

presents...

Shenson Chamber Series

CALDER QUARTET

Benjamin Jacobson | Violin
Tereza Stanislav | Violin

Jonathan Moerschel | Viola
Eric Byers | Cello

ANTOINE HUNTER | Choreographer URBAN JAZZ DANCE COMPANY

Saturday, March 16, 2024 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

The Mind's Ear: Motion Beyond Silence

JOHN CAGE

String Quartet in 4 Parts

Quietly Flowing Along—Summer
Slowly Rocking—Autumn
Nearly Stationary—Winter
Quodlibet—Spring

BEETHOVEN

String Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 130

Adagio, ma non troppo; Allegro
Presto
Andante con moto, ma non troppo
Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai
Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo
Grosse Fuge

JULIUS EASTMAN

Joy Boy

**The Shenson Chamber Series is made possible by Fred M. Levin,
The Shenson Foundation.**

Calder Quartet is represented by Colbert Artists
180 Elm Street, Suite I #221, Pittsfield, MA 01201-655 colbertartists.com

Urban Jazz Dance Company
Intersection For The Arts, 1446 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 realurbanjazzdance.com



ARTIST PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presented the Calder Quartet for the third time. They first appeared in March 2005.

Tonight is the SF Performances debut of Antoine Hunter, Urban Jazz Dance Company.

Hailed as “Superb” and “imaginative, skillful creators” by the *New York Times*, the **Calder Quartet** captivates audiences exploring a broad spectrum of repertoire, always striving to fulfill the composer’s vision in their performances. The group’s distinctive artistry is exemplified by a musical curiosity brought to everything they perform and has led them to be called “one of America’s most satisfying—and most enterprising—quartets”. (*Los Angeles Times*)

Winners of the prestigious 2014 Avery Fisher Career Grant, they are widely known for the discovery, commissioning, recording and mentoring of some of today’s best emerging composers. In addition to performances of the complete Beethoven and Bartók quartets, the Calder Quartet’s dedication to commissioning new works has given rise to premieres of dozens of string quartets by established and up-and-coming composers including Peter Eötvös, Andrew Norman, Christopher Rouse, Ted Hearne and Christopher Cerrone. Inspired by innovative American artist Alexander Calder, the Calder Quartet’s desire to bring immediacy and context to the works they perform creates an artfully crafted musical experience.

2023–24 includes the world premiere of *The Great Span*, a piano quintet written by and performed with Timo Andres at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, with addi-

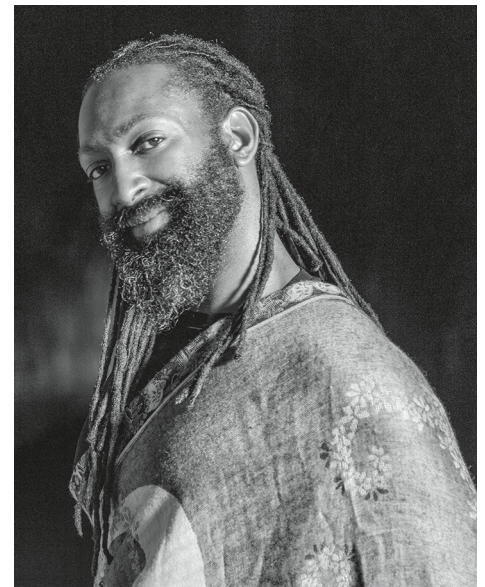
tional dates at San Francisco Performances and Chamber Music Albuquerque. A new production, “In The Mind’s Ear: Motion Beyond Silence” with dancer Antoine Hunter, receives its world premiere at the String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam, followed by Stanford, San Francisco Performances, and the Meany Center for the Arts. The Calder’s season begins with a tour of Alaska and includes a return to Chamber Music Napa Valley. Summer engagements included the Mendocino Music Festival, Festival de Lanaudiere, and performances of Adès at La Jolla Music Society.

Past highlights include Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Disney Hall, Lincoln Center, Metropolitan Museum of Art, multiple performances at Wigmore Hall, Barbican, Salzburg Festival, Donaueschingen Festival, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Tonhalle Zurich, IRCAM Paris, Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie and the Sydney Opera House. They have performed as soloists with the Cleveland Orchestra and LA Philharmonic and have collaborated with musicians such as Thomas Adès, Peter Eötvös, Anders Hillborg, Daniel Bjarncasson, Andrew Norman, Audrey Luna, Johannes Moser, Joshua Bell, Menahem Pressler, Joseph Kalechstein, Paul Neubauer, Iva Bittová and Edgar Meyer.

In 2017, the quartet signed an exclusive, multi-disc record deal with Pentatone Records. Their 2018 debut recording features the music of Beethoven and Swedish composer Anders Hillborg. Previously the quartet has appeared on Signum Classics, BMC records, Bridge Records and E1 recording the quartets of Peter Eötvös with Audrey Luna, Thomas Adès’ chamber music with the composer at the piano, early works of Terry Riley, the chamber music

of Christopher Rouse, Mozart Piano concertos with Anne-Marie McDermott, and Ravel and Mozart quartets.

In 2011 the Calder Quartet launched a non-profit dedicated to furthering its efforts in commissioning, presenting, recording, and education, collaborating with the Getty Museum, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, and the Barbican Centre in London. The Calder Quartet formed at the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music and continued studies at the Colburn Conservatory of Music with Ronald Leonard, and at the Juilliard School, receiving the Artist Diploma in Chamber Music Studies as the Juilliard Graduate Resident String Quartet. The quartet regularly conducts master classes and has taught at the Colburn School, the Oberlin School, the Juilliard School, Cleveland Institute of Music, University of Cincinnati College Conservatory and USC Thornton School of Music.



Founded in 2007 by Deaf dancer and choreographer **Antoine Hunter, Urban Jazz Dance Company’s (UJDC)** mission is to uplift and provide opportunities for Deaf, Hard of hearing (Hoh) and Disabled artists from marginalized backgrounds.

UJDC amplifies visibility and creates opportunities for Deaf artists through programming by being a Deaf-led dance company highlighting Deaf experiences, teaching dance classes to Deaf and hearing dancers, annually producing the Bay Area International Deaf Dance Festival (BAIDDF) and social justice Deaf Louder November home seasons, both platforms for Deaf artists to celebrate their talents through performance/workshops that engage 100+ artists and 1,000+ attendees, Deaf Dance

Festivals in other locations including San Diego, Rochester NY and Turkey, touring famous performances called Deaf's IMPRISONED Internationally, a production exploring Deaf Diaspora and how a Deaf person lives in a "prison within a prison," done multiple school engagements. Hunter also says stay woke like #DeafWoke. Join Antoine Hunter and Zahna Simon with Urban Jazz Dance Company.

PROGRAM NOTES

The Mind's Ear: Motion Beyond Silence

An advocate for the Deaf community, **Antoine Hunter** expresses his experience in a hearing world through dance. In this performance by the imaginative **Calder Quartet**, the audience will experience the Calder's captivating ensemble work alongside Hunter's unique dance interpretation of the music, culminating in a visually and aurally stunning performance piece.

The project takes inspiration from the collaboration between Merce Cunningham and John Cage, as well as the musical interchange between Julius Eastman and Cage. In addition to exploring the hidden dance forms in Beethoven Opus 130, the Calder and Hunter will blend music and motion in Cage's *String Quartet in Four Parts*, and Eastman's evocative work for four musicians *Joy Boy*.

—Jonathan Moerschel, Calder Quartet

String Quartet in Four Parts

JOHN CAGE
(1912–1992)

In 1946 Lincoln Kirstein commissioned a ballet from John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham. It would be Cage's first composition for orchestra, and he composed the score early in 1947. Cage had by this time begun his lifelong fascination with Eastern philosophy, and *The Seasons* is based on the Indian conception of a repetitive cycle of four seasons, each with a specific character: winter (quiescence), spring (creation), summer (preservation), and autumn (destruction). While *The Seasons* precedes Cage's experiments with chance and random composition (the score is notated exactly), this is music remarkable for what it is not: it is without form, without develop-

ment, without high-profile themes, and at times virtually without rhythmic progression. The resulting static quality is clearly intentional: Cage views the seasons as part of a constantly-repeating process, and so the music's non-linear nature reflects his sense of stasis within a repetitive cycle.

Two years later, in 1949, Cage began work on a string quartet, and he returned to the idea of basing its movements on the cycle of the four seasons, but this time in a different order and with a slightly different sense of each season:

Quietly Flowing Along—Summer
Slowly Rocking—Autumn
Nearly Stationary—Winter
Quodlibet—Spring

But Cage's *String Quartet* is in its own way an even more defiant creation than *The Seasons*. Any new quartet is heir to the rich tradition of the form as practiced by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Bartók, Shostakovich, and many others, and Cage rejects this tradition entirely. There is no sonata form here, with its conflict between themes. There is no harmonic foundation to this music, so there can be no harmonic resolution. There is no counterpoint. Cage even refuses to call the four sections "movements"—he chooses instead to call them "parts" because they do not "move." He instructs that the entire piece is to be played without vibrato and with only "minimal weight on the bow." Silence is part of this music, too—Cage seems intentionally to annihilate the notion of progress and resolution. Cage's *String Quartet* may not be an anti-quartet, but it is a re-imagining of what the string quartet might be.

Cage builds each movements on what he called "gamuts": assemblages of notes that provide a context for melody, and the notion of "melody" here is often fragmentary in the extreme. There is a solemn, slow nobility about the opening *Quietly Flowing Along*, an almost consciously archaic sound that eventually fades into silence as the first violin rocks back and forth on the notes D and B. The second movement, *Slowly Rocking*, feels made up of bits, of individual notes. Cage asks for extended use of harmonics and *sul ponticello* (on top of the bridge) bowing, and the dynamic here is very quiet, with some passages marked quadruple *piano*. The third movement, *Nearly Stationary*, is by far the longest movement, lasting about half the length of the entire quartet. Cage's title for this movement is apt. Nothing hap-

pens here—we are locked into the stasis of winter—and the music consists of a stately progression of individual notes rather than any form of sustained line. Release (and relief) come in the concluding *Quodlibet*, which whips past in 90 fun seconds. This is a dance movement of an almost medieval character. Spring and new life have returned, the music dances gracefully and very briefly, and at the end we are left wishing that it might continue.

String Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 130

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

Beethoven composed the *Quartet in B-flat Major* between July and December of 1825, and the music had its premiere in Vienna on March 21, 1826, almost exactly a year to the day before the composer's death. This massive quartet, consisting of six movements that span a total of nearly 50 minutes, concluded with a complex and extremely difficult fugue that left the first audience stunned. Beethoven, by this time totally deaf, did not attend the premiere, but when told that the fourth and fifth movements had been so enthusiastically applauded that they had to be repeated, he erupted with anger at the audience: "Yes, these delicacies! Why not the Fugue? Cattle! Asses!"

But it was not just the audience at the premiere that found the concluding fugue difficult. With some trepidation, Beethoven's publisher asked the crusty old composer to write a substitute finale and to publish the fugue separately. To everyone's astonishment, Beethoven agreed to that request and wrote a new finale—a good-natured rondo—in the fall of 1826. Since that time, critics have debated which ending makes better sense artistically, and this is one of those debates that will probably continue forever. For generations, the *Quartet in B-flat Major* was performed with the substitute rondo as the finale, but recently that practice appears to have evolved, and quartets today are increasingly following Beethoven's original intention and concluding the *Quartet in B-flat Major* with the *Grosse Fuge*.

In either version, this music presents problems of unity, for its six movements are quite different from each other. The issue is intensified when the *Grosse Fuge* is used as the finale, for this movement is so individual, so fierce, that it does seem an independent statement. In its original

form, the quartet consists of two huge outer movements that frame four shorter movements (two scherzos and two slow movements). The music encompasses a huge range of emotion, from the frankly playful to some of the most deeply-felt music Beethoven ever wrote. The unifying principle of this quartet may simply be its disunity, its amazing range of expression and mood.

The first movement, cast in the highly-modified sonata form Beethoven used in his final years, is built on two contrasting tempos: a reverent *Adagio* and a quick *Allegro* that flies along on a steady rush of sixteenth notes. These tempos alternate, sometimes in sections only one measure long—there is some extraordinarily beautiful music here, full of soaring themes and unexpected shifts of key. By contrast, the *Presto*—flickering and shadowy—flits past in less than two minutes; in ABA form, it offers a long center section and a sudden close on the return of the opening material. The solemn opening of the *Andante* is a false direction, for it quickly gives way to a rather elegant movement in sonata form, full of poised, flowing, and calm music. Beethoven titled the fourth movement *Alla danza tedesca*, which means “Dance in the German Style.” In 3/8 meter, it is based on the rocking, haunting little tune that opens the movement.

The *Cavatina* has become one of the most famous movements in all Beethoven’s quartets. Everyone is struck by the intensity of its feeling, though few agree as to what it expresses—some feel it tragic, others view it as serene; Beethoven himself confessed that even thinking about this movement moved him to tears. Near the end comes an extraordinary passage that Beethoven marks *Beklemmt* (“Oppressive”): the music seems to stumble and then makes its way to the close over halting and uncertain rhythms.

This performance concludes with the *Grosse Fuge* Beethoven had intended as the original finale. Let it be said right from the start: the *Grosse Fuge* is a brilliant piece of music and a very tough one, and it should come as no surprise that it has excited quite different responses. Though he was no particular admirer of Beethoven, Stravinsky near the end of his long life came to know and respect the late quartets, and his admiration for the *Grosse Fuge* led him to call it an “absolutely contemporary piece of music that will be contemporary forever.” At the other extreme, the iconoclastic American critic B.H. Haggin was adamant that the *Grosse Fuge* should be considered

“inaccessible—except for a quiet and lovely episode—by some music lovers who have listened to it repeatedly.”

The *Grosse Fuge* is in fact not one fugue, but three different fugal sections, each in a contrasting tempo—Beethoven described it as a “Grand Fugue, freely treated in some places, fugally elaborated in others.” The brief *Overtura* suggests the shape of the fugue subject in three different permutations (all of which will reappear and be treated differently) and then proceeds directly into the first fugue, an extremely abrasive *Allegro* in B-flat major that demands a great deal from both performers and audiences. Much of the complexity here is rhythmic: not only does the fugue subject leap across a span of several octaves, but its progress is often obscured by its overlapping triple, duple, and dotted rhythms. The lyric, flowing central section, a *Meno mosso e moderato* in G-flat major, is fugal in character rather than taking the form of a strict fugue. It gives way to the *Allegro molto e con brio*, which is derived from the second appearance of the fugue subject in the *Overtura*; here it bristles with trills and sudden pauses. Near the close, Beethoven recalls fragments of the different sections, then offers a full-throated restatement of the fugue theme before the rush to the cadence.

Individual listeners may draw their own conclusions about the use of the *Grosse Fuge* as a fitting close to this quartet, but there can be no doubt that the *Quartet in B-flat Major*—by turns beautiful, aggressive, charming, and violent—remains as astonishing a piece of music for us today as it was to that first audience in 1826.

Joy Boy

JULIUS EASTMAN

(1940–1990)

Julius Eastman’s life was full of talent and full of torment, and it was short—he died at 49. Eastman led a strangely bifurcated life. He was a superb pianist—he studied with Mieczysław Horszowski at the Curtis Institute of Music and made his Carnegie Hall debut performing his own works. Eastman also had a beautiful voice, and he sang Peter Maxwell Davies’ *Eight Songs of a Mad King* with the New York Philharmonic under Pierre Boulez. But Eastman was also consciously a rebel and an outsider who once said that his aim in life was to be “black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, a homosexual to the fullest.”

Though he taught briefly at SUNY Buffalo, his career was erratic, careening through drugs, depression, and homelessness. His death in a Buffalo hospital went unnoticed for months by the larger musical community, and his compositions were left in a precarious state: many of his manuscripts have been lost, and those that have survived need to be carefully edited to make sense of Eastman’s individual style of notation. Over the last decade, his music has gradually been re-discovered, and a number of performances and recordings have brought this music to audiences that had been unaware of its existence.

Eastman’s style may be described as post-minimalist, but it is a good deal more original than that. It has a driving energy of its own, but performances frequently allow for improvisation and individual solos, and the instrumentation is sometimes open to choices by individual performers. Eastman’s music has been described as “additive”: gradually material begins to accrue around the basic gesture of the music. Eastman himself described the process of his music: “They’re not exactly perfect, but there is an attempt to make every section contain all of the information of the previous sections, or else taking out information at a gradual and logical rate.” At its best, his music can be energetic, spontaneous, ecstatic, and improvisational.

Eastman composed *Joy Boy* in 1974. His score is only one page long, and it is up to the performers to extend its many repeats. The instrumentation can vary wildly from performance to performance: Eastman apparently intended it for an ensemble of two to six players, but it is sometimes performed by larger ensembles that can include a vocalist. The beginning is minimal in the extreme—only hints of a pulsing motion—but this hypnotic effect grows, more layers gather (what Eastman called “additive” music), and through the shimmering textures sharp accents can break free as *Joy Boy* eventually glides to its most subdued conclusion.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger