



presents...

Shenson Chamber Series

JACK QUARTET

Christopher Otto | Violin
Austin Wulliman | Violin

John Pickford Richards | Viola
Jay Campbell | Cello

Thursday, October 26, 2023 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

JOHN LUTHER ADAMS “Rising” from *untouched*

Lines Made by Walking

1. *Up the Mountain*
2. *Along the Ridges*
3. *Down the Mountain*

The Wind in High Places

1. *Above Sunset Pass*
2. *MacLaren Summit*
3. *Looking Toward Hope*

**The Shenson Chamber Series is made possible by Fred M. Levin,
The Shenson Foundation.**

The **JACK Quartet** is represented by Pink Noise Agency
Brooklyn, NY pinknoiseagency.com



ENSEMBLE PROFILE

San Francisco Performances presents the JACK Quartet for the third time. The Quartet made their first appearance as inaugural artists of the PIVOT series in March 2016.

Hailed by the *New York Times* as “our leading new-music foursome,” the Grammy®-nominated **JACK Quartet** is one of the most respected experimental string quartets performing today, synchronized in its mission to create international community through transformative, mind-broadening experiences and close listening. Comprising violinists Christopher Otto and Austin Wulliman, violist John Pickford Richards, and cellist Jay Campbell, JACK was founded in 2005 and operates as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the performance, commissioning, and appreciation of 20th and 21st century string quartet music. Through intimate, longstanding relationships with many of today’s most creative voices, the quartet has a prolific commissioning and recording catalog and has been nominated for three Grammy® Awards.

JACK is featured in the ongoing celebrations of John Zorn’s 70th birthday, including an album release of his complete string quartets, major global tour dates, and a premiere with Barbara Hannigan. Other season highlights include a three-concert day at Wigmore Hall, the premiere of Natacha Diels’ *Beautiful Trouble* in Philadelphia, an Australian tour, and the 5th edition of JACK Studio.

Through its successful nonprofit model, the quartet has both self-commissioned and been commissioned to create hundreds of new works. The world’s top com-

posers choose JACK because of its singular dedication to innovation and experimentation, realized through the invisible labor of extensive studio time and the support of full-time leadership staff and a Board of Directors.

Committed to helping dismantle outmoded classical music pipelines for composers, JACK’s all-access initiative JACK Studio funds collaborations with a selection of artists each year, who receive money, workshop time, mentorship, and resources to develop new works for string quartet. JACK receives more than 500 applications each season and selects up to 15 composers or artists. More than 40 composers have worked with JACK through JACK Studio thus far.

Among many honors, JACK has earned an Avery Fisher Career Grant and Fromm Music Foundation Prize; been selected as Musical America’s 2018 Ensemble of the Year; and received Lincoln Center’s Martin E. Segal Award, New Music USA’s Trailblazer Award, and the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming.

JACK has been nominated for three Grammy® Awards, the most recent being their albums of music by John Luther Adams—nominated in the 2022 and 2023 Best Ensemble Performance category. Other albums include music by Helmut Lachenmann, Catherine Lamb, Du Yun, Elliott Sharp, Zosha di Castri, Iannis Xenakis, and an upcoming release of the complete quartets of Elliott Carter.

The JACK Quartet makes its home in New York City, where it is the Quartet in Residence at the Mannes School of Music at The New School. They also teach each summer at New Music on the Point in Vermont and at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativi-

ty. JACK has long-standing relationships with the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program, where they teach and collaborate with students each fall and spring, as well as with the Lucerne Festival Academy, of which the four members are all alumni. Learn more at jackquartet.com.

PROGRAM NOTES

Untouched (2015)

JOHN LUTHER ADAMS
(B. 1953)

Over the years my large ensemble works have sometimes included string quartet. However, I didn’t write my first piece for string quartet alone until I was 59. Now, in my second string quartet, the fingers of the players still have yet to touch the fingerboard.

This music contains no normal stopped tones. All the sounds are produced either as natural harmonics or on open strings.

The highest harmonic utilized is the tenth. Some of the harmonics may be more resonant when played as double harmonics. For example, the sixth harmonic can be produced by simultaneously touching the nodes for the second and third harmonics.

Dynamics are free. But all the sounds in the air at any moment should be equally balanced.

Lines Made By Walking (2019)

I’ve always been a walker. For much of my life I walked the mountains and tundra of Alaska. More recently it’s been the Mexican desert, the altiplano, quebradas, and mountain ridges of Chile, and the hills and canyons of Montana. Making my way across these landscapes at three miles an hour, I began to imagine music coming directly out of the contours of the land.

I began work on my fifth string quartet, *Lines Made by Walking*, by composing three expansive harmonic fields made up of tempo canons with five, six, and seven independent layers. (This is a technique I’ve used for years, in which a single melodic line is superimposed on itself at different speeds.) Once I’d composed these fields, I traced pathways across them. As I did this, each instrument of the quartet acquired a unique profile, transforming the strict imitative counterpoint of the tempo canons into intricately varied textures.

In the mornings, in my studio, I would

search for the most fluid and beautiful routes across my musical landscapes. In the afternoons, on my walks, I'd follow the contours of the land, along old tracks and animal trails or watersheds and ridgelines. In the process I discovered something approaching a true multi-voice polyphony—not so much through my fingers on the piano keyboard as through my feet, walking across open ground.

The Wind in High Places (2011)

Gordon Wright was the friend of a lifetime. For 30 years, Gordon and I shared our two greatest passions: music and Alaska. Gordon was my musical collaborator, my next-door neighbor, my fellow environmentalist and my camping buddy. *The Wind in High Places* is a triptych evoking special moments and places in our friendship. Over the years, I've utilized string quartet in several large ensemble works. But, at the age of 59, I finally composed my first string quartet.

I've long been enamored with the ethereal tones of Aeolian harps—instruments that draw their music directly from the wind. *The Wind in High Places* treats the string quartet as a large, 16-stringed harp. All the sounds in the piece are produced as natural harmonics or on open strings. Over the course of almost 20 minutes, the fingers of the musicians never touch the fingerboards of the instruments. If I could've found a way to make this music without them touching the instruments at all, I would have.

—Program notes by John Luther Adams