

Reflections on a Residency

By Melia Watras

As a highlight of our year at Juilliard as the Graduate Quartet-in-Residence, the Corigliano Quartet will present the Lisa Arnhold Concert at Alice Tully Hall on April 26. The 8:00 p.m. concert will consist of Haydn's String Quartet in F minor, Op. 20, No. 5, John Corigliano's String Quartet (1995), and the A minor quartet of Robert Schumann, Op. 41, No. 1.

We've been very fortunate to be able to work closely with the Juilliard String Quartet this year. We have been inspired by their endless knowledge of the quartet repertoire, their understanding of the composers they play, their passion for music, and their tireless devotion to their art. Their approach to music making and the way they share it with their students will stay with us long after we have left Juilliard. The quartet residency gave us the opportunity to get coachings from the experienced gurus of the JSQ, and (when the JSQ went out of town) to give coachings to some extremely gifted string players. It has been an ideal combination for us to learn from and grow.

This concert represents a culmination of our residency at Juilliard. When we selected the program, we wanted to choose pieces that would reflect the work we had done with the JSQ. We also wanted a program that an audience would really enjoy listening to—a program that we would like to hear if we were in the crowd. Finally, we knew we would include a work by an American composer, something we always try to do in honor of the great composers of our country,

There is a line of continuity that runs through the program. Both the Haydn and the Corigliano have fugue movements. What is particularly interesting is to note the musical distance that has been traveled from a fugue written in 1772 to one from 1995. Haydn's finale is a two-subject fugue, which moves through constantly changing keys and relationships. Tension is built almost entirely in *sotto voce*. The Corigliano fugue adds the element of time in his treatment of the

subject. It opens with the subject in the viola, then is heard from the second violin, then the first. Each subject entrance is notated in a way that they all have the same rhythmic proportions, but with slightly altered note values. So the overall effect is that the three different lines are playing the same material, but at slightly different tempos, independent of each other.

One of the main thematic elements in the Corigliano is the use of a sequence of disjunct minor thirds. You can hear this throughout the piece, and it's particularly prominent in ascending patterns in the Scherzo. At one point the exact pitches of the pattern are non-specified—the players ascend, keeping the distance of a minor third as they go up, but with non-specified pitches. As you listen to the Schumann, you will also notice patterns of disjunct thirds (sometimes major, sometimes minor) in the fourth movement. Schumann's use is of course very tonal, but the motivic similarity is there.

The historical scope of our program starts with the beginnings of the string quartet and goes to where the string quartet is today. From Haydn, who played a critical role in the development of the string quartet form, up to Corigliano, who played a critical role in the forming of our string quartet. The Corigliano was the first piece we ever played together, as an ad-hoc group at Indiana University. John Corigliano was in the audience, and his encouragement gave us the energy and confidence to try to forge a career as a string quartet.

As we finish our year as Juilliard's grad quartet, we'll look back fondly on our time spent here. For Lina Bahn, it was a return to her roots, to the school where she earned her bachelor's degree. For the other three (Jeffrey Zeigler, Michael Lim, and myself) it was a great introduction to musical life in New York.

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