lilt, like Robinson herself speaking, but soon begins to fray as the familiar harmony unravels into tumbling fragments and unexpected repetitive tunnels. These musical trap doors lead to various worlds that are built from the materials of the beginning, like the odd way dreams can transform one thing into another. I started writing these three “essays” while listening to the calm optimism of an audio recording of Marilynne Robinson reading from her book *The Givenness of Things*, but I completed it during the turmoil of the 2016 US Presidential election. The title of the first essay refers to the legendary biblical figure Nimrod, who
oversaw the construction of the Tower of Babel – a city designed to be tall enough to reach heaven but which resulted in the confusion and scattering of language. This image of chaos and fragmentation, but also of extraordinary creative energy, may serve as a framework for listening to these three musical essays. The Second Essay (“Echo”), is a stylistic contrast to the first and third, in the spirit of a typical ‘slow movement’ nested between two quick ones. The title touches on a number of references: the concept of the ‘echo chamber’ that social media fosters in our political discourse; the ‘echo’ function in the Hypertext Preprocessor (PHP) programming language; and of course the effect of an echo. The Third Essay (“Ruby”), returns to the fragmentation and angularity that was introduced in the first essay but attempts to tame it into some kind of logical structure. The title refers both to the programming language Ruby (developed in Japan in the mid-1990s) as well the simple beauty of the gem stone for which the language was named. It’s more a point of inspiration than a strict system of generating material. - Shaw
BIOGRAPHY

Grammy award-winning Attacca Quartet, as described by *The Nation*, “lives in the present aesthetically, without rejecting the virtues of the musical past”, and it is this dexterity to glide from the music of the 18th through to the 21st century repertoire that places them as one of the most versatile and outstanding ensembles of the moment – a quartet for modern times.

Touring extensively in the United States, recent highlights include Lincoln Center’s White Lights Festival and Miller Theatre, both with Caroline Shaw, Phillips Collection where they have been re-invited this season, Chamber Music Detroit, Red Bank Chamber Music Society, Chamber Music Austin, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Banff String Quartet Festival and other upcoming engagements at Dumbarton Oaks, and Bang on a Can Festival in Brooklyn. Attacca Quartet has also served as the Quartet in Residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Ensemble-in-Residence at the School of Music at Texas State University and Juilliard's Graduate Resident String Quartet, where they premiered the film *Plan and Elevation* (featuring the music of the same name by Caroline Shaw) last year.

Outside of the US, recent performances include their debut in London at Kings Place and in Oslo at the Vertavo Haydn Festival as well as performances at Gothenburg Konserthuset, MITO Septembre Festival in Italy and Sociedad Filarmónica de Bilbao. This season will also see them touring again in South America – including Sala São Paulo in Brazil, Fundacion Beethoven in Chile and Teatro Mayor in Bogota. They will also return to Europe for a tour in Spain and Germany. This season Attacca Quartet has also been exploring new digital formats, taking part and also producing a number of filmed and streamed concerts for Banff Centre International String Quartet Festival, Duke Performances, Austin Chamber Music Center, as well as their digital engagement for Szczecin Philharmonic Orchestra.
Passionate advocates of contemporary repertoire, the Quartet are dedicated to presenting and recording new works. Their latest recording project, *Orange*, for which they received the 2020 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, features string quartet works by Pulitzer-prize winning composer Caroline Shaw. Greatly received and praised by the critics, it has also been featured in *NPR*’s List of ‘25 Best Albums of 2019’ and ‘10 Classical Albums to Usher in the Next Decade’ and in *New York Times*’ list of the ‘25 Best Classical Music Tracks of 2019’ for *Valencia*. It was also shortlisted for the 2020 BBC Music Magazine Awards and several Opus Klassik Awards.

Previous recordings include three critically acclaimed albums with Azica Records, including a disc of Michael Ippolito’s string quartets, and the complete works for string quartet by John Adams. The latter was praised by Steve Smith of *The New York Times* as a “vivacious, compelling set” and described the Attacca Quartet’s playing as “exuberant, funky, and … exactingly nuanced.” The album was the recipient of the 2013 National Federation of Music Clubs Centennial Chamber Music Award. Additional awards for their recordings include both the Arthur Foote Award from the Harvard Musical Association and Lotos Prize in the Arts from the Stecher and Horowitz Foundation.

Other accolades include First Prize at the 7th Osaka International Chamber Music Competition, the Top Prize and Listeners’ Choice award winners for the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, and Grand Prize Winners of the 60th annual Coleman Chamber Ensemble Competition.

The Attacca Quartet has engaged in extensive educational and community outreach projects, serving as guest artists and teaching fellows at the Lincoln Center Institute, the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and Bravo! Vail Valley among others.
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