

23/24



Lara Downes and the Miró Quartet

Here on Earth

Saturday, March 2, 2024 • 7:30pm
Vanderhoef Studio Theatre, UC Davis

THE SEASON IS PRESENTED BY
The Nancy and Hank Fisher Family Fund

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We should take a moment to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin people.

Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

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In Memory of Rodney Boon | 1967 - 2024

Rodney Boon began working for the Mondavi Center in 2011 with a background as a musician, touring sound engineer and tour manager working with bands in the 1990s and early 2000s. He was promoted to Head Audio Engineer in 2013. Over the years, he worked tirelessly to improve and upgrade the sound and sound control systems in both Jackson Hall and the Vanderhoef Studio Theatre, especially the Meyer Leopard speaker arrays that are hanging in Jackson Hall and strived to make our theatre spaces sound perfect for our patrons. In fact, whenever you hear the lobby chimes, know that he personally created and recorded them!

Rod was able to pass on his knowledge of touring and live sound mixing to our current Mondavi Center team and leaves behind a legacy of excellence and ensuring a superb patron experience for all who come to the Mondavi Center. He was also a great friend and mentor to all of us on the production team.

Rod's impact to the Center cannot be overstated and his presence is felt every time you hear music in our venues. Our thoughts are with his wife, Melissa, and Rod will be greatly missed by those who knew him.

Lara Downes and the Miró Quartet

Here on Earth

Lara Downes, piano

Daniel Ching, violin

William Fedkenheuer, violin

John Largess, viola

Joshua Gindele, cello

PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 63 in B flat “Sunrise” (1797) <i>I. Allegro con spirito</i>	Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
My Lord, What A Morning (1918)	Traditional, Arranged by Henry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949)
Earthrise: Dec 24, 1968 (2017)	Jake Heggie (b. 1961)
A World of Change (2023)	Clarice Assad (b. 1978)
String Quartet No. 8 in E, Op. 59, No. 2 (1808) <i>II. Molto Adagio</i>	Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Under the Stars (1907)	Amy Beach (1867-1944)
Deep River (1917)	Traditional, Arranged by Henry Thacker Burleigh
Troubled Water (1967)	Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)
La Création du Monde (1923)	Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)
What a Wonderful World (1967)	Bob Thiel (1922-1996) George David Weiss (1921-2010) Arranged by Stephen Buck

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet No. 63 in B flat “Sunrise” (1797) – I. Allegro con spirito

JOSEPH HAYDN

Born in Rohrau, Austria, March 31, 1732

Died in Vienna, Austria May 31, 1809

This quartet was written at the end of Joseph Haydn’s active years as a composer as part of the last complete set of string quartets he wrote. This last set of quartets stands between the styles of the classical and the romantic era. Haydn achieved great success and international fame as a composer during his lifetime. However, his star had risen gradually. After enduring poverty and hunger as a choirboy in Vienna, he worked in that city as a freelance musician, performing and teaching while developing his abilities as a composer. After several minor positions, he took a job working at the Esterházy court, where he remained for nearly thirty years – time spent in London in the 1790s enhanced his international reputation.

This quartet earns its nickname from the beginning of the quartet where a rising theme played by the first violin gradually brings the quartet to life. There are hints of Haydn’s characteristic sense of humor in the sudden tempo changes. The middle section is darker, using the minor mode to explore the sunrise theme from the beginning. The ending returns to the sunrise theme again with fresh wonder, much as we do when the sun rises each day.

***My Lord, What A Morning* (1918)**

**TRADITIONAL, ARRANGED BY HENRY
THACKER BURLEIGH**

Born in Erie, Pennsylvania, December 2, 1866

Died in Stamford Connecticut, September 12, 1949

Henry Thacker Burleigh grew up surrounded by the music of the African American church. His maternal grandfather, who had purchased his own freedom from slavery in 1832, taught him spirituals. Many of his early performances were in churches and synagogues. Discrimination limited Burleigh’s ability to listen to and study classical music, but he was determined and creative. At one point, Burleigh secured a position as a doorman at a music venue to hear the concerts he wasn’t permitted to attend due to his race. In 1892, he earned a scholarship to the National Conservatory of Music in New York. At the Conservatory, he met composer Antonín Dvořák and performed spirituals for him. Dvořák declared that “In the negro melodies... I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music.” Dvořák wrote the theme for his ninth symphony, the “American” (1893), in the style of the spirituals he learned from Burleigh.

After graduating, Burleigh began working as a soloist for St. George’s Episcopal Church in New York City. At first, members of the congregation objected to a Black man singing in their church. However, Burleigh’s talent and quiet dignity won over the congregation, and he sang at the church for over fifty years. *My Lord, What A Morning* describes with longing the coming of the kingdom of God on Earth.

***Earthrise: Dec 24, 1968* (2017)**

JAKE HEGGIE

Born in West Palm Beach, Florida, March 31, 1961

Jake Heggie began playing piano as a child and studied composition with Ernst Bacon as a teenager. He continued his education at the American University in Paris and UCLA before a hand injury caused him to turn his artistic energies entirely to composition. He is best known for his opera *Dead Man Walking* (2000), which was premiered by the San Francisco Opera and has since had more than 75 international productions. His music is characterized by lyricism and dramatic storytelling shaped through richly layered textures.

Earthrise is inspired by a photo that astronaut Bill Anders took of Earth as seen from the surface of the moon. The photo captures a luminous orb glistening in the abyss with the alien lunar landscape in the foreground. The image showcases the Earth’s magnificence, as well as its vulnerability. Spectral harmonics in the upper register open the piece as the Earth slowly rises in the lunar sky. A shimmering quality continues throughout, generating sonorities both alien and tender.

***A World of Change* (2023)**

CLARICE ASSAD

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, February 9, 1978

Brazilian American composer, arranger, pianist, and vocalist Clarice Assad blends jazz and classical music. The daughter of guitarist and composer Sergio Assad, she began playing music at a young age. In addition to her studies in Brazil, she also holds a Bachelor of Music from Roosevelt University and a Master of Music from the University of Michigan. Her more than seventy compositions include works for violin, piano, symphony orchestra, string quartets and guitar quartets, as well as arrangements of Brazilian songs and jazz standards. She was nominated for a Grammy in 2022 and has also received accolades for her composition, including an Aaron Copland Award and ASCAP’s Morton Gould Young Composer Award, among others.

A World of Change grew out of a larger project by the same name featuring Lara Downes and other collaborators. This piece alludes to global metamorphosis, disruption and rebirth, prompting audiences to consider their relationship

with our transformed world. The jazz-inflected soundscape calls to mind contemporary life, while the complex rhythmic variation furthers ideas of continuity and change.

String Quartet No. 8 in E, Op. 59, No. 2 (1808) – II. Molto Adagio

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born in Bonn, Germany, December 17, 1770

Died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

A product of Beethoven's middle period, this quartet was the second of three string quartets that Beethoven was commissioned to write by the Russian Count Rasumovsky. Expansions of traditional forms characterized Beethoven's compositions during this period as he broke away from the balance of the classical style, moving towards the towering masterpieces of unrestrained emotional intensity that would characterize the Romantic era. Many of Beethoven's compositions were inspired by the natural world, most notably his sixth symphony, "Pastorale" (1808), composed in the same year as this string quartet. According to Carl Czerny, a friend and student of Beethoven, the second movement of this quartet was motivated by the stars in the night sky and the music of the heavenly spheres.

Beethoven places emotional demands on the players as the long, connected lines of the work seldom come to rest during this extended movement. The chorale-like beginning signals the celestial world of the stars. The lyrical expression contains moments of light as well as darkness cumulating with an exquisite outpouring of emotion. At the end the chorale returns anchoring the finale.

***Under the Stars* (1907)**

AMY BEACH

Born in Henniker New Hampshire, September 5, 1867

Died in New York, New York, December 27, 1944

Amy Beach was a piano prodigy, but her family protected her from the public eye, and she only gave a limited number of concerts as a child. As a member of a distinguished New England family, they didn't need the income and believed that public performance was not altogether proper for a young woman. Her family did allow her to give a few recitals as a teenager. These performances, including an appearance with the Boston Symphony, were well received. At eighteen, she married a man twenty-four years her senior and, at his request, performed only twice per year for charity concerts, instead turning her attention mainly towards composition, which was a more acceptable activity for a married lady. After her husband died in 1910, she toured Europe until World War I began. Upon returning to the United States, she worked as a composer, pianist and music educator.

Although Beach is remembered today primarily as the first American woman to write and publish a symphony, Symphony in E Minor, Op. 32 "Gaelic" (1896), her first love was the piano.

In the charming miniature, *Under the Stars* for solo piano, there are no clouds in the night sky. Beach effectively uses color and mood in this reverie which sends us serenely off into the twinkling stars.

***Deep River* (1917)**

HENRY THACKER BURLEIGH

By the 1890s, Burleigh composed his own art songs while continuing his career as a performer. In the 1910s, he began publishing the arrangements of African American spirituals, which he performed in concert, thus inventing the genre of the solo concert spiritual. His arrangements took the traditional acapella melodies and harmonized them with Western classical musical language. *Deep River* was published by G. Ricordi in 1917 and was a runaway success, receiving many performances by both Black and white singers who were captivated by the song's message and haunting melody.

The success of *Deep River* prompted Burleigh to publish a collection of spirituals the following year in 1918. Burleigh's arrangements always insisted on the dignity and religious content of the spiritual. In his instructions to performers, he wrote: "Through all these songs there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and brotherhood of man ... the message is ever manifest that eventually deliverance from all that hinders and oppresses the world will come, and man – every man – will be free."

***Troubled Water* (1967)**

MARGARET BONDS

Born in Chicago, Illinois, March 3, 1913

Died in Los Angeles, California, 26 April 1972

Margaret Bonds was a pianist, composer and educator, as well as the first African American to perform with the Chicago Symphony. Her mother was a piano teacher who was well connected with Black classical musicians, including Will Marion Cook, Lillian Evanti, Abbie Mitchell and Florence Price. As a young woman, Bonds studied composition with Price and William Dawson.

Bonds found inspiration and refuge from the racist environment she faced as a student at Northwestern University in the works of other Black artists. One particular inspiration for Bonds was Langston Hughes' poem *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* which she set to music. While studying at Northwestern, she came to national attention when she won the prestigious Wannamaker prize for her song *Sea Ghost*

in 1932. After graduating from Northwestern, she sought further study at Julliard.

Bonds frequently drew on her African American heritage in her music, incorporating spirituals and jazz to create works that often had a social justice message. *Troubled Water* is a part of her three movement *Spiritual Suite* and is based on the spiritual *Wade in the Water*. Bonds combines Western classical techniques with call and response from the spiritual tradition and jazz harmonies to create a work that has proved popular with audiences.

La Création du Monde (1923)

DARIUS MILHAUD

Born in Marseilles, France, September 4, 1892

Died in Geneva, Switzerland, June 22, 1974

After studying at the Paris Conservatory, Darius Milhaud became associated with a group of French composers known as “Les Six.” Although not unified stylistically, these Avant-Garde artists were interested in advancing French music, and the hottest new thing on the scene was American jazz. Milhaud heard his first live jazz performance in London in 1920. When he traveled to New York in 1922, he made a special effort to attend live jazz performances and spent time in Harlem listening to jazz. When he returned to Paris in the spring of 1923, he collaborated with the artist Fernand Léger and the writer Blaise Cendrars to create a ballet based on African creation myths, which evolved into *La Création du Monde*.

The piece is arranged into five sections. The first shows the universe before creation, swirling and dark, yet populated by hints of things to come. Milhaud combines jazz with the classical form of the fugue in the second section, the birth of plants and animals. The peaceful creation of man and woman quickly gives way to their livelier desires as they consummate their love. In the final section, many of the moods and ideas from the previous sections return, ending with a gentle kiss.

What a Wonderful World (1967)

GEORGE DAVID WEISS

Born in New York City, New York, April 9, 1921

Died in Oldwick, New Jersey, August 23, 2010

BOB THIELE

Born in Sheepshead Bay, New York July 27, 1922

Died in New York City, January 30, 1996

ARRANGED BY STEPHEN BUCK

Louis Armstrong first recorded this song in 1967, and his gravelly voice prevented this optimistic song from becoming saccharine. At the time, the country was in desperate need of a positive message as the United States faced difficult times at home and abroad with the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement and the 1968 assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr and Robert F. Kennedy. The songwriters believed Louis Armstrong was the perfect person to bring a message of reconciliation and hope to their audience. However, this iconic record faced a difficult birth. The president of ABC Records, Larry Newton, objected to the pacing of the song. Armstrong had recently released a swinging pop hit for a rival company and Newton didn’t think the slow ballad could compete and had to be physically barred from the recording space to keep him from interrupting. Newton retaliated for being locked out by refusing to promote the song in the United States and it sold poorly when first released in 1967. Despite a slow start, the song became a standard and won the Songwriters Hall of Fame’s Towering Song Award in 2014. Today, this melody encourages us to look on the bright side and proclaim that ours is a wonderful world.

— ELIZABETH CAMPBELL was recently awarded a Ph.D. in musicology from University of California, Davis. She graduated from Indiana University in 2017 with master’s degrees in musicology and library science after completing a bachelor’s degree in music at Luther College in 2014. Her research interests include music in early twentieth-century America and Renaissance vocal polyphony. Her dissertation work was on Lillian Evanti (1890–1967), an African American opera singer who performed in Europe, the United States, and Latin America.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LARA DOWNES

Pianist, cultural catalyst, and *New York Times* Sunday Crossword clue Lara Downes has been called “a musical ray of hope” by *NBC News* and “an explorer whose imagination is fired by bringing notice to the underrepresented and forgotten” (*The Log Journal*). An iconoclast and trailblazer, her dynamic work as a sought-after soloist, a Billboard Chart-topping recording artist, a producer, curator, arts activist and advocate positions her as a cultural visionary on the national arts scene. She was honored as 2022 Classical Woman of the Year by *Performance Today*.

Downes’ recent and upcoming onstage adventures include guest appearances with The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Pops, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, with recitals and residencies at Ravinia, the Gilmore Festival, Washington Performing Arts, Caramoor, and the Cabrillo Festival, among many others. Her creative collaborations with diverse artists including Rhiannon Giddens, Thomas Hampson, Judy Collins, Daniel Hope, Yo-Yo Ma and the Miró Quartet explore shared creative perspectives across genres and traditions. Downes’ forays into the broad landscape of music have created a unique series of acclaimed recordings, including her most recent release *Love at Last* on the Pentatone label, which debuted at the top of the Billboard and Amazon charts and was featured on an NPR Tiny Desk concert. Downes’ transformative album *America Again* was selected by NPR as one of “10 Classical Albums that Saved 2016” and hailed as “a balm for a country riven by disunion” by the *Boston Globe*.

Lara is a highly visible media presence in her role as the creator and host of *AMPLIFY with Lara Downes*, an NPR Music video series soon launching its third season in partnership with Classical California. She is the creator and curator of Rising Sun Music, a label dedicated to making first recordings of music by Black composers from the 18th century to the present day.

Learn more at LaraDownes.com

The Miró Quartet

The Miró Quartet is one of America’s most celebrated and dedicated string quartets, having been labeled by *The New Yorker* as “furiously committed” and noted by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* for its “exceptional tonal focus and interpretive intensity.” For over twenty-five years the Quartet has performed throughout the world on the most prestigious concert stages, earning accolades from critics and audiences alike. Based in Austin, TX, and thriving on the area’s storied music scene, the Miró takes pride in finding new ways to

communicate with audiences of all backgrounds while cultivating the longstanding tradition of chamber music.

In their 2023-24 season, the Miró Quartet embarks on a new performance and recording project with pianist Lara Downes. *Here on Earth* features musical depictions of planet earth, its evolution, and the lives of its inhabitants, with works spanning a century of cultural shift that begins with Darius Milhaud’s *La Création du Monde*, performed in a new arrangement for piano and string quartet. Upcoming performances include the premiere of a new version of Kevin Puts’ *Credo* with the Naples Philharmonic, as well as performances for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and Premiere Performances in Hong Kong.

Miró Quartet took its name and its inspiration from the Spanish artist Joan Miró, whose Surrealist works — with subject matter drawn from the realm of memory, dreams, and imaginative fantasy — are some of the most groundbreaking, influential, and admired of the 20th century.

Visit miroquartet.com for more information.

DANIEL CHING, VIOLIN

Daniel Ching, a founding member of the Miró Quartet, began his violin studies at the age of 3 under tutelage of his father. At age 5, he entered the San Francisco Conservatory Preparatory Division on a full twelve year scholarship, where he studied violin with Serban Rusu and Zaven Melikian, and chamber music with Susan Bates. At the age of 10, Daniel was first introduced to string quartets. A graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Daniel studied violin with Kathleen Winkler, Roland and Almita Vamos, and conducting with Robert Spano and Peter Jaffe. He completed his Masters degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with former Cleveland Quartet violinist Donald Weilerstein. He also studied recording engineering and production with Thomas Knab of Telarc, and subsequently engineered the Miró Quartet’s first promotional disc. Daniel is on faculty at the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin, where he teaches private violin students and coaches chamber music. He concurrently maintains an active international touring schedule as a member of the Miró Quartet.

Daniel is a discerning connoisseur of all things cinematic and electronic. Before he became a busy parent, Daniel was an avid skier and a dedicated reader of science fiction—he looks forward to returning to those passions, some day. In his free time, Daniel enjoys hosting happy hours with friends and lounging at home with his wife Sandy, their two sons, and two cats.

WILLIAM FEDKENHEUER, VIOLIN

William Fedkenheuer is widely respected as a performer, teacher and consultant. Uniquely drawing on two decades of experience onstage and off as a member of three internationally renowned string quartets (The Miró, Fry Street, Borromeo Quartets), he dedicates his life to serving others through performance, teaching, personal and professional development.

Growing up in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, William became the youngest member of The Calgary Fiddlers in 1983 and was named a Canadian national fiddle champion in 1989 before making his solo debut with the Calgary Philharmonic in 1994.

As a soloist and chamber musician, William performs on the world's most prestigious stages including Carnegie Hall, Esterhazy Castle, Suntory Hall, and the Taipei National University of the Arts and appearances in the media include NPR, PBS, NHK, and the Discovery Channel as well as Strings and Strad magazines. Recipient of Lincoln Center's prestigious Martin E. Segal Award, collaboration highlights include commissions and premiere's of major new works by Kevin Puts, Osvaldo Golijov, and Gunther Schuller and performances with Leon Fleisher, Sasha Cooke, Colin Currie, Wu Han, Jeffrey Kahane, Audra McDonald, Midori, David Shifrin and Dawn Upshaw. William serves as an Associate Professor of Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin's Butler School of Music and oversees its Young Professional String Quartet Program.

William also maintains an active schedule as a consultant and professional development coach. Drawing on his past twenty-five years of experience developing highly effective strategies, principles and tools for how to thrive as a classical musician, ensemble and organization, his mission is to empower each individual to give permission to be their most impactful, creative and alive self. More information can be found at <https://williamfed.com>

An active hiker, fly-fisherman and burger connoisseur, William has two sons, Max and Olli who share his love of curiosity, discovery, innovation and chocolate. William performs on a violin by Peter and Wendy Moes, and bows by Charles Espey and Ole Kanestrom.

JOHN LARGESS, VIOLA

Violist John Largess began his studies in Boston at age 12 in the public schools, studying with Michael Zaretsky of the Boston Symphony, and later as a student of Michael Tree at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. In 1995, he graduated from Yale University to join the Colorado String Quartet as interim violist with whom he toured the United States and Canada teaching and concertizing. The following year he was appointed principal violist of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra in South Carolina, a position he held until joining the Miró Quartet in 1997. Also an active speaker

and writer about all things chamber-musical, in 2004 Mr. Largess was invited to give a week-long audience lecture series as a part of the Eighth International String Quartet Competition at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Alberta, Canada; he repeated this series in 2007 and again in 2010.

With his training in Greek and Latin Literature and his Bachelor's degree in Archeology from Yale University, as well as studies at the Hebrew University in Israel, he has participated in excavations in Greece, Israel, and Jordan. John loves to cook gourmet cuisine, particularly French pastry and fine desserts; luckily, he also enjoys exercising. John is a trained yoga instructor, having studied Vinyasa Power Yoga with Baron Baptiste. He also practices Kundalini, Bikram, and Astanga styles, and teaches yoga at 24 Hour Fitness and the Bodhi Yoga studio in Austin, Texas where he lives. When not standing on his head, he enjoys making his Tibetan Singing Bowl sing.

John serves as Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of String Chamber Music at the University of Texas at Austin Butler School of Music.

JOSHUA GINDELE, CELLO

Cellist Joshua Gindele, a founding member of the Miró Quartet, began his cello studies at the age of 3 playing a viola his teacher had fitted with an endpin. As cellist for the Miró, Josh has taken first prizes at several national and international competitions including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Competition. In 2005, the Miró Quartet became the first ensemble ever to be awarded the coveted Avery Fisher Career Grant.

He has shared the stage with some of the classical worlds most renowned artists including Yo-Yo Ma, The New York Philharmonic, Pinchas Zuckerman, Joshua Bell, Midori, Andre Watts and Menahem Pressler. He continues to perform across four continents and on some of the world's most prestigious concert stages.

In 2006 Joshua co-founded www.classicallounge.com. This is an online networking site where you can meet musicians, both professional and amateur, discover new talent or get discovered, share music, post and get concert information, share opinions, post classified ads and much more. The site was sold to www.classicalconnection.com in August of 2009.

Deeply committed to music education, the Miró is currently the Faculty String Quartet-in-Residence at the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin.

An active gym rat and tennis player, Josh and his wife, Rebecca Gindele, have a son and daughter, George and Nora.

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