

The image features a central horizontal strip of bright yellow paper with a torn, deckled edge. This strip is set against a background of light blue and white, suggesting a sky with soft clouds. Several dark grey silhouettes of birds in flight are scattered across the background, some above and some below the yellow strip. The word "shatter" is written in a large, red, lowercase, sans-serif font across the yellow strip. The word "VERONA QUARTET" is written in a smaller, black, uppercase, serif font, centered over the word "shatter".

shatter

VERONA QUARTET



Photo: Dario Acosta

JONATHAN ONG.....*violin*
DOROTHY RO.....*violin*
ABIGAIL ROJANSKY.....*viola*
JONATHAN DORMAND..... *cello*

Our journey with the music of SHATTER began with an admiration for the unique and eloquent musical voices of three contemporary American composers: Reena Esmail, Julia Adolphe, and Michael Gilbertson. Their reverence for the string quartet medium shines through in three revelatory works. These works challenge, reflect upon, and offer an opportunity to break through and rebuild our interactions with an increasingly complex world: In pairing the string quartet with a Hindustani singer (the inimitable Saili Oak on vocals), Reena Esmail contemplates the often binary view of cultural identity through the prismatic intersection of Eastern and Western musical traditions; Julia Adolphe juxtaposes issues of empowerment and the assertion of dominance with an ardent yearning for connection; and Michael Gilbertson explores a personal need for comfort and catharsis specifically following the 2016 US Presidential election while mirroring society's alarming dependence upon instant gratification.

SHATTER offers a snapshot of the rich tapestry of voices that comprise the ever-evolving contemporary American idiom. This album is borne out of our passion for sharing stories from across our global community through the tradition and legacy of the string quartet.

*This recording was made possible with support from The Aaron Copland Fund
for Music and the Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music*

Ragamala

During the year I spent in India, I began to notice a beautiful thing that would happen at concerts. When the artist would announce the raag to be sung or played that evening, immediately, and almost subconsciously, many of the cognoscenti in the audience would begin humming the characteristic phrases or 'pakads' of that raag quietly to themselves, intoning with the drone that was already sounding on stage. It had a magical feeling – as if that raag was present in the air, and tiny wisps of it were already starting to precipitate into the audible world in anticipation of the performance. It felt like a connection between the audience and the performer, as they prepared themselves to enjoy what was to come. Each movement of this quartet opens in exactly the same way, and it is inspired by those quiet intonations.

After the opening phrases, each movement diverges into its own distinct character. The first movement is a Fantasia inspired by the beautiful raag Bihag which layers phrases over one another to create large shapes separated by the silence of pure drones. The second movement is a vivacious and rhythmic setting of a Malkauns taan, which to the western ear, always seems to be pulling to a dominant rather than a tonic. The third movement is in the contemplative Basant – a raag that signifies the season of spring in Hindustani music. And the fourth movement is in the complex and multi-faceted Jog, a single raag which seems to contain western notions of both 'major' and 'minor' within it.

In Hindustani music, the elaboration of a single raag can often take an hour. I didn't mean for this piece to exhaust these raags, but rather provide little snapshots of particular features and characters of each raag that I find beautiful and special about each one.

By Reena Esmail

Star-Crossed Signals

Star-Crossed Signals imagines stabs at communication between two bodies, two vessels separated by an expansive landscape. The movement titles are derived from nautical signal flags used by ships at sea. Delta signifies “Keep clear of me. I am moving with difficulty” and Xray translates to “Stop carrying out your intentions and watch for my signals.” Thwarted attempts to communicate, warn, and assert power sound throughout all four voices in the string quartet’s first movement as the individual instruments strive for dominance. The first violin’s initially stifled voice slowly rises to the surface, freely clashing with the turbulent atmosphere swarming its music. The dissonance reaches a peak and then dissipates, leaving the first violin to linger and return to its opening material. The second movement uses the maritime signal Kilo, meaning: “I wish to communicate with you.” The repetition of the word Kilo evokes both a longing for connection as well as the echoing nature of the music. In this movement, the strings gently reach for one another, enveloping and folding each line in a kind of dance. The imagery of navy signal flags stems from my childhood; my father used them in his early paintings. I was always struck by the idea of ships at sea attempting to reach one another through brightly colored coded patterns. It is a wonderful metaphor for human interaction.

By Julia Adolphe

Quartet

After several weeks of sketching my first quartet in the fall of 2016, I started over in mid-November as the piece became a sort of personal reaction to the presidential election. I felt the need to write something comforting and thought of the pulsing chords that open Sibelius' Second Symphony. A similar gesture of lulling, repeated chords became the basis for material in the first movement. I thought simple sugars (carbs that are metabolized quickly and provide an immediate rush, but no nutritional substance) was a fitting title for the restless energy of the second movement.

By Michael Gilbertson

VERONA QUARTET



STRING QUARTET (RAGAMALA) *by* REENA ESMAIL
featuring Hindustani vocalist Saili Oak

1. — I. FANTASIE (BIHAG)
2. — II. SCHERZO (MALKAUNS)
3. — III. RECITATIVE (BASANT)
4. — IV. RONDO (JŌG)

STAR-CROSSED SIGNALS *by* JULIA ADOLPHE

5. — I. DELTA X-RAY
6. — II. KILO KILO

QUARTET *by* MICHAEL GILBERTSON

7. — I. MOTHER CHORDS
8. — II. SIMPLE SUGARS

Producer: Jesse Lewis

Engineer: Christopher Moretti & Tom Caulfield

Graphic Design: David Foarde

Recorded at Jordan Hall, Boston, MA • April 11, 2019 & August 23-24, 2021

BRIGHTSHINY.NINJA | VERONAQUARTET.COM

