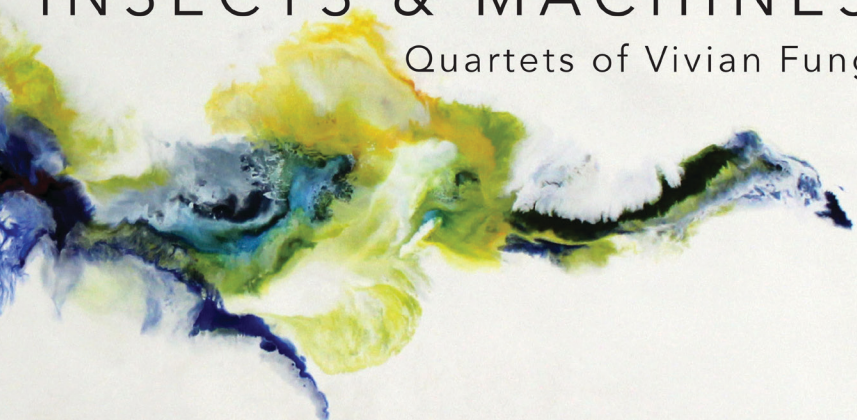




# INSECTS & MACHINES

Quartets of Vivian Fung



Jasper String Quartet

# Insects & Machines: Quartets of Vivian Fung

## Jasper String Quartet

### String Quartet No. 1

- I. Animato [4:03]
- II. Interludium [3:37]
- III. Pizzicato [4:21]
- IV. Moto Perpetuo - Presto Possible [4:28]

### String Quartet No. 2

- I. Introduction [1:40]
- II. Of the Wind [3:01]
- III. Of Birds and Insects [3:29]
- IV. Interlude - With Calmness: Klangfarbenmelodie [1:45]
- V. Of Tribes and Villages [3:44]
- VI. Postlude: Of Ghosts and Memories [2:51]

String Quartet No. 3 [11:48]

String Quartet No. 4: *Insects and Machines* [11:27]

Total Time: [56:22]

Vivian Fung has long been a friend and admired composer of the Jasper String Quartet. The Quartet first performed one of her works in 2019, and we were immediately captivated by the visceral energy and impeccable craft of her writing. Vivian's String Quartets Nos. 1-4 span 18 years of her career and reflect a remarkable journey of absorbing, integrating, and synthesizing a unique spectrum of influences into her compositional voice. Unwavering in all of the works is a fierce heart, instrumental fearlessness, and an amazing instinct for texture. We are incredibly grateful to have recorded these works with Vivian in the studio and for the growth we experienced in the process.

- Jasper String Quartet

This album is a testimonial to my lifelong adoration of strings, dating back to my beginning cello studies as a middle school student. My cello teacher introduced me to a wide-ranging repertoire and opened up my sonic world with the sound of string quartets, concerti, and Baroque instruments. The string quartet format, in particular, has gripped my imagination since writing *Pizzicato*, which I originally wrote as a standalone work and later incorporated as the third movement of String Quartet No. 1 and continues to be one of my most performed pieces.

Many thank yous to the Jasper String Quartet for their dedication to this CD project; to my husband, son, and parents for their support; and to everyone at Sono Luminus for producing this wonderful album.

- Vivian Fung

## String Quartet No. 1 (2004)

A residency at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in 2001 provided the foundation for my String Quartet No. 1. The coordinators of the residency asked the participants to compose a short work for string quartet, no longer than five minutes, which was later read by the American String Quartet. At the time, I had been listening to and absorbing influences from the folk music of certain parts of Asia, including China and Indonesia. I began to think of ways to incorporate the exotic atmosphere created by that music into my own music, and the result was what was to become the third movement of my Quartet, *Pizzicato*. Inspired by the success of the American String Quartet's reading, I composed the first, second, and fourth movements over the next two years. Those three movements also have elements of Asian folk influence, and, in many instances, use the same scale patterns found in *Pizzicato*.

The first movement, *Animato*, is lively with frequent use of interlocking and syncopated rhythms under long, flowing, melodic lines. Next, *Interludium*, the only slow movement, has hints of a folk melody, superimposed over alternating chords that appear and disappear to create an atmospheric mood. As the title suggests, *Pizzicato* requires the string players to pluck the strings of their instruments. The final movement, *Moto Perpetuo*, is a virtuosic display of constantly swirling sixteenth notes that drives the work to an explosive conclusion.

Funded in part by the Composer Assistance Program of the American Music Center, the entire string quartet was premiered by the Avalon String Quartet on January 24, 2004 as part of the Chamber Music Columbus series in Ohio. A string orchestra version of the third movement, *Pizzicato*, exists and was premiered by the San José Chamber Orchestra in December 2001.

### **String Quartet No. 2 (2009)**

As a composer, I try to best represent in musical terms my own individual voice in each work that I write. Even though each composition addresses different artistic challenges, issues of my Asian identity underscore much of my work. Oftentimes, the source of inspiration for a work lies in Asian folk materials, as is the case in this String Quartet No. 2, which uses a Chinese folksong as the basis of the introduction, interlude, and postlude.

Having heard the Shanghai Quartet in performance and on recordings many times, I realized that the group has not only the technical and musical artistry to rival any of the top string quartets in the world, but also a special lyricism and sensitivity that sets it apart. I wanted to write music that could highlight all the above qualities for the group, and chose a format of six shorter movements, with each movement being a study in a certain mood or affect, represented in the subtitles of the movements.

These descriptions are not to be taken literally, but are more evocative in flavor.

The first movement, *Introduction*, introduces the folk song as a chorale with the instruction “to be played like a consort of viols.” In other words, I wanted an ancient sound quality to this introduction, as though the movement was written many moons ago. The second movement, subtitled *Of the Wind*, evokes ferocity and aggression, and the challenge comes with the different bow strokes involved and the virtuosic scalar passages featured. The third movement, *Of Birds and Insects*, is meant to be playful and humorous, using many off-the-bow strokes, natural harmonics, and ornamentation, including glissandi and trills, to depict the sounds of nature. The fourth movement, *Interlude*, restates the folksong of the first movement, but in a disguised form in which each note of the melody is played by a different member of the quartet—hence the term *klangfarbenmelodie*, German for “tone-color-melody. The fifth movement, *Of Tribes and Villages*, features a distinct rhythmic drive as well as a songful melody in the middle section. The last movement, *Of Ghosts and Memories*, restates the folk song as a slow chorale and is constantly interjected with quotations, or “memories,” of the previous movements.

### String Quartet No. 3 (2013)

This work revolves around a chant that is first realized in full about a minute into the piece. Evoking non-Western song, the chant is announced by the entire quartet, highly ornamented, powerful, and tuned to suggest the microtonal tendencies found in many non-Western scales. My recent reflections on faith and spirituality come to life in this quartet as a world of varied prayers, sometimes turbulent, sometimes passionate, sung to oneself or among a crowd.

Hushed, ambiguous chords start the piece and then crescendo and surge into fast wispy harmonics. The harmonics gradually morph and descend into immense arpeggiated chords euphorically hailing the arrival of the main melody. The chant undergoes a series of transformations, from heterophonic passages in which the quartet acts as four disparate voices, at times wailing and intense; through trilled versions of the melody with virtuosic accompaniments; and finally into a chaconne, a four note repeated harmonic figure that allows for fluid, quasi-improvisational, anguished renditions of the chant. The chaconne is repeatedly interrupted, at first nostalgically, then more and more abruptly, by material that recalls former passages. The work ends quietly with harmonics and a sense of uncertainty lingering in the air.

### String Quartet No. 4: Insects and Machines (2019)

*Buzzing.....whirring.....glitching.....ringing.....thumping.....*

We are constantly saturated with noises that permeate our daily lives. On a recent trip to Cambodia, I was especially attuned to the persistent noises of buzzing insects that accompanied my walk through the thick jungle, and this cacophony gelled with my emotional reaction to the terrible genocide of the Khmer people.

I give voice to this background babbling in this quartet, organizing the various moments as episodes that freely morph from one event into another. One can hear buzzing at the beginning that turns into a waltz, which in turn transforms into a motoric adventure of machine-like chuggings-along.

Much like the sound of thumping bass in a neighboring car, the episodes come in as waves and then disappear into the distance to be replaced by other soundscapes. The end result is an unrelenting fast and virtuosic 12-minute tour-de-force quartet.

- Vivian Fung



## Jasper String Quartet

J Freivogel and Karen Kim, *violins*

Andrew Gonzalez, *viola*

Rachel Henderson Freivogel, *cello*

Celebrating its seventeenth anniversary in 2023, the Jasper String Quartet is recognized as one of the leading American string quartets on the performance stage today. A recipient of Chamber Music America's prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award, the quartet has been hailed as "sonically delightful and expressively compelling," (The Strad) and described by Gramophone as "flawless in ensemble and intonation, expressively assured and beautifully balanced." The New York Times named their album *Unbound* as one of the 25 Best Classical Recordings of 2017.

The Quartet is the Professional Quartet-in-Residence at Temple University's Center for Gifted Young Musicians and is committed to celebrating the diverse array of compositional voices writing for string quartet on every program.

Highlights of the 2023/2024 season include a collaboration with tenor Nicholas Phan and pianist Myra Huang in the premiere

performance of a new work by Vivian Fung at the Kaufmann Center in New York City, as well as residencies at Trinity University, Swarthmore College, and the Fine Arts Center of Greenville, SC. The Quartet is the Founder and Artistic Director of Jasper Chamber Concerts.

The Jasper Quartet is passionate about connecting with audiences beyond the concert hall and has performed hundreds of outreach programs in schools and community centers. The Quartet received a Residency Partnership grant from Chamber Music America for the 2020-21 season and has received numerous Picasso Project grants from Public Citizens for Children and Youth to support its ongoing work with public schools in Philadelphia. The Fischhoff National Chamber Music Association recognized the Quartet's "outstanding and imaginative programming for children and youth in the United States" with their 2016 Educator Award.

Formed at Oberlin Conservatory, the Jasper Quartet launched their professional career in 2006 while studying with James Dunham, Norman Fischer, and Kenneth Goldsmith as Rice University's Graduate Quartet-in-Residence. In 2008, the Quartet continued its training with the Tokyo String Quartet as Yale University's Graduate

Quartet-in-Residence. In 2008, the Jaspers swept through the competition circuit, winning the Grand Prize and the Audience Prize in the Plowman Chamber Music Competition, the Grand Prize at the Coleman Competition, First Prize at Chamber Music Yellow Springs, and the Silver Medal at the 2008 and 2009 Fischhoff Chamber Music Competitions. They were also the first ensemble honored with Yale School of Music's Horatio Parker Memorial Prize, an award established in 1945, and selected by the faculty for "best fulfilling... lofty musical ideals." In 2010, they joined the roster of Astral Artists after winning their national auditions.

The Jasper String Quartet is named after Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada. For more information, please visit [www.jasperquartet.com](http://www.jasperquartet.com). The Quartet is represented by Artist Manager Marianne LaCrosse of Suòno Artist Management.

### **Vivian Fung**

JUNO Award-winning composer Vivian Fung has a unique talent for combining idiosyncratic textures and styles into large-scale works, reflecting her multicultural background. Upcoming performance highlights include the world premiere of her fifth String Quartet by Canada's Lafayette String Quartet and a new piece for Houston's ROCO; international performances of her critically-acclaimed

elegy for the pandemic, Prayer; and the European premieres of A Child's Dream of Toys and Baroque Melting. Mary Elizabeth Bowden tours her Trumpet Concerto to Philharmonia Northwest, Waynesboro Symphony, San José Chamber Orchestra. Fung is the 2023 Composer-in-Residence at Alba Music Festival Composition Program in Italy.

Fung is currently at work on a new project with soprano Andrea Nunez and Royce Vavrek, percussion works for Network for New Music and Ensemble for These Times, a piano work for the "Ligeti Etudes meets 18 Composers" commissioning project, and a commission by Cape Cod Chamber Music Society. Elizabeth Bowden has recorded her Trumpet Concerto with the Chicago Youth





Symphony Orchestras for future release on Çedille Records.

Fung has a deep interest in exploring cultures through travel and research. As a composer whose trips often inspire her music, Fung has also explored diverse cultures in China, North Vietnam, Spain, and Indonesia. With a grant from the Canada Council, she and Royce Vavrek will travel to Cambodia in 2023 to continue research for a new opera based on her family's experience surviving the Cambodian genocide.

In 2012, Naxos Canadian Classics released a recording of Fung's Violin Concerto [No.1], commissioned by the Metropolis Ensemble, which earned Fung the 2013 JUNO Award for "Classical Composition of the Year."

Several of Fung's other works have also been released commercially on the Telarc, Çedille, Innova, and Signpost labels.

Fung is a passionate mentor for young composers, is an associate composer of the Canadian Music Centre, and served on the board of the American Composers Forum. Born in Canada, Fung received her doctorate from The Juilliard School. She currently lives in California. Learn more at [www.vivianfung.ca](http://www.vivianfung.ca).

## Thanks

A huge thank you to Vivian Fung for her artistic vision in writing these quartets and her support every step of the way in creating this album.

Thank you as well to our producer Dan Merceruio, engineer Daniel Shores, and everyone at Sono Luminus. We are incredibly grateful to all those who have, and continue to, support our career - our manager Marianne LaCrosse of Suòno Artist Management, our publicist, Christina Jensen of Jensen Artists, and the many amazing presenters and patrons who present and attend our performances across the country and the globe.

Finally a huge thank you to our families - our spouses, our children and our parents for their support of our dreams.



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## INSECTS &amp; MACHINES

## JASPER STRING QUARTET

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Geneviève Caron; p. 17 - Joshua Frey

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