



BROOKLYN RIDER

Sunday, February 21 at 7 p.m.

Monday, February 22 at 8 p.m.



*Friends of
Music at
Dumbarton
Oaks*

BROOKLYN RIDER

February 21 & 22, 2010

Johnny Gandelsman, violin
Colin Jacobsen, violin
Nicholas Cords, viola
Eric Jacobsen, cello

ACHILLE'S HEEL ↻ Colin Jacobsen (1978–)
Lydia's Reflection | *Second Bounce* | *Loveland* | *Shur Landing*

... AL NIENTE ↻ Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky (1963–)

FEDERICO II, *excerpt from VIAGGIO IN ITALIA*
Giovanni Sollima (1962–)

INTERMISSION

QUARTET NO. 2, "COMPANY" ↻ Philip Glass (1937–)
I | *II* | *III* | *IV*

STRING QUARTET IN D MINOR, "DEATH AND THE MAIDEN"
Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
Allegro | *Andante con moto* | *Scherzo: Allegro molto* | *Presto*

Achille's Heel, notes from the composer:

For years, I found it difficult to imagine the act of "composing." Largely through my work as part of the Silk Road Ensemble, the support of Brooklyn Rider, and the example of composers like Achille-Claude Debussy, I realized that it was possible to put notes together as a child plays: with serious intent, joy when something works, and with the idea, as Debussy put it, that "pleasure is the law." So *Achille's Heel* is above all a celebration of play—childlike and uninhibited, yet filled with rules and boundaries.

Lydia's Reflection: Two instruments, two brothers, tell the tale of Lydia, whose clear and liquid eyes were so beautiful they turned anyone who had the misfortune to peer into their endless depths into stone. This was a sad family trait she shared with her sister Medusa.

Second Bounce: This piece is inspired by one of those crazy bouncy balls. They always seem to jump off the ground harder than you threw them; but watch out for the second bounce. All the spin accumulates, and you never know where they will land.

Loveland: If you were missing Johnny, don't worry. He lives here and will demonstrate it with his sweet sound.

Shur Landing: Maybe if you the threw the Bouncy Ball hard enough, it would land in ancient Persia.

—Colin Jacobsen

Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky was born in 1963 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and has been in residence at Harvard University for the past two years. Dmitri's musical sensibilities are formed in part from the unique blend of influences from his Central Asian homeland and a deep knowledge of Western classical music. ...*al niente*, one of his most recent works, was written for Brooklyn Rider in 2009 and is featured on their newest recording, *Dominant Curve*. Though ...*al niente* uses elements of the Debussy Quartet as a submerged *cantus firmus*, the result is an entirely new composition. The phrases repeat themselves again and again, eventually resolving into nothingness.

The Sicilian composer and cellist **Giovanni Sollima** has a distinctive compositional voice that combines a love of his native folk music with a strong vernacular sensibility. Written in 2000, *Federico II* is the first movement in an hour-long musical journey through the cultural history of Italy entitled *Viaggio in Italia*. When asked why he chose to begin this monumental work with *Federico II*, Sollima responded, "I felt I wanted to render the bright, joyous, and multiethnic atmosphere of the court of Emperor Federico II (1194-1250) in the guise of dancing with my music. Federico II was an enlightened personality of great character, tolerant towards all races and religions. His political concepts were widely modern and liberal. Within the circles of his vast rule, the sacred Roman Empire, which stretched from Germany to most of Italy, he chose to live mainly in Palermo. He was a lover of the arts and made his magnificent court the venue for the early poets of the new Italian language."

Philip Glass is most widely known for his dramatic scores to such iconic films as *The Hours*, *Kundun*, *Mishima*, and *Koyaanisqatsi*, as well as for his operatic works, namely *Einstein on the Beach*, *Satyagraha*, and *The Voyage*. The four short movements of Glass's **Second String Quartet, "Company"** (1984), were scored originally as music to accompany the dramatization of a Samuel Beckett prose poem entitled *Company*. The poem itself is a soliloquy in which a man hears a voice from his past and comes to terms with a profound feeling of solitude. The music is unique in its brevity, its sense of silence, and the palindrome-like development of its phrase structure.

Given **Franz Schubert's** undeniable stature in the pantheon of musical luminaries, it is challenging to imagine him as greatly underappreciated during his lifetime. Very few of his large-scale works were known to the Viennese public, much less to those outside of Vienna. Schubert himself was not an outstanding performer; and he wrote no concertos, so his cause was not advanced by the popular virtuosos of the era. It took later figures such as Robert Schumann to extend Schubert's influence to a wider audience. Today, Schubert's **String Quartet in D Minor, "Death and the Maiden"** (1824) surely needs little introduction—it is one of the most beloved works in the chamber music repertoire. Of particular note is the second movement, the famed theme-and-variations movement, which uses as its source the composer's own 1817 song *Death and the Maiden*. Schubert's quartet exemplifies the influence of song on so much instrumental music. Today, we celebrate the role of the human voice in chamber music, pairing the Schubert piece with a work by Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky. This new composition is a great example of how the vocal tradition that Schubert excelled in continues to be reinvented and celebrated in the present day. Additionally, Philip Glass is known to be an ardent admirer of Schubert's music. Much of his trademark style seems to borrow from Schubert's driving harmonies and gossamer-like, layered textures—both of which are on display in the restless undulation of the "Death and the Maiden" string quartet.

—Notes by Nicholas Cords

The genre-defying string quartet **Brooklyn Rider** employs creative programming and exciting collaborations to illuminate music in fresh ways and invite its audiences into a shared experience. Capable of addressing a wide range of music, they are as willing to explore the world of Haydn and Debussy as that of contemporary composers. They have performed in venues as varied as Joe's Pub in New York City, the Todai-ji Temple in Nara, Japan, and the San Francisco Jazz Festival. Brooklyn Rider has worked with numerous composers, such as Derek Bermel, Lisa Bielawa, Ljova, Osvaldo Golijov, and Jenny Scheinman; and a frequent part of Brooklyn Rider's programming involves works written or arranged by members of the group. Some recent special guests include Chinese pipa virtuoso Wu Man, Syrian/Armenian visual artist Kevork Mourad, traditional and technology-based Japanese shakuhachi player Kojiro Umezaki, Irish fiddle player Martin Hayes, and singer/songwriter Christina Courtin, whose widely released debut album on the Nonesuch label features several tracks with the quartet. A long-standing relationship between Brooklyn Rider and Persian kamancheh virtuoso Kayhan Kalhor resulted in the critically acclaimed 2008 recording, *Silent City*, on the World Village/Harmonia Mundi label.

Brooklyn Rider often appears under the umbrella of outside initiatives begun by all four members of the group. In 2003 violinist Johnny Gandelsman created *In A Circle*, a series of performance events in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn that explore connections between music and the visual arts. Brothers Colin and Eric Jacobsen are co-founders of The Knights, a chamber orchestra based in New York that recently opened the 2009 Dresden Musikfestspiele and released two albums with Sony Classical. The quartet also founded the Stillwater Music Festival in Minnesota in 2006 as a place where they unveil new repertoire and unusual collaborations. Much of Brooklyn Rider's efforts to extend the borders of conventional string quartet programming has been enabled through their longstanding participation in Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble. As individual members of the ensemble, they have performed throughout the world, recorded three albums for Sony Classical, and reached out to audiences through a series of educational initiatives, family concerts, and media broadcasts. Members of Brooklyn Rider have also taken part in a series of museum residencies initiated by the Silk Road Project, and have participated in ongoing Silk Road Ensemble residencies at Harvard University and the Rhode Island School of Design.

The quartet's name is inspired in part by the cross disciplinary vision of Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), a pre-World War I Munich-based artistic collective including Vassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Arnold Schoenberg, and Alexander Scriabin, to name a few. In this spirit, Brooklyn Rider has created an online art gallery showcasing the work of friends of the quartet (www.brooklynrider.com). The quartet also draws inspiration from the array of cultures and artistic energy found in the borough of Brooklyn in New York City, a place they call home.

