

JASPER QUARTET

WEILL RECITAL HALL 19 FEBRUARY 2016

The Jasper Quartet presented three very different works, demonstrating that we really do live in a golden age of string quartet playing. In Haydn's G major Quartet op.76 no.1, the opening displayed joie de vivre and athleticism – and, perhaps most tellingly, grins all round. The cohesiveness of the Adagio sostenuto was matched by a nostalgic glow, capped by the impressively tuned final chord. In the third movement, here more unsettling than usual, humour and well-judged rubato gave delightfully subversive clues to the finale, taken perilously fast. And the group's deft timing in the false endings was almost worth the entire evening.

I have heard Debussy's classic G minor Quartet at least six times over the last twelve months or so, and am happy to report that the Jasper's warm, alert performance can stand with any. But the night's real news was sandwiched in between: the New York premiere of Aaron Jay Kernis's String Quartet no.3 'River', co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall. This work is based on tonal roots and opens with a stirring



cello line – magnificently played by Rachel Henderson Freivogel – in the first of five movements, notable for its flow and for pizzicatos using guitar picks for extra snap. After rapid, minnow-like passages, tiny rivulets of trills and a lovely Cavatina with a hymnic opening, the initial cello line returns in the final movement, with alluring tranquillity.

BRUCE HODGES