

Mary J. C. Cresimore & Chamber Music Raleigh present
HARLEM STRING QUARTET

Sunday, February 20, 2022
North Carolina Museum of Art

Ilmar Gavilán, violin
Melissa White, violin
Jaime Amador, viola
Felix Umansky, cello

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart:
String Quartet in C Major, K 465 "Dissonance"

Guido Lopez Gavilan:
Cuarteto en Guaguanco

Wynton Marsalis:
Selections from "At the Octaroon Balls"

Billy Strayhorn (arr. Paul Chihara and Harlem Quartet):
"Take the "A" Train"



ARTIST BIOS

Harlem Quartet advances diversity in classical music while engaging new audiences with varied repertoire that includes works by minority composers. Their mission to share their passion with a wider audience has taken them around the world; from a 2009 performance at The White House for President Obama and First Lady, Michelle Obama, to a highly successful tour of South Africa in 2012, and numerous venues in between. The musically versatile ensemble has performed with such distinguished artists as Itzhak Perlman, Ida Kavafian, Carter Brey, Fred Sherry, Misha Dichter, Jeremy Denk, and Paquito D’Rivera. The quartet also collaborated with jazz masters Chick Corea and Gary Burton on the album *Hot House*, a 2013 multi-Grammy Award winning release.

THE HARLEM QUARTET NC RESIDENCY IS FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS



1941
2021

PROGRAM NOTES
Harlem Quartet – February 20, 2022

String Quartet in C major, K. 465
“Dissonance”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
1756-1791

In 1773, the 17-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart encountered Haydn’s two sets of string quartets, Op. 17 and Op. 20. He immediately recognized their revolutionary nature and wrote a set of six quartets (K. 168-173) in conscious imitation of the older master. Then, in 1781, Haydn published his six string quartets Op. 33, which were among the first to treat all four instruments equally, resembling a conversation among friends (Earlier quartets tended essentially to be a display for the first violin with the other three as accompaniment.)

Now Mozart had gained self-confidence as a composer, and while he respected Haydn, his competitive nature drove him to master the new techniques of string quartet writing and give it his own voice. Between the end of 1782 and January of 1785, he composed six string quartets and dedicated them to Haydn. They were, according to the dedication, “the fruit of long and laborious effort,” a statement supported by the fact that it took Mozart – usually a fast worker – so long to finish them. During this period his financial and social outlooks were rosy, his music much in demand and he was inundated with commissions. It was a measure of his determination, as well as his respect and friendship for the older master, that he took the time to compose these quartets without guaranteed remuneration, knowing that the demand for such works was slim. To his surprise, they sold well.

Haydn was greatly impressed: “I tell you before God, and as an honest man, that your son is the greatest composer I know, either personally or by reputation,” he told Leopold Mozart in 1785 after hearing three of the six. The prodigious talents of the younger composer, however, did not faze Haydn, who continued to write string quartets for a dozen more years, always pushing the envelope and establishing the genre as the quintessential form of chamber music.

In the String Quartet K. 465, the last of the six “Haydn” Quartets, Mozart was also going out on a limb. With the ever-widening harmonic language in the last 250 years we have to imagine ourselves back in Mozart’s time to understand the uproar over the daring harmonic “excursions” in the mysterious introduction, which gave the Quartet its nickname “The Dissonance.” The Introduction, marked *Adagio*, would have been tantamount to musical chaos to the ears of Mozart’s contemporaries, who would have literally groped about for some sort of resolution, or key, to hang on to. When the resolution finally comes, Mozart humorously contrasts it with a sunny theme to open the *Allegro*, as if awakening from a musical nightmare. Incidentally, although Haydn is reported to have looked askance at the opening of K. 465, he was later to employ a similar trick in the portrayal of chaos in orchestral introduction to *The Creation*.

Cuarteto en Guaguancó

Guido Lopez Gavilán
b. 1944

Guido Lopez Gavilán is a conductor and composer in Havana, Cuba, where he directed the *Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional de Cuba* and heads the conducting program at the *Instituto Superior de Arte* of Havana. He has conducted orchestras worldwide and has been a central

figure in festivals of Latin American music. Many of Gavilán's compositions are based on traditional Cuban folk music and dances. He is the father of violinist Ilmar Gavilan, first violin of the Harlem Quartet.

Guaguancó is both a dance and a distinctive rhythmic pattern. Like most Cuban music, the rhythmic foundation for Guaguancó is based on the clave – a rhythmic ostinato that can be arranged in several ways. Guaguancó is known for its characteristic delay on the third clave accent. This delay creates what is known as a rumba clave pattern, the rhythmic underpinning for the Cuban rumba style.

Composed in 2005 and arranged for the Harlem Quartet in 2016, *Cuarteto en Guaguancó* is quite unique for the string quartet repertoire not only for these Cuban rhythmic elements but also for the way it traces its sonority back to melodic chanting of the West African Yoruba tradition.

From *At the Octoroon Balls*

VII. "Rampart Street Row House Rag"

III. "Creole Contradanza"

V. "Hellbound Highball"

Wynton Marsalis

b. 1961

Trumpeter, composer and educator Wynton Marsalis is one of the outstanding and most versatile musicians of our time. As a jazz and classical performer, composer and educator Marsalis has connected with audiences of all ages, levels and tastes. For his contributions he has garnered Grammys in both jazz and classical categories, 29 honorary degrees and numerous national and international awards. In 2005 he was awarded the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest arts award.

Born in New Orleans, he was invited at 14 to perform with the New Orleans Philharmonic. During high school, besides performing with various symphony orchestras and brass bands, he belonged to a weekend jazz band. At 17 he was the youngest musician ever to be admitted to Tanglewood's Berkshire Music Center. In 1979 Marsalis entered Juilliard and a year later started studies under master drummer and bandleader, Art Blakey. He assembled his own band and started touring extensively worldwide. In 1987 he co-founded the Jazz at Lincoln Center program, which has performed hundreds of concerts in 15 countries. He has also initiated and participated in many educational programs, especially his Marsalis on Music series on jazz and classical music for PBS, and a 26-week series *The Making the Music*, which aired on NPR.

As a composer, Marsalis has written extensively for dance companies, including the New York City Ballet. In 1995 he composed his first string quartet, *At the Octoroon Balls*, for the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, was inspired by his early life in New Orleans. Marsalis used the term "octoroon" – originally a racist term describing individuals 1/8th African-American – to symbolize the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of New Orleans. Marsalis writes, "The work explores the American Creole contradictions and compromises - cultural, social, and political - exemplified by life in New Orleans."

Highball was a slang term for a speeding train. In "Hellbound Highball," the ball takes place on a speeding train. Marsalis blends the dance rhythms with the ostinato train sounds.

Take the "A" Train

Billy Strayhorn
1915-1967

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, and for a time also in Hillsboro, NC, composer, pianist, lyricist and arranger Billy Strayhorn started his musical career as a Classical musician, studying at the Pittsburgh Music Institute. But the racial realities of the time directed him into jazz.

He met Duke Ellington in Pittsburgh in 1938, and impressed him with his arrangements and compositions. Ellington invited him to come to New York and join his band, and he moved there in 1939, remaining for the rest of his life as Ellington's right hand man.

Strayhorn composed *Take the A Train* in 1939. Apparently, the title comes from the directions Ellington sent him of how to reach his residence in Harlem. In 1941 the song became the signature opening piece of Duke Ellington and His Orchestra.

Program notes by:
Joseph & Elizabeth Kahn

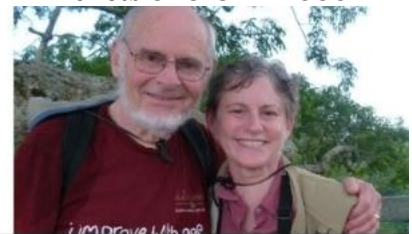
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Mallarme Chamber Players
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Aurora Musicalis
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SOLOMON EICHNER PIANO
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