



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

TAKÁCS QUARTET *with* JULIEN LABRO

Edward Dusinger | Violin

Harumi Rhodes | Violin

Richard O'Neill | Viola

András Fejér | Cello

with

Julien Labro | Bandoneón and Accordina

Thursday Evening, February 17, 2022 at 7:30

Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

First performance on the Concert Classics Series of the 129th Season

Program

**BRYCE
DESSNER**

(b. 1976)

Circles
(premiere performance)*

**JULIEN
LABRO**

(b. 1980)

Meditation No. 1 (PUC premiere)
Takács Quartet and Julien Labro, bandoneón

**DINO
SALUZZI**

(b. 1935)

Minguito

**JOHANN
SEBASTIAN
BACH**

Arr. Labro
(1685–1750)

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645

**JULIEN
LABRO**

Astoración
Julien Labro, bandoneón & accordina

**MAURICE
RAVEL**

(1875–1937)

String Quartet in F Major
Allegro moderato – très doux
Assez vif – très rythmé
Très lent
Vif et agité

**CLARICE
ASSAD**

(b. 1978)

Clash
(premiere performance)*

This evening's concert is approximately 70 minutes in duration and is performed without intermission.

*This premiere performance is a co-commission by Princeton University Concerts and Music Accord.



About the Program

By Lucy Caplan © 2022 • Program Annotator

Lucy Caplan is a Lecturer on History and Literature at Harvard University. In 2016 she received the Rubin Prize for Music Criticism.

As a student musician playing in a string quartet, I was once encouraged by a chamber music coach to focus inward. Imagine a column of sound located at the nexus of the four instruments, the coach said. The goal was synthesis: we were each to subsume our individual voices to create a freestanding, self-contained sonic marvel. If this was excellent advice for young musicians, it's also a useful metaphor for thinking about a pattern that often arises in discussions of the history of the string quartet as a musical genre. Such narratives also tend to look inward, to treat the string quartet as a wholly singular form whose smooth, unbroken trajectory can be explained in terms of stylistic innovations which take us from one great composer to the next: Haydn influences Beethoven influences Bartók, and so on.

But are there other ways to think about the string quartet? What if we looked outward, instead, to the wider environment in which composers live and work? What if we turned that neat column of sound into a loosely structured mosaic, in which each work might pick up on all manner of influences and ideas? This concept can feel intuitive when applied to music by living composers: both Bryce Dessner and Clarice Assad, for instance, describe their work on tonight's program as being shaped by the turbulence and tumult of the past few years. But this shift in perspective also facilitates a different way of thinking about the musical past: one that's less concerned with a narrow set of compositional developments and more interested in how music and musicians move through the world. As such, it raises questions about who is included in the narratives we tell, and who is not; about when cultural exchange morphs into theft; about how global histories can be heard in sound. By taking up these issues, these notes will situate tonight's program in a more expansive context, opening our ears to new ideas.

BRYCE DESSNER

Born April 23, 1976 in Cincinnati, Ohio

Circles (2021)

PUC premiere: Tonight marks a premiere performance of this piece, co-commissioned by PUC and Music Accord.

I was fortunate to meet the wonderful bandoneón/accordion player Julien Labro a few years ago while I was composing the music for the Fernando Mereilles film, *The Two Popes*. I wrote a lot of music for Julien to play and was completely blown away in the studio by his exceptional musicianship and virtuosity. He seems to literally be able to do anything. So when the chance to compose for him and the equally wonderful Takács Quartet came, I was very happy to write a new piece.

Circles is my composition for their quintet and is a simple idea that I wrote during the many months of lockdown in France due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This piece was an expression of the creative process slowly starting to turn again, each individual voice searching for a line and searching for one another and eventually falling into a pattern or dance together, which weaves in and out of this collective rhythm and individualist polyphony. This theme of the individual versus the collective voice is something I have been exploring a lot in my work, especially when writing for a soloist. What does it mean to write for the individual, is it not more important than what we have to say as a group — the voice of many as opposed to the voice of one? And in this case, I have left quite a lot of information out of the score, to encourage the players of the quartet and Julien to find their own expressions and dynamics, to bring their own voice to these skeletal notes.

—*Note by Bryce Dessner*

JULIEN LABRO

Born September 17, 1980 in Rodez, France

Meditation No. 1 (2021), PUC premiere

Meditation No. 1 is the first of a series of forthcoming pieces for bandoneón and string quartet that was composed as a way to create a space that allows for escape from the chaos that often envelops us. In dealing with the tumultuous events over the past year, I started a habit of waking up early in the morning and preserving small windows of time for myself before

allowing the craziness of the world to descend upon me. This series captures and reflects these precious moments in time, without disruptions from news outlets, social media, phones, etcetera, where I was able to escape into an oasis that opened a new window for peace and creativity.

—*Note by Julien Labro*

DINO SALUZZI

Born May 20, 1935 in Campo Santo, Argentina

Minguito (2006), arr. Labro

Written by the acclaimed composer-improviser-bandoneón-player Dino Saluzzi, *Minguito* is named after the comic Argentinian TV character Minguito Tinguítella, played by the actor Juan Carlos Altavista. As this reference might suggest, Saluzzi's points of reference extend far beyond the classical-music canon. He has characterized his early musical education as one deeply shaped by his environment. Growing up in a small village in northern Argentina, he learned about music primarily from his family: "There weren't books, or schools, or radio — nothing," he recalled. "Nevertheless, my father was able to transmit a musical education to me; music that, later, when I was studying, I realized that I already knew—not from the point of view of reason or rationality, but rather in a different way." His later career included collaborations and interactions with musicians working across genres, from the essential Tango Nuevo figure Astor Piazzolla to jazz, classical, and folk artists.

Minguito reflects these broad influences. The string quartet morphs into a tango ensemble in the piece's opening moments, as the dancing rhythms of the bandoneón melt into the cello's resonant pizzicato bass line. Out of these smoky timbres, gentle flashes of major-key sunshine emerge, enveloping the listener in warmth. Later on, individual instruments rise up for virtuosic solo turns, then melt back into the collective texture. The result is playful, romantic, and quietly unpredictable: a roving exploration of these instruments' singular and shared sounds.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 21, 1685 in Eisenach, Germany,

Died July 28, 1750 in Leipzig

“Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,” BWV 645 (1731), arr. Labro

In the 1840s, a Rheinland merchant named Heinrich Band began to distribute a newly manufactured instrument: a large concertina, similar to a diatonic button accordion. Band was a savvy marketer, and he promoted the new instrument by publishing sheet music and enlisting his family members to teach lessons and open shops where it could be purchased. Within a decade, it had become so popular that it surpassed the concertina as the preferred instrument for performances in church. By the 1880s, German immigrants had begun to bring the instrument across the Atlantic with them to Argentina. And so Heinrich Band’s eponymous Bandonion became the Argentine *bandoneón*, now essential to tango and other Argentine musical traditions.

Despite – or perhaps because of – the bandoneón’s cross-cultural, genre-spanning history, the question of its suitability for Bach’s music has rankled some purists. “Should Accordionists Play Bach?” asked an author in a 1949 issue of *Accordion World*. While admitting that many felt the accordionist “should leave the music of Bach and the other great masters strictly alone,” the writer ultimately argued that “the accordionist who shuns Bach is either not well acquainted with this music or does not appreciate the true possibilities of his instrument.” Those possibilities are on full display here, as the instrument returns to its German roots in this arrangement of Bach’s well-known “Wachet auf.” Based on a Lutheran hymn by Philipp Nicolai, the chorale is both vast in scale and intricate in textural detail. Vibrant with energy, structurally complex, and perpetually on the move, it nevertheless evokes a serene mood: a sort of peaceful, glittering grandeur.

JULIEN LABRO

Astoración (2021), PUC premiere

Astoración is an imagined duet and conversation with Nuevo Tango master Astor Piazzolla. I discovered his music at age 12 and it changed my life. It enlightened me that music was not only about written notes on a page but a means of expression. His passionate music moved me like none other and he became one of my biggest inspirations. I always dreamt that perhaps

one day I could thank him in person, but fate decided otherwise as Piazzolla passed away in July 1992, the same month and year I discovered his music.

—*Note by Julien Labro*

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875 in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France

Died December 28, 1937 in Paris

String Quartet in F Major (1903)

Maurice Ravel was only fourteen years old at the time of the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, a spectacular world's fair that brought tens of millions of visitors to the city (and was the occasion for the construction of the Eiffel Tower). Located in the colonial metropole, the fair also introduced visitors to music and culture from around the world – often in a manner which exoticized and demeaned colonized peoples and other non-European groups. Colonial subjects were displayed in “living exhibits,” a cluster of constructed villages which misrepresented their cultures as primitive, unsophisticated, and culturally inferior to Europeans. One especially popular exhibit featured Javanese people living under Dutch colonial rule, including a group of dancers accompanied by musicians playing in a gamelan ensemble.

This music had a profound influence on Ravel, Debussy, and other young French composers. Does the exploitative context in which they first encountered it matter to how we listen? This is a tricky question, particularly when it comes to works like Ravel's String Quartet, which do not make direct allusions to “exotic” peoples or musical traditions. At the very least, this context might prompt us to consider how what's often described as the quintessentially “French” sound of these composers' music is related to the colonial context of its creation. Composed in Paris, where Ravel was at the time auditing Gabriel Fauré's composition class at the Conservatoire, the quartet delights in sonic variety. The first movement begins with a gentle sweetness, floats from theme to theme, and fades away toward ethereal stillness. The mood brightens in the second movement, whose vibrant pizzicato theme gives way to high trills and tremolos; the movement's astonishing middle section is slow and searching, a glimpse into an utterly different world. A roaming sensibility pervades the third movement, which moves freely across tempi and textures. After such wandering, the fourth movement feels like a homecoming: energy bubbles up in repeated patterns, echoes of moments earlier in the quartet, and a sense of collective joy.

One wonders how the Javanese visitors at the fair might have reacted to this music if the tables were turned; what might they have heard that was both exotic and familiar in Ravel's sonic world?

CLARICE ASSAD

Born February 9, 1978 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Clash (2021)

PUC premiere: Tonight marks a premiere performance of this piece, co-commissioned by PUC and Music Accord.

I modeled the composition on imaginary friction between two human beings, basing much of the musical material and phrasing in human speech and predictability on human behavior, such as behavioral matching and contrast. Emotions influence language, and as listeners, we react to the speaker's emotional state, later adapting our behavior depending on what emotions the speaker transmits. On one side we have a person who argues, throws violent insults, interrupts, and yells — and on the other side; another who either retaliates or retreats, appeals to guilt, pleads, and indulges in over-sentimentalism. These are constant themes in this work.

Episodic in nature, *Clash* gravitates towards tension more than understanding, though such moments happen periodically, as, for every conflict, there must be a resolution. Moments of peace and agreement in this work are musical passages of a quasi-diplomatic character; they act either as neutral or pleading intercessors between escalating clashes of willfulness and stubbornness.

I wrote *Clash* between 2020 and 2021, a turbulent period for many, brought by a world health crisis, social distancing, the collapse of the economy, riots, and political turmoil — stressful occurrences with one central theme at its core: Conflict. This piece explores states of discord such as struggle, disagreement, dispute, and division.

The music travels through obvious fiery passages of dissonance versus consonance and tackles indirect moments of discordance: the idea of not being heard while speaking; bursts of anger forcefully making the other party either retaliate or retreat.

—Note by Clarice Assad

About *the* Artists



TAKÁCS STRING QUARTET

Recent winners of the Gramophone Classical Music Awards 2021 Chamber category, the world-renowned **Takács Quartet** is now entering its 47th season. Edward Dusinberre, Harumi Rhodes (violins), Richard O'Neill (viola), and András Fejér (cello) are excited to bring to fruition several innovative projects for the 2021–22 season. With bandoneón/ accordion virtuoso Julien Labro, the group will perform new works composed for them by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner throughout the US. This season also marks the world premiere of a new quartet written for the Takács by Stephen Hough, *Les Six Rencontres*. The Takács will record this extraordinary work for Hyperion Records, in combination with quartets by Ravel and Dutilleux.

During the last year, the Takács marked the arrival of Grammy Award-winning violist Richard O'Neill by making two new recordings for Hyperion. Quartets by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel and Felix Mendelssohn will be released in fall 2021, followed in 2022 by a disc of Haydn's Opp. 42, 77, and 103.

The Takács Quartet continues its role in 2021–22 as Associate Artists at London's Wigmore Hall, performing four concerts there this season. In addition to many concerts in the UK, the ensemble will play at prestigious European venues including the Paris Philharmonie, Berlin Konzerthaus, and Teatro Della Pergola, Florence. The Takács will perform throughout North America, including concerts in New

York, Boston, Washington DC, Princeton, Ann Arbor, Berkeley, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Vancouver, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Portland.

In June 2020 the Takács Quartet was featured in the BBC television series *Being Beethoven*. The ensemble's 2019 recording for Hyperion of piano quintets by Amy Beach and Elgar with pianist Garrick Ohlsson won a Presto "Classical Recording of the Year."

In 2014 the Takács became the first string quartet to be awarded the Wigmore Hall Medal. The Medal, inaugurated in 2007, recognizes major international artists who have a strong association with the Hall. Recipients include András Schiff, Thomas Quasthoff, Menahem Pressler, and Dame Felicity Lott. In 2012, Gramophone announced that the Takács was the first string quartet to be inducted into its "Hall of Fame," along with such legendary artists as Jascha Heifetz, Leonard Bernstein, and Dame Janet Baker. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.

Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, the members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Faculty Fellows. The Quartet has helped to develop a string program with a special emphasis on chamber music, where students work in a nurturing environment designed to help them develop their artistry. Through the university, two of the Quartet's members benefit from the generous loan of instruments from the Drake Instrument Foundation. The members of the Takács are on the faculty at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, where they run an intensive summer string quartet seminar, and Visiting Fellows at the Guildhall School of Music, London.

JULIEN LABRO

Heralded as "the next accordion star" by Howard Reich of the *Chicago Tribune*, **Julien Labro** (bandoneón, accordina, and composer) has established himself as one of the foremost accordion and bandoneón players in both the classical and jazz genres. Mr. Labro is deemed "a triple threat: brilliant technician, poetic melodist, and cunning arranger," and his artistry, virtuosity, and creativity as a musician, composer, and arranger have earned him international acclaim and continue to astonish audiences worldwide.

Born in France, Mr. Labro was influenced early on by traditional folk music and the melodic, lyrical quality of the French chanson. Upon discovering the music of jazz legends, he quickly became inspired by the originality, freedom, creativity, and the endless possibilities of their musical language. After graduating from the Marseille Conservatory of Music, Mr. Labro began winning international awards including the Coupe Mondiale, the Castelfidardo Competitions, and many others. In 1998, Mr. Labro moved to the US, where he further pursued his musical dream. Equipped with advanced degrees in classical music, jazz studies, and composition, he draws from his diverse academic background and eclectic musical influences as he searches for new themes and untried concepts, transforming and developing his creative ideas into new projects.

Mr. Labro has collaborated with numerous symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles, often playing the dual roles of solo artist as well as composer/arranger. These include the conductorless Boston-based chamber orchestra A Far Cry, Spektral Quartet, Arneis Quartet, Ensemble Vivant of Toronto, and Curtis On Tour from the Curtis Institute of Music faculty of Philadelphia. He has been a guest soloist with numerous symphonies such as the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of St Luke's, New World Symphony, the Hartford Symphony, the Arkansas Symphony, the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Cape Cod Symphony, the Cleveland Pops Orchestra, the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra.

He has written for numerous ensembles, from quartets to full symphony orchestras. He has premiered works by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Du Yun, Bryce Dessner, Angélica Negrón, Clarice Assad, Ethan Iverson, and Avner Dorman. He has collaborated with Cassandra Wilson, Maria Schneider, Anat Cohen, João Donato, Marcel Khalife, Paquito D'Rivera, Pablo Ziegler, Uri Caine, Miguel Zenón, James Carter, John Clayton, and guitarists Larry Coryell, Tommy Emmanuel, and John and Bucky Pizzarelli.

After a busy summer touring the US performing at the Strings Music Festival, Gretna Music, the Vail Jazz Festival, and premiering his latest orchestral work *The Django Fantasy* at the Berks Jazz Festival, Mr. Labro opened the 2021-22 season performing with the Maria Schneider Orchestra at the DC Jazz Festival. In the fall and spring of 2022, he will zigzag the US with the world-renowned Takács Quartet performing new works written for them by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner. In his free time, Mr. Labro is working on composing a new bandoneón concerto that will be a sequel to his accordion concerto *Apricity*. For more information, please visit www.julienlabro.com.

BRYCE DESSNER

Bryce Dessner (composer) is an American composer and guitarist based in Paris, and a member of the rock band The National. Mr. Dessner's orchestral, chamber, and vocal compositions have been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Metropolitan Museum of Art (for the New York Philharmonic), Kronos Quartet, Carnegie Hall, BAM Next Wave Festival, Barbican Centre, Edinburgh International Festival, Sounds From A Safe Harbour Festival, Cork City, County Cork Ireland, Sydney Festival, eighth blackbird, Sō Percussion, New York City Ballet, UMS (Ann Arbor), and Music Accord. His work *Murder Ballades*, featured on eighth blackbird's album *Filament* — an album he also produced and performs on — won the 2016 Grammy Award for “Best Small Ensemble Performance.” Mr. Dessner has collaborated with artists such as Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Paul Simon, Sufjan Stevens, Nico Muhly, Jonny Greenwood, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Justin Peck, Ragnar Kjartansson, Katia and Marielle Labeque, Fernando Mereilles, and Taylor Swift. Mr. Dessner is the founder of the MusicNOW Festival, co-founder of Copenhagen's HAVEN festival, and co-curates the festival Sounds From a Safe Harbour. He is a founding member of the improvisatory instrumental group Clogs and co-founder of Brassland Records. In 2018 he was named one of eight creative and artistic partners for San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, as part of incoming music director Esa-Pekka Salonen's new leadership model for the orchestra from 2020. He has a master's degree in music from Yale University.

CLARICE ASSAD

Born in Rio de Janeiro, **Clarice Assad** (composer) has lived in Brazil, France, and the US. She is fluent in Portuguese, French, and English, and sings in all three languages, as well as Spanish and Italian. One of the most widely performed Brazilian concert music composers of her generation, she is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including an Aaron Copland Award, several ASCAP awards in composition, a Morton Gould Young Composer Award, the Van Lier Fellowship, the Franklin Honor Society Award, the Samuel Ostrowsky Humanities Award, the New Music Alive Partnership program by the League of American Orchestras, and a McKnight Visiting Composer Award. Ms. Assad holds a BM from Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois, and a MM from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, where she studied with Michael Daugherty, Susan Botti, and Evan Chambers.

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Comprised of top classical music presenting organizations throughout the US, **Music Accord** (www.musicaccord.org) is a consortium that commissions new works in the chamber music, instrumental recital, and song genres. The consortium's goal is to create a significant number of new works and to ensure presentation of these works in venues throughout this country and, if the occasion arises, internationally. Music Accord awards commissions principally to performers who are US citizens or reside in the US and assists these performers in selecting composers who are US citizens or who reside in the US. Member organizations include Boston Symphony Orchestra/Tanglewood, Celebrity Series of Boston, Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Hancher Auditorium/The University of Iowa, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Middlebury Performing Arts Series, Princeton University Concerts, San Francisco Performances, and the University Musical Society/University of Michigan.

Mitsuko Uchida,
Piano
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7:30PM

Mark Padmore,
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