



September 22, 2021

Princeton Symphony Orchestra Presents Music for a Late Summer Evening

By Nancy Plum

For the second consecutive year, Princeton Symphony Orchestra began its concert season outdoors. With indoor halls in the area limited or closed to large audiences, the Orchestra presented its opening concert of the 2021-22 season at Princeton's Morven Museum and Garden Pool House, featuring the Philadelphia-based Jasper String Quartet performing three chamber works to an outdoor audience. Violinists J Freivogel and Karen Kim, violist Andrew Gonzalez, and cellist Rachel Henderson Freivogel played a program of Florence Price and Maurice Ravel, as well as a work by a unique composer fusing classical and indigenous American music.

The chamber music of early 20th-century American composer Florence Price has been popular in this past year of outdoor-only concerts, and the Jasper Quartet opened last Thursday night's performance with Price's *String Quartet in G Major*. Playing from a gazebo to an audience seated on Morven's back lawn, the Jasper musicians were able to bring out the quiriness of Price's harmonic language as well as the rich melodies which mark this composer's works. The Quartet played melodic themes with consistent forward motion, with teasing trills from the violins and an ensemble sound which became richer as the music progressed. The second movement's free and open theme reflected Price's extensive repertory of songs, contrasted by a fast-moving and playful section. Cellist Henderson Freivogel provided a particularly solid foundation to close the work under violist Gonzalez's rich viola playing and the nimble fingering of the two violinists.

Composer Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma and maintains a string commitment to the nurturing and development of American Indian classical composition. Frequently commissioned by musical organizations nationwide, Tate is particularly known for infusing classical music

with American Indian nationalism. Tate's chamber work *Pisachi, Six Epitomes for String Quartet*, was commissioned in 2013 by the *avant-garde* string quartet ETHEL, and was conceived as part of a multi-media presentation. *Pisachi*, whose title is the Chickasaw word for "reveal," draws from Hopi and Pueblo Indian musical rhythms and forms for its musical language.

The Jasper String Quartet players began *Pisachi* with an almost imperceptible violin, as a subtle viola solo barely won out in an auditory competition with an overhead airplane. Violinist Freivogel provided a very high violin part against the rumbling accompaniment of the other players, and the quartet opened the six "epitomes" with a consistently straight tone, emphasizing dynamic contrasts and effects. In the second movement, the Quartet played quick and agitated unison passages with dynamic intensity, suggesting horses galloping across a Western backdrop. Violist Gonzalez provided intricate double stops to the third movement and was also featured in the closing "epitome," leading the ensemble through musical effects including undulating cello and viola passages which supported very delicate upper strings.

If the Price and Tate works were the appetizers of this concert, Maurice Ravel's 1903 *String Quartet in F Major* was the main course. The four-movement *Quartet*, considered Ravel's first masterpiece, showed the composer's trademark soaring melodies and orchestral sunrise musical effects. The piece is dedicated to ethereal French composer Gabriel Fauré, and recalled Fauré's musical palette, with a pastel orchestral opening evoking an outdoor landscape by the Seine. Throughout the first movement, the Jasper Quartet played with contrasting dynamics, well supported by Henderson Freivogel's extended cello passages. Violinist J Freivogel's pizzicato playing was sharp and crisp, and the ensemble moved the music forward with urgency as melodic material was passed among the instruments.

The second movement "Assez vif" was marked by a dancelike atmosphere as the instrumentalists' pizzicato playing rang in the night air. Henderson Freivogel provided a dark and Romantic cello solo over shimmering string accompaniment in the third movement, and the music demonstrated Ravel's ability to write poignantly for all the instruments of the quartet.

Princeton Symphony Orchestra has designed a hybrid season of outdoor and indoor concerts this year, as well as rebroadcasts of performance from last season. Opening the season with the Jasper Quartet on a crisp late summer evening was a good start to easing back into full performance mode after what was surely a difficult and improvisatory year.

Princeton Symphony Orchestra will present its next outdoor concert on Thursday, September 23 at 5:30 p.m. at the Morven Museum and Garden Pool House. Featured will be the Exponential Ensemble, performing music of Poulenc, Françaix, Colema, and

others. Information about this concert and Princeton Symphony Orchestra's upcoming performances at McCarter Theatre can be obtained by visiting princetonsymphony.org.

Tweet

Save

Like 0

← Previous Post

Next Post →



[Click HERE to vote in the 2021 Readers' Choice Awards!](#)

Search

Search...

PRINCETON, NJ

66°
partly cloudy

6:48am - 6:44pm EDT

feels like: 66°f
wind: 8mph wsw
humidity: 55%
pressure: 30"hg
uv index: 2

tue	wed	thu
77/54°F	72/55°F	68/52°F