

64th Concert Series 2017-2018



is pleased to present

# **Brooklyn Rider**

**Johnny Gandelsman, violin**

**Colin Jacobsen, violin**

**Nicholas Cords, viola**

**Michael Nicolas, cello**

Saturday, April 28, 2018

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York



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Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization that brings to Westchester audiences world-renowned ensembles and distinguished younger musicians chosen from among the finest artists in today's diverse world of chamber music. Through our Partnership in Education program in public schools, and free admission to our six-concert season for those 18 years of age and under, we give young people throughout the county enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music, building audiences of the future.

**We need additional helping hands to carry out our mission. Do consider joining the volunteers listed above. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can discuss several specific areas in which assistance is needed.**

**Acknowledgments**

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# Program

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**Selections from The Art of the Fugue**

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

**Bella by Barlight**

John Lurie  
(b. 1952)

**BTT**

Colin Jacobsen  
(b. 1952)

Intermission

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**Blueprint**

Caroline Shaw  
(b. 1982)

**String Quartet in F minor, Op. 95 (“Serioso”)**

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

*Allegro con brio*

*Allegretto ma non troppo*

*Allegro assai vivace ma serioso – Più Allegro*

*Larghetto espressivo – Allegretto agitato - Allegro*

Brooklyn Rider appears by arrangement with Opus3 Artists, 470 Park Avenue South, 9th Floor North, New York, NY 10016. [www.opus3artists.com](http://www.opus3artists.com).

Next Concert

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Saturday, May 12, 2018, 8:00 pm at Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

**Charlie Albright, piano**

Program: Two Impromptus by Franz Schubert, from his Opus 90; Improvisations, by Charlie Albright; Concert Arabesques on themes from Strauss’s “On the Beautiful Blue Danube” by Adolf Andrei Schulz-Evler; Variations, Opus 41, by Nikolai Kasputin; and the Opus 25 Études by Frédéric Chopin.

# Program notes

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## **Selections from The Art of the Fugue, BWV 1080**

Johann Sebastian Bach

The year after Bach died (in 1750) some of his musician sons published an anthology of fugues that had occupied him sporadically during the last decade of his life. Each of these more than a dozen pieces is called, in Latin, a *contrapuntus* (“counterpoint”), which was the term used for fugues by German theoreticians of that time. Bach had completed most of this collection by about 1748; blinded by cataracts and plagued by other ailments, he spent the final two years of his life revising its contents in preparation for publication.

**The Art of the Fugue** is Bach at his most abstract and intellectual. Today it is thought that the sequence in which the pieces appeared and even the title of the publication may have been his sons’ work. They also appended to his *contrapuncti* an additional unfinished huge fugue that combined into one all the complexities of four different fugues; they then added a grand contrapuntal treatment of a hymn-tune as if to make up for the incomplete piece. This hymn melody Bach dictated when he felt death was near: the choral prelude “Before Thy Throne I Stand” (“Vor deinen Thron tret’ ich hiermit”). His sons explained in the preface to the published work that they appended this piece at the end “to compensate the friends of his muse” for the unfinished closing fugue. The publication now is regarded as a priceless compilation of unmatched masterpieces in one of the highest, most complex, and most difficult techniques of artistic expression.

Each fugue is based on a single musical subject, a phrase of melody that at first seems to have no particular distinction but soon proves to lend itself to the most inventive, ingenious manipulation. Almost all of them appear in what musicians call “open score,” which is to say that there is a separate line for each “voice” that “speaks” (or better, “sings” in simultaneous musical discourse.

Music was undergoing radical change; contrapuntal style was then being used less and less, since homophonic style, in particular *style galant*, was on the rise. While contrapuntal style had generally been used in religious settings as church music, *style galant* was more suitable for secular occasions such as concerts in the ornate homes of nobility and in royal palaces. Bach, aware of the new trend, felt that his compendium of fugues constituted his “last testament,” a valedictory as it were.

## **Bella by Barlight**

John Lurie

John Lurie escapes categorization: he is a self-taught musician, painter, actor, director, producer, and storyteller. He played harmonica in high school, jamming with Mississippi Fred McDowell and Canned Heat in 1968. Formatively, he listened to Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles.

Lurie acted in nineteen films, including *Stranger than Paradise*, and he composed and performed music for twenty television and film works; he produced, directed, and starred in a television series called *Fishing with John*. In 1996, his soundtrack for *Get Shorty* was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Lurie has been most identified with the melding of music and art that occurred in lower Manhattan in the 1970s and early 1980s. As saxophonist and bandleader of The Lounge Lizards, he was associated with the No-Wave Movement (along with James Chance and the

Contortions, and others). He also was friend and mentor to the young Jean-Michel Basquiat.

The brief **Bella by Barlight**, composed in 1985, comes from the collection *Stranger than Paradise*. This moody music fits the spare aesthetic of the film by Jim Marmusch for which it was composed. It is both melancholic and amusing.

Lurie's paintings have been shown in galleries in Munich, Zurich, Amsterdam, Tokyo, Los Angeles, Montreal, and New York.

## **BTT**

Colin Jacobsen

*The Washington Post* recently described violinist and composer Colin Jacobsen as “one of the most interesting figures on the classical music scene.” In addition to being a founding member of two unusual, audience-expanding ensembles (Brooklyn Rider and the orchestra The Knights), he is a touring member of Yo-Yo Ma's venerated Silk Road Project and an Avery Fisher Career Grant-winning violinist. His work as a composer developed as a natural outgrowth of his chamber and orchestral collaborations, inspired by encounters with leading exponents of non-western traditions as well as by his own classical heritage. Among his most recent compositions for Brooklyn Rider is **Three Miniatures** (“vivacious, deftly drawn sketches” said *The New York Times*), written for the reopening of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic art galleries. Jacobsen collaborated with Iran's Siamak Aghaei to write a Persian folk-inflected composition, *Ascending Bird*, in which he performed as soloist with the YouTube Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House in a concert that was streamed world-wide. His works for dance and theater include *Chalk and Soot*, a collaboration with Dance Heginbotham, and music for Compagnia de'Colombari's theatrical production of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*.

Jacobsen prepared his own note for this work. “BTT started off in my mind as an investigation into and celebration of the incredible creative ferment and experimentation of the 1970's/80's downtown New York scene as embodied by the likes of Glenn Branca, Meredith Monk, Arthur Russell, John Zorn, the Velvet Underground, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, the New York Dolls, Laurie Anderson, Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company, the Lounge Lizards, to name a few. However, I also found myself thinking about John Cage and Johann Sebastian Bach. This happened in part because a colleague of mine suggested that Cage was really the spiritual father of that whole scene, and I had this thought that he was tapping into the same elemental ‘stuff’ that Bach did, though coming at it perhaps from an opposite point of view and obviously from a very different era. While Cage is known as a proponent of chaos, one realizes that for every musical experiment he made, he set up a system of rules and then looked forward to what unfolded within that system (though often in extreme and unexpected juxtaposition). When we think of Bach and the cosmic order of his fugues, there's a similar setting-up of parameters that almost has a pre-determined quality, but then there's that same sense of things unfolding in a natural and larger-than-human way.

“I also felt that even within the incredible eclecticism that defined that downtown NY scene (which continues to influence so many worlds – contemporary classical, folk, rock, and jazz included) one could think of the “minimalism” (music that unfolds over spacious time) of Glass and Reich as one thread and the “maximalism” (music that constantly seeks to smash and subvert itself even as it's happening) of Zorn as another. And I found it interesting to have those two streams juxtaposed at times in this piece.

“All this is to say that most of the musical material in BTT emanates from a spelling of B-A-C-H and C-A-G-E (D), which in and of itself sets up an interesting juxtaposition of tonalities. The BACH motif is chromatic and curls in on itself, which the CAGE motif has an open and

pentatonic feel. Over the course of the piece, the two motifs interact in a variety of ways, sometimes contradicting each other and sometimes in harmony.”

**BTT** was composed in 2014 and had its world premiere on June 3, 2016, at National Sawdust as part of the New York Philharmonic’s Biennial.

## **Blueprint**

Caroline Shaw

Caroline Shaw is a New York-based musician – vocalist, violinist, composer, and producer – who performs in solo and collaborative projects. She is the youngest (at age 30) recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music, for *Partita for 8 Voices*, written for the Grammy-winning Roomful of Teeth of which she is a member. Born in Greenville, NC, she began playing the violin when she was two years old, her mother being her first teacher. She began composing when she was ten, mostly in imitation of the chamber music of Mozart and Brahms. She received her Bachelor of Music in violin performance from Rice University in 2004 and her Master’s degree in violin from Yale in 2007. She entered the PhD program in composition at Princeton in 2010. This season Ms. Shaw’s new works have been premiered by Renée Fleming with Inon Barnatan, Dawn Upshaw with Sō Percussion and Gil Kalish, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s with John Lithgow, the Britten Sinfonietta, TENET with the Metropolis Ensemble, the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, and Luciana Souza with A Far Cry.

**Blueprint**, composed in 2016 for the Aizuri Quartet, riffs off the finale of Beethoven’s String Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 18, No. 6. As *Washington Post* critic Robert Battey described it in his review of its premiere: “it starts with small motifs of this and that, but we soon hear shards of the Beethoven (both the somber intro and the frisky Allegretto section). Shaw deconstructs and recasts these motifs into a kaleidoscopic blend of old and new music, the textures sometimes melting into and at other times angrily interrupting one another. This bricolage felt perfectly natural despite its artifice, and for the first time ever, I write of the new work that it was way too short.”

## **String Quartet in F minor, Op. 95 (“Serioso”)**

Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven’s Opus 95 is the shortest of his sixteen quartets, the most compact, and the most concentrated. In his manuscript, he called it *Quartett serioso*, the only quartet to which he gave a qualifying title. It is indeed a serious work, introspective, impassioned, dramatic, forceful, at times even violent. He seems to have written it for himself alone, rather than having a commission from a wealthy sponsor. He began it in the summer of 1810 and completed it that October, not publishing it until 1816.

Most modern commentators see this quartet as a harbinger of Beethoven’s late quartets. He opens the first short movement, *Allegro con brio*, as directly as possible. No introduction, no preparatory accompaniment figure, not even an up-beat exists, only an abrupt melodic motif, not harmonized but in octaves that all four musicians play. Beethoven makes no provision for repeating the terse thematic exposition, and the entire development is only twenty measures in length, shorter even than the coda that closes the movement with viola repetitions of the opening five-note phrase. The whole movement is characterized by sudden concise, angry eruptions; its significant hallmark is the way the music has been compressed, pared down to its very essence. As a result, the listener becomes aware of how Beethoven avoids lengthy transitions. Additionally, unusual unison, insistent declamations occur seven times, with all four voices intoning the same theme.

The second movement, *Allegretto, ma non troppo*, filled with chromaticism, has a simple three-part form with a smooth central fugal section. The soft little cello solo figure with which it begins may, at first, seem to be just an introduction to the lyrical violin melody, but the way Beethoven uses it later makes clear that it is, in fact, the first part of the movement's main theme. The viola first articulates the second theme, which then passes contrapuntally from one instrument to the other. A shortened recapitulation of the beginning section comes before the coda. A diminished chord leads directly into the third movement, *Allegro assai vivace, ma serioso*, an energetic, galloping variant of the classical scherzo, with an accompanied chorale as its contrasting central trio section.

The fourth movement's melancholic opening, *Larghetto espressivo*, has an almost vocal quality. Beethoven then connects this prefatory section to the previous movement's opening rhythmic motif, which introduces a rondo, *Allegretto agitato*, a favorite, classical finale structure that often is jolly and playful; here, however, its principal and subsidiary themes are passionate and stormy. In fact, although it begins with melodic segments, Beethoven actually introduces a fugue that he does not complete; it and the key shifts contribute to a feeling of tension and unrest. Another section, *Allegro*, almost a movement within a movement, is added at the end. Because the finale reinterprets many of the motifs and harmonies of the initial movement, it seems that Beethoven could conclude the work only with a sudden transition to something completely different. Indeed he does; he breathes in some sunshine by introducing the major tonality. This new material, with its sudden change of tempo and meter, brings the quartet to a close on a liberating, optimistic, even triumphal tone.

## About the Artists

Founded in 2005 and based in Brooklyn, NY, Brooklyn Rider has become known for playing unusual and contemporary repertoire and for collaborating with musicians outside the classical music sphere. Violinists Johnny Gandelsman and Colin Jacobsen, and violist Nicholas Cords have been mainstays of Silkroads, a musical ensemble founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma with the simple belief that radical cross-cultural collaboration leads to a more hopeful world. Cellist Michael Nicolas has been a member of the acclaimed International Contemporary Ensemble working with countless composers from around the world, and was a founding member of Third Sound, which made its debut with an historic residency in Cuba at the 2015 Havana Contemporary Music Festival. Together the four musicians continue to attract legions of fans and draw rave reviews from classical, world, and rock critics alike.

Brooklyn Rider's first album, *Passport*, released in 2008, was selected by NPR as one of the best classical albums of that year. In 2015 the quartet celebrated its 10th anniversary with the ground-breaking, multi-disciplinary project, *The Brooklyn Rider Almanac*, for which it recorded and toured 15 specially commissioned works, each inspired by a different artistic muse. In 2016 the quartet released *So Many Things* with mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, featuring music by Kate Bush, John Adams, Caroline Shaw, Bjork, Nico Muhly, Anders Hillborg, Brad Mehldau, Elvis Costello, Sting, and Rufus Wainwright.

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