

# KEAN STAGE



*The Sixth Annual ASTA/NJ Chamber Music Institute  
at Kean University Presents:*

## *Jack String Quartet*

**Sunday, August 1, 2010**

**7:30 p.m.**

**Enlow Recital Hall**

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*Christopher Otto, Violin*

*Ari Streisfeld, Violin*

*John Pickford Richards, Viola*

*Kevin McFarland, Cello*

*Concert*  
*Artist*  
PROGRAM

Dr. Anthony Scelba, Director

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# Program

Three Machaut Pieces (arr. Ari Streisfeld)  
*Rose, LIz, Printemps, Verdur*  
*Dame, de Qui Toute Ma Joie Vient*  
*Inviolata Genitrix*

Guillaume de Machaut  
(c. 1300 – April 1377)

String Quartet no. 5

Philip Glass  
(b.1937)

— *Intermission* —

Six Bagatelles

Anton Webern  
(1883-1945)

String Quartet no. 3 “im innersten”

I  
II  
III  
IV  
V  
VI

Wolfgang Rihm  
(b. 1952)

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# Program Notes

**Three Machaut Pieces** – The three works from Machaut’s vast oeuvres that I have chosen to transcribe and arrange for string quartet include a rondeau (Rose, Liz, Printemps, Verdure), a ballade (Dame, de qui toute ma joie vient), and a motet (Inviolata Genitrix). Throughout these transcriptions, I tried to subtly bring out different timbres and colors that are associated with contemporary string writing while remaining faithful to the music. In Rose, Liz, Printemps, Verdure I moved the lines around between repetitions of the melody, allowing every instrument the opportunity to play each line at least once. This makes for some interesting colors as occasionally the cello plays higher than the other instruments. Throughout the other two pieces, in order to highlight certain lines and harmonies I added gradual timbral shifts from *sul tasto* (playing on the fingerboard) to *sul ponticello* (playing near the bridge) to *ordinario*. In creating these arrangements my goal was not to simply create modern transcriptions but to provide a contemporary perspective on Machaut’s incredible musical language.

– Ari Streisfeld

**Philip Glass’** string quartets may contain his most intimate music. They are works through which a very public composer, perhaps the most important opera reformer of our age and a longstanding collaborator in large-scale music theater, holds up a mirror to himself and his way of composing.

It was...to the string quartet that Glass — following the examples in our century of Bartok, Schoenberg, Shostakovich and Elliott Carter — turned at moments of profound introspection about both self and music. “In an odd way,” Glass explains, “string quartets have always functioned like that for composers. I don’t really know why, but it’s almost impossible to get away from it. It’s the way composers of the past have thought and that’s no less true for me.”

Such an historical imperative can also, of course, be a particularly daunting one. “It’s almost,” Glass explains, “as if we say we’re going to write a string quartet, we take a deep breath, and we wade in to try to write the most serious, significant piece that we can.” But, from Beethoven on, the process has often ultimately steered composers to a hard-won new simplicity and accessibility in their late quartets. And Glass says that as he sat down . . . to write a quartet — the String Quartet No. 5 (1991) — he had discovered that perhaps not taking a serious tone might be the most serious way to deal with it. “I was thinking that I had really gone one beyond the need to write a serious string quartet and that I could write a quartet that is about musicality, which in a certain way is the most serious subject.”

Indeed, the tone of the Fifth Quartet is a luminous one, set in the very opening bars, where a pluck and a shimmering leap up through the instruments transforms the trademark Glass *arpeggio* into a sweet bell-like announcement. Similarly transformed are all of the familiar conventions of Glass’ style, his rhythmic and harmonic fingerprints, his elusive repetitiveness where subtle shifts continually occur. Like much of Glass’ music, the Fifth Quartet is a study in contrasts. Fast-moving rhythmic sections contrast with slow, chordal ones. Dynamics shift, loud and soft.

The introduction’s tone pervades the quartet, not only in the way the material from the opening becomes increasingly incorporated into a traditional structure of four connected main movements but also in Glass’ seemingly effortless ability to resolve his contrasts. In the second movement, a syncopated, swaying, *barcarolle*-like melody in shifting meters alternates with the plucked and bowed chords of the introduction, unified by a rocking bass pattern. In the *scherzo*-like third movement, a continually evolving dance-like figure initially alternates with

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# Program Notes

a more regular, propulsive rhythmic passage, but gradually the two come together to form a transition to the rapturous, long melodic lines of the next, slow movement. A quicker middle section to that movement prepares for the soaring scales of the fifth movement, into which the quartet's introductory material gradually returns, the two merging into a transcendent weightless resolution. —Mark Swed (excerpted from the liner notes to *Kronos Quartet performs Philip Glass* on Nonesuch Records.)

**Anton Webern's Six Bagatelles for String Quartet Op. 9**, published in 1924, is an amalgamation of two sets of miniatures completed in 1911 and 1913. It comprises six very brief movements, most around 30 seconds in duration, and the longest little more than a minute. The composition pre-dates the 12-tone techniques of his teacher and mentor, Arnold Schoenberg, in which rows appear in multiple forms and combinations as structures for musical ideas to develop over time. Rather, each movement works through all or most of the 12 tones available, with maybe a few repetitions, and simply ends before any traditional form of musical development can occur. The effect is one in which every gesture and idea carries an incredible weight, being not elements of a larger structure, but the structure itself. Stark dynamic contrasts, quick rhythmic cells juxtaposing different playing techniques, and somber melodic fragments of a few pitches seem to bear an increased potency not possible in longer-form music; as quickly as these ideas are first revealed they dissipate back into the intervening silence between movements. The compactness, clarity, and power of Webern's music was inspirational for later generations of composers, and still continues to do so today nearly 100 years after it was written.

– Kevin McFarland

**Wolfgang Rihm's Quartet No. 3 "Im Innersten" (1976)**: Rihm's Third String Quartet was completed when the composer was 24 years old. It is a work of youthful exuberance but displays a maturity beyond his age that has allowed it to withstand the test of time. The quartet is characteristic of Rihm's work in that the overall form is not structured in a formalized way, but rather the individual lines are imbued with an inner life, navigating the work through sudden twists and turns guided by an unsteady emotional compass. The piece amalgamates a diverse array of textures and harmonies without becoming pastiche. It reflects upon traditional tonality and counterpoint in a nostalgic way without ever seeming trite. As the title indicates (roughly translated as "in the internal" or "innermost") the work is intensely personal and heartfelt, and this feeling of genuineness overrides what could otherwise be perceived as cliché or ironic.

It is difficult and even inadvisable to give a proper narrative overview of the work. Any attempt to do so would seem incredibly redundant. The first five movements could all be described as extended and relentless climaxes punctuated by moments of quiet but hesitant or unsure repose. And though they are all related by similar motives and themes, they nonetheless each have an individual identity that is difficult to capture or sum up in words. To give a blow-by-blow account of each movement would ruin the work's efficacy, much like overhearing the plot twists of a movie or book in advance. The only hint given here is that the sixth movement is radically different from the others, in that it displays incredible restraint and control, withholding its emotional peak for the absolute maximum effect. In this final movement all the aforementioned extremes are reconciled, but not integrated. The full resolution of this inner conflict is rendered as a beautiful, but perhaps impossible dream.

– Kevin McFarland

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# Jack String Quartet Biography

“Every JACK concert transcends a run-of-the-mill performance and becomes a true event.”

–Time Out New York

“The JACK Quartet, in terrific performances, proved that the quaint old string quartet, stretched to its limits, remains vital and entertaining.”

– Tom Huizenga, *Washington Post*

The JACK Quartet is breaking new ground with “viscerally exciting performances” (*New York Times*) of “explosive virtuosity” (*Boston Globe*). Alex Ross (*New Yorker*) proclaimed their performance of Iannis Xenakis’ complete string quartets as being “exceptional” and “beautifully harsh,” and Mark Swed (*Los Angeles Times*) called their sold-out performances of Georg Friedrich Haas’ *String Quartet No. 3 In iij. Noct.* “mind-blowingly good.” JACK’s recording of Xenakis’ complete string quartets appeared on “Best Of” lists from the *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe*, *New Yorker*, *NPR*, and *Time Out New York* as “one of 2009’s most impressive recordings.” The quartet has recently performed to critical acclaim at the Library of Congress, Miller Theatre, Morgan Library, and Kimmel Center with upcoming performances at the Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Germany), Garth Newel Music Center, Donaueschinger Musiktage (Germany), Muziekgebouw aan ‘t IJ (Netherlands), Festival Internacional Cervantino (Mexico), Ultraschall Festival für neue Musik (Germany), Wigmore Hall (UK), and the Arcana Festival (Austria).

Comprising violinists Christopher Otto and Ari Streisfeld, violist John Pickford Richards, and cellist Kevin McFarland, the JACK Quartet is focused on the commissioning and performance of new works, leading them to work closely with composers Helmut Lachenmann, György Kurtág, Matthias Pintscher, Toshio Hosokawa, Wolfgang Rihm, Elliott Sharp, Beat Furrer, Caleb Burhans, and Aaron Cassidy. Upcoming premieres include works by Jimmy López, Evan Gardner, Peter Ablinger, Alan Hilario, and Gregory Spears. The quartet also has a keen interest in unusual reworkings of music written before familiar repertoire, including works by Guillaume de Machaut, Girolamo Frescobaldi, and Josquin des Prez.

JACK has led workshops with young composers at Columbia University, New York University, the University of Huddersfield, Northwestern University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Victoria, the University of Iowa, and the University of Washington. In addition to working with composers and performers, the JACK Quartet seeks to broaden and diversify the potential audience for new music through educational presentations designed for a variety of ages, backgrounds, and levels of musical experience.

The members of the quartet met while attending the Eastman School of Music, and they have since studied with the Arditti Quartet, Kronos Quartet, Muir String Quartet, and members of the Ensemble Intercontemporain.

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# The Concert Artist Program

The Concert Artist Program of Kean University, in its 12<sup>th</sup> season, brings world-renowned performing musicians onto the faculty of the Kean University Conservatory of Music. While maintaining successful careers as professional performers, Concert Artists present solo, chamber music, and jazz recitals at Kean; teach private, weekly studio lessons to Kean students; and conduct masterclasses and other community outreach services in the public schools and junior colleges. Some Concert Artists also coach ensembles and teach classroom courses related to their specialties.

Dr. Anthony Scelba first proposed the Program in 1998 (then called the “Affiliate Artist Program”) as part of an overall plan for advancement of the Conservatory. Since then the Program has expanded from three to 20 Concert Artists. Musicians are chosen for the Program after a regional search. Eminent artists with high reputations for excellence and thriving careers, who are eager to devote themselves to Kean as performers and teachers, and who would contribute to the Program’s outstanding chamber music series are selected.

The CAP Concert Series includes performances throughout the school year. In 2008, the CAP appointed Frank Ezra Levy its first Composer-in-Residence. Its 2009-2010 Composer-in-Residence is the Brazilian, Liduino Pitombeira. In 2010-2011 it will be Samuel Zyman of the Juilliard School. In 2009, the Program offered three performances in Merkin Concert Hall, New York. The Concert Artist Series and Enlow Recital Hall—its new state-of-the-art home—are helping to realize President Dawood Farahi’s vision to make Kean University an artistic and cultural center for the region.

Since the Program’s inception, Kean’s Concert Artists individually have performed as soloists and chamber musicians here and abroad, recorded CDs, been nominated for a Grammy and several Latin Grammys, performed on *Live from Lincoln Center* and Kennedy Center broadcasts, won glowing reviews (including 4½ stars from *Down Beat Magazine*), debuted at prestigious venues and received numerous awards and recognitions. In 2004, “Concert Artist” was recognized by Kean University as a distinct category of adjunct faculty.

Information about these wonderful musicians, about the Concert Artist Performance Series, and about their two CDs— *Schubertiana* and the crossover album *The Great Kean Way: Concert Artists on Broadway*—can be found at <http://www.keanconcertartists.com>.

## Acknowledgements

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“...I AM  
A PASSIONATE  
SUPPORTER  
*of the*  
CAMPAIGN TO  
TRANSFORM  
LIVES.

I HOPE  
YOU WILL  
JOIN ME....”

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