

Pacifica Quartet

Contemporary Voices

with Otis Murphy
alto saxophone



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with **Otis Murphy**
alto saxophone

SHULAMIT RAN

Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory —
String Quartet No. 3* (22:44)

- 1 I. That which happened (6:56)
- 2 II. Menace (3:08)
- 3 III. "If I perish — do not let my
paintings die." (6:37)
- 4 IV. Shards, Memory (5:52)

JENNIFER HICDON

Voices (18:02)

- 5 I. Blitz — (6:13)
- 6 II. Soft Enlacing — (6:21)
- 7 III. Grace (5:27)

TT: (58:00)

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

ELLEN TAAFFE ZWILICH

Quintet for Alto Saxophone
and String Quartet (16:54)

- 8 I. ♩ = 66 (5:41)
- 9 II. ♩ = 132 (4:05)
- 10 III. ♩ = 60; 126; 120 (7:00)



Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory — String Quartet No. 3 (2012–2013)

notes by Shulamit Ran

My third string quartet was composed at the invitation of the Pacifica Quartet, whose music-making I came to know intimately and admire greatly when they were resident performing artists at the University of Chicago (1999–2016). The piece was commissioned for Pacifica by Music Accord, Inc., Suntory Hall, and Wigmore Hall.

In our early conversations, Pacifica proposed that this quartet might, in some manner, refer to the visual arts as a point of germination. Probing further, I found out that the quartet members had special interest in art created during the earlier part of the 20th century, perhaps between the two world wars.

It was my good fortune to have met, a short while later, while in residence at the American Academy in Rome in the fall of 2011, art conservationist Albert Albano who steered me to the work of Felix Nussbaum (1904–1944), a German-Jewish painter who, like so many others, perished in the Holocaust at a young age, and who left some powerful, deeply moving art that spoke to the life that was unraveling around him.



The title of my string quartet takes its inspiration from a major exhibit devoted to art by German artists of the period of the Weimar Republic (1919–1933) titled “Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s,” first shown at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2006–2007. Nussbaum would have been a bit too young to be included in this exhibit. His most noteworthy art was created in the last very few years of his short life. The exhibit’s evocative title, however, suggested to me the idea of “Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory” as a way of framing a possible musical composition that would be an homage to his life and art, and to that of so many others like him during that era. Knowing that their days were numbered, yet intent on leaving a mark, a legacy, a memory, their art is triumph of the human spirit over annihilation.

Parallel to my wish to compose a string quartet that, typically for this genre, would exist as “pure music,” independent of a narrative, was my desire to effect an awareness in my listener of matters which are, to me, of great human concern. To my mind there is no contradiction between the two goals. As in several other works composed since 1969, this is my way of saying “do not forget” — something that, I believe, can be done through music with special power and poignancy.

The individual titles of the quartet’s four movements give an indication of some of the emotional strands this work explores.

1 “That which happened” (*das was geschah*) is how the poet Paul Celan referred to the Shoah — the Holocaust. These simple words served for me, in the first movement, as a metaphor for the way in which an “ordinary” life, with its daily flow and its sense of sweet normalcy, was shockingly, inhumanely, inexplicably shattered.

2 “Menace” is a shorter movement, mimicking a scherzo. It is also machine-like, incessant, with an occasional, recurring, waltz-like little tune — perhaps the chilling grimace we recognize from the executioner's guillotine mask. Like the death machine it alludes to, it gathers momentum as it goes, and is unstoppable.

3 “If I perish — do not let my paintings die.” These words are by Felix Nussbaum who, knowing what lay ahead, nonetheless continued painting until his death in Auschwitz in 1944. If the heart of the first movement is the shuddering interruption of life as we know it, the third movement tries to capture something of what I can only imagine to be the conflicting states of mind that would have made it possible, and essential, to continue to live and practice one's art: bearing witness to the events. Creating must have been, for Nussbaum and for so many others, a way of maintaining sanity, both a struggle and a catharsis — an act of defiance and salvation all at the same time.

4 “Shards, Memory” is a direct reference to my quartet's title. Only shards are left. And memory. The memory is of things large and small, of unspeakable tragedy, but also of the song and the dance, the smile, the hopes. All things human. As we remember, in the face of death's silence, we restore dignity to those who are gone.

Voices (1993)

notes by Jennifer Higdon

Voices is the telling of three different images. The first image, “Blitz,” carries a tremendous amount of relentless, frenzied energy. It portrays a high level of intensity, always on the verge of explosion. The second image, “Soft Enlacing,” carries a much more vague meaning, and is a calming contrast from the first movement. It may be very much like a walk through the house in the middle of the night: while the floor feels solid under foot, the rest of the world, to the eyes and ears, seems to be moving shadows. Again, the image is not meant to be clear-cut and depends upon the listener’s “viewing.” The final movement, “Grace,” is the calmest and carries the most possible number of meanings: the giving of thanks at a meal; the grace seen in behavior or in a personality; the grace of movement; the bestowing of one’s self unto others; the quiet presence that exists in a being’s soul. The telling of these images is from manic and frenzied to calm and quiet, from specific to vague, and from dark to light.

In 1997, I had the distinct pleasure of working with the Pacifica Quartet at a summer music festival, where we were paired up as a young string quartet/young composer. This is the piece that they performed, and even though we were all just starting our careers, I could already tell that this group was going to soar. Inspired by their incredible musicality and enthusiasm, I decided to dedicate this quartet to them.

Quintet for Alto Saxophone and String Quartet (2007)

notes by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich

I'm the kind of composer who has a "wish list" of works I'm eager to write, but on occasion someone suggests an idea not on my "list" that I find immediately exciting and that leads me in an unexpected direction. My Quintet for Alto Saxophone and String Quartet was inspired by such a suggestion. In honor of the diverse musical ideas stimulated by (commissioning organization) Arizona Friends of Chamber Music president Jean-Paul Bierny's suggested medium, I dedicate the piece to him.

My ideal concept for chamber music is a conversation among equals, a conversation that is unique to the parties involved. In this instance, the alto sax brings a luscious singing quality and a certain sassy attitude to the mix, while the strings offer their amazing agility and variety of articulation, color, and phrasing. One of the great pleasures in writing (or playing or listening to) chamber music is that each player can be a virtuoso soloist one moment and a sensitive partner the next, and this "electricity" becomes an agent of musical form.

My Quintet for Alto Saxophone and String Quartet is in three movements: the first is slow (♩ = 66); the second is fast (♩ = 132); and the third is both slow and fast (♩ = 60; 126; 120).

Pacifica Quartet

Simin Ganatra violin

Austin Hartman violin

Mark Holloway viola

Brandon Vamos cello

Recognized for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and often-daring repertory choices, over the past 25 years the Pacifica Quartet has achieved international recognition as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. Named the quartet-in-residence at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in March 2012, the Pacifica was previously the quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and resident performing artist at the University of Chicago. The ensemble has received a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance. In 2017, the Pacifica Quartet was appointed to lead the Center for Advanced Quartet Studies at the Aspen Music Festival and School.

Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly won chamber music's top competitions including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002, the ensemble was honored with Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and appointment to Lincoln Center's The Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). The Quartet was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2006 and named "Ensemble of the Year" by *Musical America* in 2009.

The Pacifica Quartet has carved a niche for itself as the preeminent interpreter of string quartet cycles, harnessing the group's singular focus and incredible stamina to portray each composer's evolution, often over the course of just a few days. Having given highly acclaimed performances of the complete Carter, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven cycles around the world, the Quartet presented the monumental Shostakovich cycle in Chicago, New York, Montreal, and London.

The members of the Pacifica Quartet live in Bloomington, Indiana, where they serve as quartet-in-residence and full-time faculty members at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. Prior to its appointment, the Quartet was on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana from 2003 to 2012.

www.pacificaquartet.com

Otis Murphy

Otis Murphy holds the position of Professor of Saxophone at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, joining the faculty at age 28 and becoming one of the youngest faculty members in its history. He is in great demand as an international artist, having performed in more than 25 countries worldwide across four continents. Dr. Murphy has garnered a number of international awards including prizes in Belgium's Adolphe

Sax International Saxophone Competition and France's Jean-Marie Londeix International Saxophone Competition, and he has appeared in major concert venues including Carnegie Hall's Isaac Stern Auditorium, Merkin Hall (New York City), Casals Hall (Tokyo), Palau de la Musica (Valencia), and Muziekgebouw aan het IJ (Amsterdam). He has taught at music schools and festivals worldwide including the Paris Conservatory, Amsterdam Conservatory, Cologne Academy of Music, Hamamatsu International Wind Instrument Academy and Festival, London Royal College of Music and many more. Dr. Murphy's students have received accolades in national and international competitions and are members of premier military concert bands in the various branches of the U.S. armed forces. Dr. Murphy holds Doctor of Music and Master of Music degrees from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, receiving the Performer's Certificate accolade. In addition, he pursued advanced studies in France under a Fulbright Fellowship for foreign study at the Conservatoire National Régional de Musique in Cergy-Pontoise, earning the *Prix de Perfectionnement à l'unanimité*. Dr. Murphy leads a very fulfilling life with his wife, pianist Haruko Murphy; together, they are dedicated parents of their six children.

www.otismurphy.com

Shulamit Ran

Shulamit Ran began composing songs to Hebrew poetry at the age of seven in her native Israel. By nine she was studying composition and piano with some of Israel's most noted musicians, and within several years was having her early works performed by professional musicians, including orchestras. She continued her studies in the U.S., on scholarships from the Mannes College of Music and the America Israel Cultural Foundation, and has been awarded most major honors given to composers in the U.S. including the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for her *Symphony*. Her music has been performed worldwide by leading ensembles including the Chicago Symphony; Philadelphia Orchestra; Cleveland Orchestra; Israel Philharmonic; New York Philharmonic; American Composers Orchestra; the Mendelssohn, Brentano, Pacifica, Spektral, and Juilliard Quartets; Chanticleer, and many others. Noted maestros Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Christoph Von Dohnanyi, Gustavo Dudamel, Zubin Mehta, Yehudi Menuhin, and others have conducted her works. She was Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1990 to 1997 and with Lyric Opera of Chicago during 1994–1997, where her residency culminated in the premiere of her first opera, *Between Two Worlds (the Dybbuk)*.

The recipient of five honorary degrees, she is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Ran is the Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor

Emerita at the University of Chicago Department of Music, where she has taught since 1973. She is currently composing *Anne Frank*, a full-scale opera on a libretto by Charles Kondek.

Jennifer Higdon

Jennifer Higdon, Pulitzer Prize and three-time Grammy winner, is one of America's most performed living composers. She makes her living from commissions and has had the distinct honor of working with some of the world's most extraordinary performers in many genres: from the Pacifica Quartet to Eighth Blackbird, from the Chicago Symphony to the London Philharmonic, and from Thomas Hampson to Opera Philadelphia. In 2018, Higdon received the prestigious Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University, which is awarded to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. Among her many honors, Dr. Higdon was most recently inducted into the prestigious American Philosophical Society, a learned society founded in 1743 by Benjamin Franklin to recognize and honor top scholars from a variety of academic disciplines. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year and her works have been recorded on more than 60 CDs. She holds the Rock Chair in Composition at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich

At a time when the world's musical offerings are more varied than ever before, few composers have emerged with the unique personality of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. Her work has been commissioned and performed by most major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic; Cleveland Orchestra; and Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco Symphonies.

Zwilich is the recipient of numerous prizes and honors, including the 1983 Pulitzer Prize in Music (the first woman ever to receive this coveted award), the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Chamber Music Prize, the Arturo Toscanini Music Critics Award, the Ernst von Dohnányi Citation, an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Music, a Guggenheim Fellowship, four Grammy nominations, the Alfred I. Dupont Award, Miami Performing Arts Center Award, the Medaglia d'oro in the G.B. Viotti Competition, and the NPR and WNYC Gotham Award for her contributions to the musical life of New York City. Among other distinctions, Zwilich has been elected to the American Classical Music Hall of Fame, the Florida Artists Hall of Fame, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1995, she was named to the first Composer's Chair in the history of Carnegie Hall, and she was designated *Musical America's* Composer of the Year for 1999. Zwilich, who holds a doctorate from The Juilliard School, currently holds the Francis Eppes Distinguished Professorship at Florida State University.

Producer James Ginsburg

Engineer Bill Maylone

Recorded January 16, 2019, Logan Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Chicago (Ran) and December 20–21, 2019, Auer Hall at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music (Higdon, Zwilich)

Cover Image Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

Booklet Image Felix Nussbaum, “Self-portrait with Jewish Identity Card,” 1943, Museumsquartier Osnabrück, Felix-Nussbaum-Haus Osnabrück/Artists Rights Society (Ars), New York

Graphic Design Bark Design

Publishers

Ran: *Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory* — String Quartet No. 3 ©2014 Theodore Presser Company

Higdon: *Voices* ©1993 Jennifer Higdon (ASCAP)

Zwilich: Quintet for Alto Saxophone and String Quartet ©2008 Theodore Presser Company

This recording is made possible in part by generous support from Bonnie McGrath and Bruce Oltman

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