

74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

MARCH 13, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART





Photo Mary Kay Gaydos

PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

Fry Street Quartet

Robert Waters, violin

Rebecca McFaul, violin

Bradley Ottesen, viola

Anne Francis Bayless, cello

Presented in honor of Women's History Month

Laura Kaminsky (b. 1956)

Rising Tide

H₂O (The Source of Life)

Bios

Forage

Societas

Amy Beach (1867–1944)

Quartet for Strings (In One Movement), op. 89

Grave — Allegro molto — Grave

Intermission

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Emergence

Radiant

Reactive

Rage

Resolve

Reverence

Joan Tower (b. 1938)

Night Fields

The Musicians

The Fry Street Quartet — hailed as “a triumph of ensemble playing” by the *New York Times* — is a multifaceted ensemble taking chamber music in new directions. Performing music of the masters as well as exciting original works from visionary composers of our time, the Fry Street Quartet has perfected a “blend of technical precision and scorching spontaneity,” writes the *Strad*. Since securing the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the quartet has reached audiences from Carnegie Hall to London, and Sarajevo to Jerusalem, exploring the medium of the string quartet and its life-affirming potential with “profound understanding . . . depth of expression, and stunning technical astuteness,” according to the *Deseret Morning News*.

With a discography that includes a wide range of works from Haydn and Beethoven to Stravinsky, Janáček, and Rorem, the quartet is known for being, “equally at home in the classic repertoire of Mozart and Beethoven or contemporary music,” says a review in the *Palm Beach Daily News*.

The Fry Street Quartet has collaborated with acclaimed instrumentalists, including Wu Han, Paul Katz, Donald Weilerstein, Misha Dichter, and Roger Tapping. The musicians have commissioned and toured new works by a wide range of composers. *Pandemonium* by Brazilian composer Clarice Assad received its Fry Street premiere with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra; Michael Ellison’s *Fiddlin’* was co-commissioned by the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music Series and the Salt Lake City-based NOVA series; Laura Kaminsky’s *Rising Tide* was commissioned especially for the quartet’s global sustainability initiative, The Crossroads Project.

After more than twenty performances in three countries, *The Crossroads Project: Rising Tide* continues to resonate with audiences. This fresh approach to communicating society’s sustainability challenges draws upon all the senses with a unique blend of science and art and has been featured on NPR, as well as in publications by the multimedia service Yale Climate Connections and the *New York Times*.

The quartet’s 2014 - 2015 season included the premiere of Laura Kaminsky’s new chamber opera, *As One*, featuring soprano Sasha Cooke and baritone Kelly Markgraff at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, as well as Libby Larsen’s new work *Emergence*, which anchors the Crossroads Project’s second chapter, *Crossroads: Emergence for string quartet, film, and actor*.

The Fry Street Quartet is pleased to hold the Dan and Manon Caine Russell Endowed String Quartet Residency at the Caine College of the Arts at Utah State University. And because you were wondering . . . “Fry Street” was the location of the quartet’s first rehearsal space in the Chicago neighborhood once ruled by Al Capone.

Program Notes

Rising Tide

Starting with Source of Life, I imagined an ancient landscape: dark, forbidding and foreboding, dry and dusty, with a small stream of water running through it. I saw in my mind's eye the terrain of Armenia, flat and volcanic, with a looming Mt. Ararat far in the distance. I wrote an imaginary folk tune that starts from nothing, like a tiny stream, and then grows, building to a climax as in a rushing mountain river, and then trickling away.

For Bios I wanted to create a steady pulsing throughout, the elemental pulse of life, yet with flickers of energy bursting through, and never purely mechanical or regular, as life is not. I then built momentum before reverting back to the open, more "floating" quality of the beginning.

Forage is simply a romp — the animals scurrying to find nourishment in field and forest. There's a dance-like quality, yet also something majestic.

Societas opens with a chorale-like yearning theme, an innocent and reverential society, serene, yet not still, gaining in intensity until it can be chorale-like no more. A scampering dialogue follows, evoking the dizzying complexity and multilayered nature of human existence, with all four voices in dialogue or in sync before recalling where it came from. *Program notes by Laura Kaminsky*

Quartet for Strings (In One Movement), op. 89

Amy Beach was sixty-two years old when she composed her only string quartet in 1929. Beach was America's first significant female composer and though she did have some chamber music scattered throughout her vast compositional output, she had never before taken up the venerable challenge of the quartet genre. One possible reason for the delay was her female status. The America of Beach's era was not yet ready to accept women in traditionally male roles, especially those reserved for the elite. Beach's parents, and later her husband, were careful to limit her public exposure, fearing that she might cross social barriers or expectations of the times. Despite the limitations put on her performing life, which undoubtedly made it difficult for her to collaborate with professional string quartets, Beach wrote a lot. Dozens of songs fill her catalogue, along with some chamber music, a symphony, and a piano concerto. When the quartet music finally came, it was set in a single movement and based on traditional Inuit melodic material. The quartet is a wonderful blend of folk and progressive elements, and although it remained unpublished until the 1990s, Beach was able to hear it one last time in November 1942 on a program that celebrated her seventy-fifth birthday. *Program notes by Jeff Counts*

Emergence

Two years ago, during a visit to Utah State University, I met Rebecca McFaul and immediately connected with her intense commitment to the idea that music can act as a powerful agent of transformation and change. She spoke eloquently and forcefully about the Fry Street Quartet's dedication to actively making art that is relevant to the challenges of our time, and she introduced me to the quartet's Crossroads Project, which combines music, visuals, and writing to shine light on humanity's growing sustainability crisis. Like so many of us, I am extremely concerned about what we humans are doing to our natural environment, and I am eager for opportunities to use my own gifts to help. *Emergence* is the result of the Fry Street Quartet's and my mutual desire to do what we can to contribute to our collective social conscience.

It struck me early on that the water cycle could be a useful metaphor, so I planned *Emergence* as an abstract narrative in five movements. Each movement is inspired by parts of the water cycle: precipitation, runoff, evaporation, transpiration, and condensation. Each movement also suggests emotion: exhilaration, joy, wonder, fear, anger, grief, regret, resolve, and reverence.

I hoped to embrace Rebecca's philosophy about music and compose abstract music that could place every listener *inside* it, both as a being interconnected with all other kinds of beings and as individual spirits capable of reason, emotion, and action. *Program notes by Libby Larsen*

Night Fields

In addition to teaching and conducting, world-renowned composer Joan Tower has always enjoyed the performance of chamber music. An accomplished pianist, she founded the Da Capo Chamber Players in 1969 and has since contributed significantly to the literature of the string quartet, the piano trio, and virtually every other kind of intimate genre. That said, her first string quartet, like that of Amy Beach, came rather late in 1994. By Tower's own account, it was a struggle. She has remarked in pre-concert comments that she should have called the piece *Nightmare* instead of *Night Fields*, but the intense rhythmic immediacy of the music belies any lack of assurance. Though cast in a single movement (also like Beach's piece), *Night Fields* follows a loose, three-part structure and generates several emotionally charged atmospheres. Tower wrote that "*Night Fields*, my first string quartet, is dedicated with affection and admiration to the Muir String Quartet. The title came after the work was completed and provides an image or setting for some of the moods of the piece: a cold windy night in a wheat field lit up by a bright full moon where waves of fast-moving colors ripple over the field, occasionally settling on a patch of gold." *Program notes by Jeff Counts*

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

COMMEMORATING THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

US Air Force Band Airmen of Note Combo
March 17, Thursday, 12:10, 1:10, and 2:10
West Building, East Garden Court

"The President's Own" Marine Chamber Orchestra
March 18, Friday, 12:00 and 2:00
West Building, West Garden Court

US Navy Band Sea Chanters
March 19, Saturday, 3:00
East Building Atrium

US Army Chorus and Brass Quintet
March 20, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Rachel Barton Pine
Complete Bach *Sonatas and Partitas*
for solo violin
March 27, Sunday, 2:00 and 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Washington Toho Koto Society
Traditional Japanese music
Presented in conjunction with the National Cherry Blossom Festival
April 3, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

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Cover Georges Braque, *Fruit, Glass, and Mandolin* (detail), 1938, National Gallery of Art, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

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