

**NewMusic**  
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2021



# JACK QUARTET

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 2020

**New College**  
THE HONORS COLLEGE of Florida

# NewMusicNewCollege

Mark Dancigers, Director  
R. L. Silver, Producer

## JACK QUARTET

Saturday, August 29, 2020 • 8 p.m.

Co-presented by New Music New College and Kaufman Music Center  
Filmed at Kaufman Music Center's Merkin Hall, New York City

Event Sponsor:  
Ina Schnell

## PROGRAM

<i>String Quartet No. 1</i> (2016)	Zosha Di Castri (b. 1985)
<i>Chambers</i> (2011/2012) 1. 2. 3.	Marcos Balter (b. 1974)
<i>Composition 18</i> (1971)	Anthony Braxton (b. 1945)
<i>A Failed Entertainment</i> (2013)	Clara Iannotta (b. 1983)
<i>String Quartet 2.5 "Playing with Seeds"</i> (2017)	George Lewis (b. 1952)

### **JACK Quartet:**

Christopher Otto & Austin Wulliman, violins  
John Pickford Richards, viola  
Jay Campbell, cello

Point of Order Media: video and editing  
Ben Young: mixing and mastering

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

New Music New College offers special thanks to Ina Schnell for graciously sponsoring these events. The wonderful folks at Kaufman Music Center's Merkin Hall are taking care of the remote video and audio, so this can be streamed from New York, far from New Music New College's Sarasota home. We cannot express enough gratitude to the members of JACK Quartet and Colbert Artists Management, Inc., for working so hard to make this concert happen during the most difficult of times. NMNC would also like to thank the dedicated staff of the Office of Communications and Marketing, our friends at the New College Foundation, Daniel Hernandez in the office of the Division of Humanities, New College attorney David Fugett, Provost Barbara Feldman, and absolutely everyone else at New College of Florida for supporting us and remaining a strong community dedicated to learning, teaching, exploration, and experimentation.

Program Designed by Shane Donglasan

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## PROGRAM NOTES:

### **Zosha Di Castri—*String Quartet No. 1***

*Co-commissioned by the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, in partnership with The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Americas Society. Premiered September 2nd, 2016, by the 10 finalist groups at the Banff International String Quartet Competition*

Both purely abstract and sonically concrete, this quartet explores virtuosic shifts between quickly contrasting modes of expression, while demanding a physical internalization of a dense thicket of activity. Escaping the agitation and frenzy are moments of melodic beauty, microtonal introspection, and a delicate fabric of time-suspending harmonics.

—Zosha Di Castri

### **Marcos Balter—*Chambers***

The first movement of *Chambers* focuses on attentive listening, immersing oneself into seemingly static textures that in return gradually unveil their many complexities and hidden hyperactivity, primarily through timbre. The second movement divides the quartet in two duets, and is centered around the role of spatial and temporal organization of musical gestures. The third movement both summarizes the two previous movements and introduces elements of virtual polyphony via counterpoint.

—Marcos Balter

### **Anthony Braxton—*Composition 18***

Braxton writes that his approach to composition, which incorporates improvisatory structures, is “designed to encourage greater input from its performing musicians, so that more than one level of intent and insight can be transmitted during its execution. The reality of this new involvement is in accordance with my belief in transformational creativity and transformational participation.”

In approaching Braxton’s music, John Pickford Richards says that the JACK Quartet will “come up with a rough game plan, an order of possibilities. The fun in playing this piece is seeing how far can we stretch the rules and push each other into uncharted territory.”

## Clara Iannotta—*A Failed Entertainment*

*Dedication: to Chris*

Last October, I was on a four-day train trip from San Francisco to New York when I started reading *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace. Over the last year, I have been looking for a way—my personal way—to deal with form and time, and this book helped me, giving me a new, different perspective on them. I am not saying that my piece is related to *Infinite Jest*—although “*A Failed Entertainment*” was Wallace’s working title for his novel—but that this was the impulse which led me here, a starting point for a search that will probably take me several years.

I am used to working with different kinds of sound, melting them together in order to find a unique shape. What challenged me in this piece was precisely the fact that I could not work as I always do, because I had four instruments with the same sound properties. *A Failed Entertainment* is my longest work as well as my first attempt at working beyond the sound itself.

I am grateful to Julia Gerlach and the Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD for supporting the project, and to the musicians of Quatuor Diotima, for their commitment.

—Clara Iannotta

## George Lewis—*String Quartet 2.5, “Playing with Seeds”*

The anthropologist Paul Richards has spent over thirty years studying rice cultivation among the Mende-speaking population of the village of Mogbuama in Sierra Leone. Richards understands shifting cultivation as a system of improvisation that requires not only experience and intuition, but also knowledge of landscape, soil, weather, and at least 45 different rice varieties. Richards likens this form of improvisation to the musical, while also pointing out the difference between the safety net of the structured art performance context and a real-time, real-world practice in which false moves can result in hunger, debt, starvation, and death.

In this society, women are the principal investigators: cataloguing plant varieties, introducing new growing techniques, predicting and monitoring their impact on the environment, coping with contingencies, and serving as repositories of memory for outcomes. Seed experimentation by women on small plots—“playing with seeds”—has resulted in the emergence of new and hardier varieties of rice, and it is this practice that presents the analogy for how this string quartet operates. The music is “grown” from “seeds” that are developed into new “varietals” through trajectories of register, temporal flux (stretching/compressing), sudden reversals of apparent fortune, and the nomadism that is central to shifting cultivation.

I want to suggest that like all listening, an engagement with this work constitutes a form of nomadic improvisation—not by the performers, who are dealing with fully notated music—but on the part of audiences. In Mogbuaman society, farming sites belong to “the living, the dead, and the yet unborn.” That’s actually quite a fine situation for a piece of music.

See Paul Richards, “Shifting Cultivation as Improvisation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies, Volume 1*, edited by George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut, 365-382 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

—George Lewis

## ABOUT JACK QUARTET



Hailed by *The New York Times* as the “nation’s most important quartet”, the JACK Quartet is one of the most acclaimed, renowned, and respected groups performing today. JACK has maintained an unwavering commitment to their mission of performing and commissioning new works, giving voice to unheard composers, and cultivating an ever-greater sense of openness toward contemporary classical music. Over the past season, they have been selected as Musical America’s 2018 “Ensemble of the Year”, named to WQXR’s “19 for 19 Artists to Watch”, and awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Through intimate relationships with today’s most creative voices, JACK embraces close collaboration with the composers they perform, leading to a radical embodiment of the technical, musical, and emotional aspects of their work. The quartet has worked with artists such as Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Julia Wolfe, George Lewis, Chaya Czernowin, and Simon Steen-Andersen, with upcoming and recent premieres including works by Tyshawn Sorey, Georg Friedrich Haas, Clara Iannotta, John Luther Adams, Catherine Lamb, and John Zorn. JACK also recently announced their new Fulcrum Project, an all-access initiative to commission six artists each year, who will receive money, workshop time, mentorship, and resources to develop new work to be performed and recorded by the quartet.

Committed to education, JACK is the Quartet in Residence at the Mannes School of Music, who will host JACK’s new Frontiers Festival, a multi-faceted festival of contemporary music for string quartet. They also teach each summer at New Music on the Point and at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. JACK has done educational programs at the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program, the Lucerne Festival Academy, Harvard University, NYU, Princeton University, Stanford University, and more.

Comprising violinists Christopher Otto and Austin Wulliman, violist John Pickford Richards, and cellist Jay Campbell, JACK operates as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the performance, commissioning, and appreciation of new string quartet music.

## JACK QUARTET BIOS

**Christopher Otto** performs with ensembles including Ensemble Signal, The Cellar and Point, Alarm Will Sound, Talea Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, The Theatre of Eternal Music String Ensemble, Ne(x)tworks, and The Knights. He has premiered and recorded several chamber works by John Zorn and has performed and recorded as soloist in Zorn's violin concerto *Contes de Fées*. Christopher has also performed as soloist in Brian Ferneyhough's *Terrain* with Ensemble Signal. His violin teachers include Cyrus Forough and Timothy Ying. He is a founder, along with his wife Emily DuFour, of Hutchins East, an ensemble performing on a set of eight proportionally-sized string instruments made by Carleen Hutchins, and has written and arranged several works for the ensemble. He studied composition at the Eastman School of Music with Robert Morris, David Liptak, Martin Bresnick, and James Willey as well as mathematics at the University of Rochester. Christopher has written works in just intonation for string quartet, violin duo, violin octet, violin with electronics, and ensembles of Hutchins instruments. His violin duo was recorded by Erik Carlson and is available on SoundCloud along with his violin octet. An article on his violin octet appears in *Arcana VII*, an anthology edited by John Zorn. Christopher serves on the faculty of the Mannes School of Music, where JACK is Quartet in Residence.

Praised as a "gifted, adventuresome violinist" by the *Chicago Tribune* and as a "remarkable, unbelievable violinist/violist extraordinaire" by the syndicated radio program *Relevant Tones*, **Austin Wulliman** has gained critical and audience attention through his "wide technical range and interpretive daring" (New Music Box) as a soloist and chamber musician. He first forged his reputation in Chicago with the collective Ensemble Dal Niente, serving as the group's Program Director, and winning the Kranichstein Music Prize (the grand prize for interpretation) at the Darmstadt Summer Course in 2012. Austin was also a founding member of Spektral Quartet, serving as Ensemble in Residence (as well as Adjunct Instructor of Violin) at the University of Chicago from 2011-2016. Consistently in search of new musical pathways through ensemble work, Austin has collaborated with a wide range of musical voices, from artists like Deerhoof and Julia Holter, to Miguel Zenon and Billy Childs, or Brian Ferneyhough and Kaija Saariaho. Furthermore, he has also been a guest artist with groups such as Eighth Blackbird, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNow Ensemble. His debut solo release *Diligence Is to Magic as Progress Is to Flight* was released in 2014 in collaboration with bassoonist/composer Katherine Young. Austin holds degrees from the University of Michigan and Northwestern University, as well as having held fellowships at the Aspen Music Festival and Lucerne Academy. Austin serves on the faculty of the Mannes School of Music, where JACK is Quartet in Residence.

Called "wholesome-looking" by the *New York Times*, violist **John Pickford Richards** has gained a reputation for performing new and unusual music around the globe. He was a founding member of the ensemble Alarm Will Sound and now serves both as JACK's violist and Executive Director. John has appeared with artists including Björk and Grizzly Bear and has performed as soloist with the Pasadena Symphony, Armenian Philharmonic, Wordless Music Orchestra, OSSIA, and with the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra playing the solo part to Luciano Berio's *Chemins II* under the direction of Pierre Boulez. He holds degrees from the Interlochen Arts Academy and Eastman School of Music where his primary teachers were David Holland and John Graham. John serves on the faculty of the Mannes School of Music, where JACK is Quartet in Residence.

Cellist **Jay Campbell** has been recognized around the world for approaching both old and new works with equally probing curiosity and emotional commitment. His performances have been described as "brilliant and insatiably inquisitive", "electrifying", and "prodigious" by the *New York Times*, and "gentle, poignant, and deeply moving" by the *Washington Post*. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, Jay performed with the New York Philharmonic in 2013 and was a curator for the New York Philharmonic's 2016 Biennale. He has soloed in major venues around the globe including Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, Avery Fisher Hall, and Lucerne's KKL and performed recitals in Carnegie's Weill Hall, the Kennedy, Mondavi, and Krannert centers. Dedicated to introducing audiences to the music of our time, Jay has worked closely with some of the most creative minds of the 20th/21st centuries including Pierre Boulez, Elliott Carter, Matthias

Pintscher, Kaija Saariaho, and countless others from his own generation. His close association with John Zorn has resulted in over a dozen works written for him including *The Aristos*, a Pulitzer Prize runner up resulting in the release of *Hen to Pan* (Tzadik), listed in the *New York Times* Best Recordings of 2015. Jay is the cellist of Junction Trio with violinist Stefan Jackiw and pianist Conrad Tao. He has been a guest at the Marlboro, Chamber Music Northwest, Moab, Heidelberger Fruhling, DITTO, and Lincoln Center festivals. Jay serves on the faculty of the Mannes School of Music, where JACK is Quartet in Residence.