

**AIZURI QUARTET**  
**“What’s Past is Prologue”**  
**On Demand, April 21-28, 2021**

Emma Frucht, violin  
Miho Saegusa, violin  
Ayane Kozasa, viola  
Karen Ouzounian, cello

**PROGRAM NOTES**

**Hildegard von Bingen** (1098-1179), a German Benedictine abbess, writer, mystic, and visionary from the High Middle Ages, was canonized a saint in 2012. In addition to her numerous vocal compositions, she wrote theological, botanical, and medicinal texts. *Columba aspexit*, a sequence (a dramatic poem sung between the Alleluia and the Gospel in the Mass), was composed in the late 12th century as a vocal work. The Aizuri Quartet commissioned this arrangement by Alex Fortes.

**Barbara Strozzi** (1619-1677), an Italian singer and prolific composer of the Baroque period, published eight volumes of her own music. The vast majority of her works were secular, unique for composers of this period. *L’usignuolo* (The Nightingale) and *L’amante modesto* (The Modest Lover), both secular vocal works, were arranged by Alex Fortes.

**Nina C. Young** (b. 1984) composed *Memento mori, Phase 1* (from the Latin: “remember that you will die”) as the first section of a larger work in progress. She uses the first five notes of the D minor subject of Bach’s *The Art of the Fugue* as the musical material from which the piece is spun. Young describes the piece as “...a meditation on life and the perception of time. In our daily activities, the constant influx of information, sensations, and stimuli saturates our consciousness. By stepping out of time, we can zoom in and out of our perceptual systems, allowing us to focus on their intricacies and beauty.”

**Gabriella Smith** (b. 1991) wrote *Carrot Revolution* for the Aizuri Quartet in 2015. Commissioned by the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, the work is a response to Dr. Barnes’ distinctive arrangements of paintings, metal objects, furniture and pottery in ways that pointed out similarities and differences in shapes, colors and textures. Smith notes that “...this piece is a celebration of that spirit of fresh observation and of new ways of looking at old things such as the string

quartet — a 250-year-old genre — as well as some of my even older musical influences (Bach, Perotin, Gregorian chant, Georgian folk songs, and Celtic fiddle tunes).”

**Rhiannon Giddens** (b. 1977), a composer and performing artist, was named Artistic Director of Silkroad in 2020; she is a Grammy winner and a 2017 MacArthur Fellow. “At the Purchaser’s Option,” from Giddens’ album *Freedom Highway* takes its title from a 19th-century slave advertisement for a 22-year-old female slave whose baby was also available for sale (“at the purchaser’s option”).

**Eleanor Alberga**, (b. 1949) a British Jamaican-born composer and concert pianist, serves as a guest lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She found her inspiration for this quartet in a lecture on physics and the realization that “...all matter, including our physical bodies, is made of the same stuff — star dust. So the first movement might be called ‘a fugue without a subject,’ as particles of this stardust swirl around each other, go their separate ways, collide, or merge. The second movement might be described as ‘stargazing from outer space,’ while the finale re-establishes gravity and earthbound energy.”