

Calder Quartet begins official residency at Oberlin with Artist Recital Series concert on September 30

by Mike Telin



As their first “official” duty as Quartet-in-Residence at the Oberlin Conservatory, [The Calder Quartet](#) will present the inaugural concert of the 2014-15 Oberlin Artist Recital Series in Finney Chapel on Tuesday, September 30 beginning at 8:00 pm. The quartet will perform works by Adès, Janáček and Schubert.

The Calders, Benjamin Jacobson and Andrew Bulbrook, violins, Jonathan Moerschel, viola and Eric Byers, cello, will open the program with a work by one of the group’s favorite composers, Thomas Adès’s *Arcadiana* (1994) “We’ve been playing his music for a long time

as well as working with him for seven years,” violinist Andrew Bulbrook said during a telephone conversation. “In fact we’re currently in the midst of editing a recording of his *Piano Quintet*, with Tom as the pianist. His quartet, *The Four Quarters*, which will be a world premiere recording, is also on the CD. Additionally, we have re-recorded *Arcadiani* from our first CD for this release. It’s a nice culmination of everything that we as a quartet have been working on with him.”

Bulbrook went on to explain that the rest of the evening’s program branches out from the Adès. “We’ll follow Tom’s piece with Leoš Janáček’s *String Quartet No. 2*, “Intimate Letters.” Janáček is one of Tom’s favorite composers, and he’ll often play his music whenever we share a recital with him. And many times some Janáček references will creep into Tom’s music as well. So that is one spoke of the programming wheel. The other is that *Arcadiana* references Schubert. The third movement takes its title from the Schubert song, *Auf dem Wasser zu singen*, a song about water. So his *Quartet No. 14 in D Minor*, ‘Death and the Maiden,’ comes off of that spoke.”

Since their formation at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, the Calder Quartet has established a reputation for championing the music of composers of our time, who in addition to Adès include Christopher Rouse and Terry Riley. Their dedication to the discovery, commissioning, recording, and mentoring of some of today's best emerging composers earned them a 2014 Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Because of working with so many composers, is there any specific thing they look for when searching out new works? "Everything sort of overlaps in a way," Bulbrook says with a laugh. "I mean with Thomas Adès there was definitely something that we liked. But it is very special when you not only have music that you like but when you're able to pursue a direct relationship with a composer by working with them. When you have that connection it makes everything even more interesting. And you learn a lot about their music — what they want and what they mean beyond what is literally on the page."

The Calders have also had a long relationship with Terry Riley whom they first met while sharing a concert during the L.A. Philharmonic's Minimalist Jukebox Festival in 2006. "Terry is somebody we've been big fans of for a long time and a chance came our way to work with him on some of his early chamber music through the LA Phil eight years ago. It's the same as with Tom: we had the chance to work with Terry on his early pieces, then we studied with him in Berkeley. And in the spring of 2013 we played *The Sands* (for string quartet and orchestra) with The Cleveland Orchestra."

Bulbrook said that he and his colleagues look forward to next Tuesday's concert as well as to the two-year Oberlin residency. "It's very exciting, because when we were here to play the concert with The Cleveland Orchestra we had a chance to visit Oberlin and to work with some of the students and meet some of the faculty. We were very impressed with the level of playing in addition to the curiosity of the students, who are very intellectual. Everybody is so thoughtful."

Bulbrook also finds the combination of a great conservatory embedded in such a fine college to be wonderful. "We actually formed at USC, not in a conservatory-only setting, and I think that was very good for us in so many ways. We could explore a lot of different things like taking some rigorous academics while we were studying our instruments. I think that had a big effect on our development. So because of all of this, we are looking forward to being in Oberlin."

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