

The  
Morgan  
Library &  
Museum

Presents

Rush Hour Music in J. Pierpont Morgan's Library

## Argus Quartet



Tuesday, February 22, 2022, 6:30 pm

Argus Quartet. Photography by Jeffrey Hornstein.

# Program

drip music (2019)

Katherine Balch  
(b. 1991)

"Of Being" (**world premiere**)\*

Jessica Meyer  
(b. 1974)

String Quartet in E-flat Major (1834)

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel  
(1805-1847)

*Adagio ma non troppo*

*Allegretto*

*Romanze*

*Allegro molto vivace*

\* This commission has been made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This concert is part of the Composers Now February 2022 Festival.

*The program will be performed without an intermission.  
Please turn off all electronic devices. Photography and recording are not allowed.*

# Program Notes

## OF BEING (2021)

Jessica Meyer (b. 1974)

Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* has been a book I have been wanting to read for quite some time, specifically because of the philosophical paradox it poses. Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of eternal return (or eternal recurrence) puts forth that everything in life happens an infinite number of times, causing the "heaviest of burdens." Conversely, a personal life in which everything happens only once loses its "weight" and significance — hence the "the unbearable lightness of being." Kundera encourages the reader to consider this duality through the actions of his characters and the comparisons between love and sex, loyalty and betrayal, self and community, lightness and weight, then ultimately ... fate and chance. Kundera also continuously refers to a motive Beethoven uses in his final string quartet as a sonic allegory for eternal recurrence ("Es muss sein" or "It Must Be"), and posits that musical motives in a composition can come and go like certain people in one's life.

In September of 2021, I was fortunate to have a month-long residency at the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation in Maine in order to conceive and write this piece. It gave me a lot of time to ponder these dualities, how they relate to each other, and explore how they are present in my own life. While reading the novel, five quotes stood out to me, and each movement is inspired by a different one. Also like the novel, themes are interwoven throughout in a way that encourages us to question our own patterns and experiences.

As concert seasons are getting back to their usual robustness, it is clear what we have been missing during Covid time: the communal sharing of sounds and emotions, the energy that passes between the performers and the audience, and the affirmation of why we devote our lives to our craft. The work ends with everyone in the room making music together, reminding us how our selves exist in relation to those around us, while also allowing moments of fate and chance to unfurl in real time.

Many thanks to Chamber Music America, the Argus Quartet, the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation, and to my family — both chosen and related.

## Jessica Meyer

With playing that is "fierce and lyrical" and works that are "other-worldly" (*The Strad*) and "evocative" (*The New York Times*), Jessica Meyer is a GRAMMY®-nominated violist and composer whose passionate musicianship radiates accessibility and emotional clarity. Her first composer/performer portrait album debuted at #1 on the *Billboard* traditional classical chart, where "knife-edge anticipation opens on to unexpected, often ecstatic musical realms, always with a personal touch and imaginatively written for the instruments" (*Gramophone Magazine*).

Meyer's compositions viscerally explore the wide palette of emotionally expressive colors available to each instrument while using traditional and extended techniques inspired by her varied experiences as a contemporary and period instrumentalist. Since embarking on her composition career only seven years ago, premieres have included performances by the St. Lawrence String Quartet (as the 2021 Composer in Residence at Spoleto USA), American Brass Quintet, PUBLIQuartet, A Far Cry, and acclaimed vocal ensembles such as Roomful of Teeth, Vox Clamantis, and the Lorelei Ensemble (which received the Dale Warland Singers Commission Award from Chorus America).

Upcoming premieres include a concerto for herself with the League of Composers Orchestra to be premiered in New York City's Miller Theatre, a work for the President's Own Marine Band, City Music Cleveland, for the musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra, the Dorian Wind Quintet, Hub New Music, the Bangor Symphony as the winner of their Commissioning Award, and interactive orchestral performances all around the country as part of Carnegie Hall's nationwide Link Up Program.

# About the Artists

## Argus Quartet

The Argus Quartet is dedicated to encouraging the joys of human connection, community, and discovery by bringing a wide-ranging repertoire to life through bold and meaningful programming and a vibrant commitment to collaboration and education, winning recognition as a “vivacious foursome ... [that] plays canonical standards with authority and verve and approaches modern music with care and assurance” (*The New Yorker*). Praised for playing with “supreme melodic control and total authority” and “decided dramatic impact” (*Calgary Herald*), the Quartet has quickly emerged as one of today’s most dynamic and versatile ensembles, winning First Prize at both the 2017 M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition and the 2017 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition.

Since then, increasingly busy concert seasons have taken Argus to some of the country’s most prestigious venues and festivals, including Carnegie’s Weill and Zankel Halls, Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, the Ravinia Festival, the Albany Symphony’s American Music Festival, and Music Academy of the West. Highlights of the 2019-20 season included a debut performance for Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series, along with a return engagement in New York for the Schneider Concerts at the New School.

Argus has worked with many of today’s leading musical voices, including Martin Bresnick, Chris Cerrone, Ted Hearne, Garth Knox, Andrew Norman, Christopher Theofanidis, and Augusta Read Thomas. Recent commissions include new quartets by Katherine Balch, Donald Crockett, GRAMMY nominee Eric Guinivan, Hermitage Prize winner Thomas Kotcheff, and Guggenheim Fellowship recipient Juri Seo. Argus’s recording of Seo’s works for string quartet was released in May 2019 on Innova Recordings. The Quartet has received grants from the Koussevitsky Foundation, Chamber Music America, and the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts in support of their commissioning efforts.

From 2015-17, the Quartet served as the Fellowship Quartet in Residence at the Yale School of Music under the guidance of the Brentano Quartet, and from 2017-19 held the position of Graduate Resident String Quartet at the Juilliard School, where they worked closely with the Juilliard String Quartet. They have also held residencies at New Music on the Point, working with the JACK Quartet, and at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts as the Ernst Stiefel Quartet in Residence.

Education and outreach are an important part of the Argus Quartet’s mission. The Quartet has worked with students through residencies and masterclasses at Yale and Princeton, James Madison University, Rockport Music, the Milken School, the Young Musicians Foundation, California State University Long Beach, and Los Angeles City College.

Based in New York City, the Quartet was founded in Los Angeles in 2013, where its members shared many meals at their favorite taco truck on Argus Drive.

Argus Quartet is managed by Besen Arts. [www.besenarts.com](http://www.besenarts.com)

## Clara Kim, violin

Adventure and collaboration are at the heart of violinist Clara Kim’s multi-faceted career as new music performer and chamber musician. By commissioning, premiering, and championing works from living composers, Clara has quickly established herself at the forefront of her generation in the interpretation of contemporary music. She has worked with some of today’s most imaginative musical voices such as Christopher Theofanidis, Augusta Read Thomas, and the Sleeping Giant Collective, and has premiered several new concertos written for her. Clara is the first prize winner of the 2012 International Solo Violin Competition in Cremona, Italy, and also won the MPrize Chamber Arts Competition and the Concert Artists Guild Competition as a member of the Argus Quartet. As a chamber musician, she has performed at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Jordan Hall, Lincoln Center, and Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw.

### **Giancarlo Latta, violin**

Fiercely committed to the music of our time, violinist and composer Giancarlo Latta is interested in the intersection and convergence of music old and new, a passion he explores principally as a member of the acclaimed New York-based Argus Quartet and the violin/piano duo escapeVelocity. He has worked with dozens of composers both young and established, including Mario Davidovsky, George Lewis, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Anna Thorvaldsdottir, and has been heard in venues as diverse as the Rothko Chapel (Houston), Royal Albert Hall (London) as part of the BBC Proms, and Neubad (Lucerne, Switzerland), a multipurpose performance space in a former public swimming pool. Past highlights include duo performances with flutist Claire Chase, the U.S. premiere of Liza Lim's opera *Tree of Codes* at the Spoleto Festival USA, and residencies at Yellow Barn and Avaloch Farm. Giancarlo studied with Paul Kantor at Rice University and Almita Vamos at the Music Institute of Chicago. He is also a writer.

### **Maren Rothfritz, viola**

Violist Maren Rothfritz is a passionate artist and educator who is equally at home on the concert stage, in the teaching studio, and in the classroom. From 2016-2018, she was a Fellow with Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect, performing and teaching throughout New York City. Previously, she completed her Master's degree with Kim Kashkashian at New England Conservatory. Born in Paderborn, Germany, Ms. Rothfritz entered into the Hochschule für Musik Detmold at sixteen and joined the viola class of Diemut Poppen a year later. She subsequently attended the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía in Madrid (2011-13) and the Conservatorium van Amsterdam (2013-14), where she studied with Nobuko Imai. She moved to the United States in 2014 and is now working towards a Doctorate of Musical Arts under Ettore Causa at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where she was awarded the prestigious CUNY Graduate Center Fellowship.

### **Mariel Roberts, cello**

American cellist Mariel Roberts is widely recognized not just for her virtuosic performances, but as a "fearless explorer" in her field (*Chicago Reader*) recognized for her work as an interpreter, improviser, and composer. Roberts has appeared as a soloist and chamber musician across four continents, most notably as a member and co-director of the Wet Ink Ensemble (named "The Best Classical Music Ensemble of 2018" by *The New York Times*), as well as with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Mivos Quartet, Bang on a Can All Stars, and Ensemble Signal. She performs regularly on major stages for new music such as the Lincoln Center Festival, Wien Modern (Austria), Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), Cervantino Festival (Mexico), Klang Festival (Denmark), Shanghai New Music Week (China), Darmstadt Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Germany), and Aldeburgh Music Festival (UK). Roberts' compositions have been performed at venues such as Merkin Hall and Miller Theater in New York City.

# The Morgan Library & Museum

Celebrate the intersection of art, literature, and music in engaging concerts inspired by the Morgan's collections and exhibitions. The Morgan Library & Museum houses one of the finest collections of music manuscripts in the country, featuring composers such as J.S. Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Frédéric Chopin, Claude Debussy, Gustav Mahler, Fanny Mendelssohn, W.A. Mozart, Franz Schubert, Clara Schumann, Igor Stravinsky, and Philip Glass, among many others. In addition, the collection is enhanced by extensive holdings of musician's letters and first edition scores and librettos. Explore select autographs on the Morgan's website at Music Manuscripts Online ([www.themorgan.org/music](http://www.themorgan.org/music)).

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# The Morgan Library & Museum

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

**Holbein:**

*Capturing Character*

Through May 15, 2022

**Woody Guthrie:**

*People Are the Song*

Through May 22, 2022

**Gwendolyn Brooks:**

*A Poet's Work In Community*

Through June 5, 2022

**One Hundred Years of James Joyce's Ulysses**

June 3, 2022 through October 2, 2022

**J. Pierpont Morgan's Library:**

*Building the Bookman's Paradise*

June 10, 2022 through September 18, 2022



# The Morgan Library & Museum

## Concerts

### **The George London Foundation Competition Finals**

(Live Streamed)

Friday, February 25, 2022, 4 PM

### **Frisson**

Rush Hour Music in J. Pierpont Morgan's Library

Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 6:30 PM

### **Steven Banks, saxophone**

Young Concert Artists

Wednesday, March 23, 2022, 12 PM

### **Songs of Parting: Music by Mozart, Haydn, and others**

Carolyn Sampson, soprano

Kristian Bezuidenhout, fortepiano

Boston Early Music Festival

Sunday, April 3, 2022, 3 PM

## Talks

### **A Reading Lesson with Lady Guildford**

(Virtual)

Helen Smith, professor of English and Related Literature, University of York

Tuesday, March 1, 2022, 12:00 PM

### **Holbein and Thomas More: An Intimate Portrait**

Xavier F. Salomon, Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief

Curator, The Frick Collection

Thursday, March 17, 2022, 6:30 PM

The concert program is made possible by assistance from Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky, the Joan and Alan Ades-Taub Family Foundation, the Esther Simon Charitable Trust, Miles Morgan, the Witherspoon Fund of the New York Community Trust, the Theodore H. Barth Foundation, and the following endowed funds: the Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund for Concerts and Lectures; and the Celia Ascher Endowment Fund.

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