



THE CIOMPI QUARTET

SAT, APR 17
VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE

DUKE PERFORMANCES

THE CIOMPI QUARTET OF DUKE UNIVERSITY

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VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE

ERIC PRITCHARD, VIOLIN
JONATHAN BAGG, VIOLIN
HSIAO-MEI KU, VIOLA
CAROLINE STINSON, CELLO

WITH GUEST
IEVA JOCUBAVICUITE, PIANO

PROGRAM

Soleil Noir (2020)
commissioned by the Ciompi Quartet
(world premiere)

John Supko
(b. 1980)

Piano Quintet in F Minor, (1879)
Molto moderato quasi lento – Allegro
Lento con molto sentiment
Allegro non troppo ma con fuoco

César Franck
(1822-1890)

SOLEIL NOIR (2020)

Commissioned by the Ciampi Quartet

It's strange, at first, to think of Surrealism persisting into the 1960s or later decades of the 20th century. The popular imagination associates this movement with the extravagant mischief of the 1920s and '30s, but many Surrealists lived long enough to see their ideas adapted by the student-revolutionaries of the '60s and beyond. André Breton lived until 1966; Max Ernst until '76; Dalí died in '89; Philippe Soupault made it to 1990. There are other examples of longevity, but few of these artists' late works departed much from experimental parameters established decades earlier. One exception, perhaps, is the filmmaker Luis Buñuel. No veteran Surrealist working in this latter period better fused the anonymity and arbitrary dullness of modern life with the caprices of the subconscious.

When the horse-drawn carriage bearing the Duke and his liveried attendants pulls into the terrace of the Grande Cascade restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne, no one at the numerous café tables looks twice. It's the present day — 1967 — and Catherine Deneuve's character, Belle de Jour, is drinking milk, waiting for her aristocratic john. They make small talk about the weather, which leads the Duke to remark that nothing makes him so happy as the autumn sun: a *black sun*. It's the inscrutable expression on Belle de Jour's face — confusion? terror? wonder? dread? — as she asks, "Black sun?" that seared this image into my consciousness many years ago. I use the word "image" but I don't know what I mean: there's the phrase itself, *soleil noir*; the idea of a sun that devours light; the quiet shock of the sinister-absurd; the inexorable approach of something slow and total; a picture of mysterious and terrible facts. All of this was somehow involved in the creation of my string quartet, which I wrote in January and February 2020, when the pandemic was already looming on the horizon of another miserable year.

This is not a plague piece, however, any more than it is a paean to the oldest profession. If it aspires to something, it is to a music of seductive wrongness. The noble string quartet is ill-treated. Not a single snatch of contrapuntal conversation, not a moment of lyrical exaltation here. When the quartet plays as one, its rhythmic unison seethes with errant notes. More often, the instruments play as three against one. From this imbalance emerges the transit of some implacable object, distant at first but inescapable. Then there is silence, which is no respite;

fractions of it weigh just as much as sound, and make music of rupture, thrust, derailment. At length, the ascension of the vast, dark thing resumes, until its progress collides with the materiality of the instrument: the violin can play no higher. Out of the impossibility of continuing arises a new continuity.

If it's strange to think of Surrealists sharing a green room with the Beatles or Frankie Valli, is it any stranger to discover their assimilation of ancient esoterica? There is no record of Buñuel's encounter with the *nigredo* or "blackening," but alchemists used it to describe the first step in the transmutation of substances. Man Ray, whose *Gift* changed a flatiron into a menacing totem, later made *L'Étoile de mer* with Robert Desnos, a film replete with alchemical associations. Max Ernst painted the astrological-anatomical *Of This Men Shall Know Nothing* after reading a study of alchemy by the psychoanalyst Herbert Silberer. Much of Duchamp's work can be understood, according to one account, by his early contact with Antoine-Joseph Pernety's *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique* (1787): the artist who depicted himself as the "Apprentice in the Sun" in 1914 ended his career with a secret work, *Étant donnés*, in which a "Virgin-Bride," a waterfall, and a lamp are visible through a peephole in an equally symbolic door.

What does any of this have to do with a string quartet? The answer is the autumn sun in 1967. The answer is the co-author of *Les Champs magnétiques* in 1990. The answer is that, in art, any one thing can become any other thing. Speaking to revolutionary refugees in 1856, Marx observed, "In our days, everything seems pregnant with its contrary." The *soleil noir* is simultaneously a dreadful thought and a sign that the experiment is going in the right direction.

– John Supko

JOHN SUPKO

Called "spellbindingly beautiful" (Steve Smith, *Time Out New York*), "hypnotic...eerily beautiful" (Vivien Schweitzer, *The New York Times*), and "fascinating" (Philip Clark, *The Guardian*), the work of composer **John Supko** (b. 1980, NY) explores intersections: chance and intention; conventional music notation and real-time score generation; sound and spoken text; installation and performance; human and computer creativity. Among other prizes and grants, he is a recipient of the Fulbright

and Georges Lurcy Fellowships, both for Paris, France, where he studied at the École Normale de Musique. His work has been published in collaborative editions with the poet Philippe Denis by Collection Mémoires (Paris) and by Harpo & (Marseille), and has been released on the New Amsterdam and Cotton Goods labels. His 2014 collaborative album *s_traits* (with Bill Seaman) was named in “Best of 2014” recording lists in *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*. Currently Associate Professor of Music at Duke University, where he also co-directs the Emergence Lab with Bill Seaman, Supko holds degrees from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music (B.Mus.) and Princeton University (Ph.D.)

IEVA JOKUBAVICIUTE

Lithuanian pianist **Ieva Jokubaviciute’s** powerfully and intricately crafted performances have earned her critical acclaim throughout the United States and Europe. Her ability to communicate the essential substance of a work has led critics to describe her as possessing “razor-sharp intelligence and wit” (the *Washington Post*) and as “an artist of commanding technique, refined temperament and persuasive insight” (the *New York Times*). In 2006, she was honored as a recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship.

Ms. Jokubaviciute’s Alban Berg Tribute CD was released to critical acclaim in 2010. The *New York Times* described her as “an authoritative and compelling guide throughout this fascinating disc.” Her 2014 album *Returning Paths: Solo Piano Works by Janacek and Suk* was equally well received. Jokubaviciute regularly gives solo recitals in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington DC. She made her orchestral debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Ravinia Festival and has since performed concerti with orchestras in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Montevideo, Uruguay; and in Washington, DC. Her piano trio, Trio Cavatina, won the 2009 Naumburg International Chamber Music Competition and made its Carnegie Hall debut in 2010.

In 2020, Jokubaviciute’s latest recording *Northscapes* will be released by Sono Luminus. This recording project weaves works, written within the last decade by composers from the Nordic and Baltic countries of Europe, into a tapestry of soundscapes that echo the reverberations between landscape, sound, and the

imagination. This recording will include works by: Kaja Saariaho, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, Raminta Šerkšnyte, Lasse Thoresen, Bent Sorensen, and Pēteris Vasks.

A much sought-after chamber musician and collaborator, notably with violinist Midori, Ms. Jokubaviciute's chamber music endeavors have brought her to major stages around the world, such as Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, London's Wigmore Hall, and Washington DC's Kennedy Center. She regularly appears at music festivals including Marlboro, Ravinia, Bard, Caramoor, Chesapeake Chamber Music, Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival and Prussia Cove in England. She has also appeared in Festivals in Finland, Germany, and Spain. Earning degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and from Mannes College of Music in New York City, her principal teachers have been Seymour Lipkin and Richard Goode. Previously, Ieva was Associate Professor, Piano at Shenandoah Conservatory in Winchester, VA. Ieva is also on the faculty at the Kneisel Hall Chamber Music School and Festival in Blue Hill, Maine and has established herself as a mentoring artist at the Marlboro Music Festival in Marlboro, Vermont.

THE CIOMPI QUARTET

Since its founding in 1965 by the renowned Italian violinist Giorgio Ciompi, the **Ciompi Quartet of Duke University** has delighted audiences and impressed critics around the world. All its members are professors at Duke, where they teach instrumental lessons, coordinate and coach chamber music, and perform across campus in concert halls, libraries, dormitories and classrooms. In a career that spans five continents and includes many hundreds of concerts, the Ciompi Quartet has developed a reputation for performances of real intelligence and musical sophistication, with a warm, unified sound that allows each player's individual voice to emerge. In 2018-19 Caroline Stinson joined the Quartet. Her refined musical voice, brilliant instrumental technique and distinguished history as a solo and ensemble player augur an exciting new chapter in the distinguished history of the Ciompi Quartet. In recent years, the Ciompi Quartet has performed from Washington State to California, Texas, New York, Washington DC and New England, and abroad from China to France, Italy, Germany, Prague, Serbia and Albania. In the summer the Quartet has performed at the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Detroit, North Carolina's

Eastern Music Festival and Highlands Chamber Music Festival, and at Monadnock Music in New Hampshire.

Collaborations have included the distinguished talents of pianists Bella Davidovich, Menahem Pressler and James Tocco, the Borromeo Quartet, saxophonist Branford Marsalis, soprano Tony Arnold, and jazz vocalist Nnenna Freelon, among many others. The Quartet's commitment to creative programming often mixes the old and the brand new in exciting ways. Its extensive catalog of commissions includes many that the group continues to perform on tour. Close ties to composers such as Paul Schoenfield, Stephen Jaffe, Scott Lindroth, and Melinda Wagner have produced important contributions to the repertoire; the quartet recently premiered Stephen Jaffe's Third String Quartet and Lindroth's Cello Quintet, written for the Ciompi and cellist Ashley Bathgate. The group's most recent recordings are on Toccata Classics (a string quartet by 19th century violin virtuoso Heinrich Ernst), and Naxos, which released "Journey to the West" by Chiayu Hsu in 2015; also on Naxos online is a recording of the quartets of Paul Schoenfield including the popular "Tales from Chelm." Numerous other discs are on the CRI, Arabesque, Albany, Gasparo, and Sheffield Lab labels, with music from Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, up through the present.



Alsarah talking to students at Durham School of the Arts.

Last season, **Duke Performances** held over 100 residency events with visiting artists, reaching over 2,000 Duke students and 2,000 members of the Durham community through class visits, public conversations, master classes, workshops, and pop-up concerts, as well as K-12 engagement with Durham Public Schools.

For 2020/21, this work continues in virtual form, through free online series such as 'In Conversation' and special engagements for students and teachers throughout the district.

We bring diverse and virtuosic artists to classrooms and public forums in ways that enrich our vibrant campus and community and foster conversation around the themes, traditions, and perspectives embodied in the work of these visiting artists.

Your contribution to Duke Performances ensures that we can continue to make these meaningful and memorable opportunities available at no cost to the community.

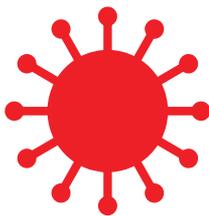
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