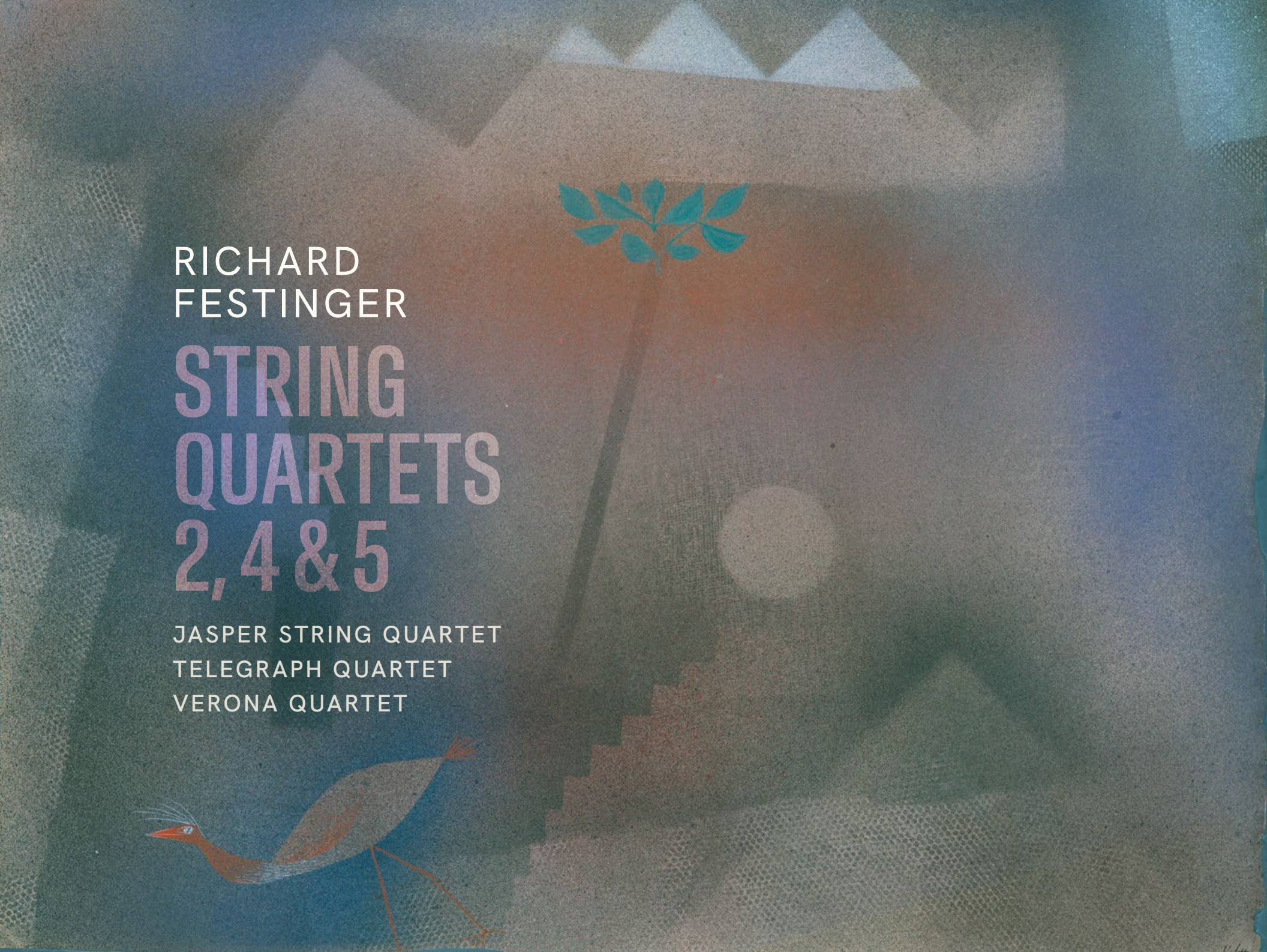


The background is a complex abstract composition. It features a large, light-colored, textured shape in the upper center, resembling a stylized house or a mountain peak. Below this, a dark, diagonal band cuts across the frame. In the lower left, a stylized bird with a long, thin beak and a small crest is depicted in profile, facing left. The bird's body is a mix of brown and grey tones. The overall color palette is muted, with shades of blue, green, brown, and grey. The texture appears to be that of a fine-grained paper or a digital filter applied to a photograph.

RICHARD
FESTINGER

STRING
QUARTETS
2, 4 & 5

JASPER STRING QUARTET
TELEGRAPH QUARTET
VERONA QUARTET





RICHARD FESTINGER

- 1 **String Quartet No. 2** (2005)..... 16:07
From the Beginning
Lento - Più lento - Presto
Verona Quartet
- 2 **String Quartet No. 4** (2018)..... 28:59
Icarus in Flight
Lento - Più mosso - Allegro serioso - Più mosso
Telegraph Quartet
- 3 **String Quartet No. 5** (2021)..... 18:40
Allegro non troppo - Andantino - Adagio - Allegro con brio
Jasper String Quartet

Total Time: 63:46

RICHARD
FESTINGER

STRING QUARTETS 2, 4 & 5

SINCE AT LEAST FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN, the string quartet genre has been at the heart of the chamber music repertoire. Highly favored by the first Viennese school, Haydn produced 68 quartets, Mozart 23, and Beethoven 17. One could say that interest in the genre receded somewhat among the Romantics, though Franz Schubert penned 13; moreover, nearly every important composer wrote at least one, sometimes of surpassing quality. Indeed, the single quartets produced by Claude Debussy (1893) and Maurice Ravel (1903) have assumed a prominent and enduring place in the standard quartet literature. In the early 20th century, the second Viennese School produced rather few quartets. Schoenberg wrote four, and Alban Berg two, of which the *Lyrische Suite* stands out as significant; in addition, Anton von Webern's two important sets of miniatures, the *Fünf Sätze* (1909) and *Sechs Bagatellen* (1913), are seminal works of musical expressionism. Of absolute centrality to the modern quartet repertoire are Bartók's six quartets, and Dmitri Shostakovich's fifteen have in recent years enjoyed wide exposure. More recent quartets include four from Iannis Xenakis, five each from Andrew Welsh Imbrie, Hans Werner Henze, Giacinto Scelsi and Elliott Carter, and six from John Harbison.

Decade after decade, the list goes on. It's natural to ask why the string quartet has proven so important a genre to so enormous a range of musical styles, and so durably so. Of course the string quartet offers the perfect blend of a homogeneous instrumental group, yet with a wide range of coloristic possibilities, attributes which distinguish it from woodwind or other mixed

ensembles. Of great import are the contrapuntal possibilities offered by the four voices, and the textural richness available from the presence of two inner parts. The agility and technical virtuosity typical of string performers provide invaluable resources, both for ensemble work, and for the more soloistic music that is achievable in chamber, as opposed to orchestral settings. And then there is the overwhelming importance of performance practice: we live today in a golden age of string quartet performance, in which a large population of highly skilled, professional quartets prepare annual touring programs with a degree of detail, nuance and flexibility unparalleled in any other genre.

All of the foregoing speak to the challenges a composer assumes in undertaking the composition of a new string quartet. How does one absorb the vastness of the historical repertoire, in all its richness and variety? How does one emulate the signal accomplishments of musical giants for whom the string quartet embodied some of their most important efforts? And how does one create a new work in the genre that is at once fresh, decidedly of its own time, and perhaps might point in new directions, and even offer inspiration to other composers? Whether or not I've accomplished any of these things in my own quartets is for the future to judge. Whatever the answer, it has been my joy and privilege to enter into conversation with all the composers of the past nearly 300 years who have essayed the genre, and to add my own contributions to that conversation.

It was also my great joy and privilege to engage on this recording with the dedicated and surpassing artistry of three

extraordinary ensembles, the Verona, Telegraph and Jasper string quartets. In each case, the musicians' total commitment to mastering the technical and musical challenges of the material has resulted in the most eloquent and expressive of interpretations. This composer couldn't wish for better collaborators.

String Quartet No. 2, "From the Beginning"

The central metaphor in my second string quartet, *From the Beginning*, is of a kind of growth, leading from germinal beginnings to fully elaborated organisms. The piece is in two movements, slow followed by fast, but connected, as the second flows without pause out of the concluding harmony of the first. The numinous, hovering melodies of the first movement give rise to a contemplative, or interior landscape, while the second movement is full of intensity, active and extroverted. As Beeri Moalem notes, writing for *San Francisco Classical Voice*, "*From the Beginning*... progresses captivatingly from ethereal desolation to swarming excitement". *From the Beginning* was composed in commemoration of the 20th anniversary season of the San Francisco based contemporary music ensemble Earplay, in 2005.

As the piece opens, a complex harmony builds up note by note, against which the first violin ascends to complete the chord, ushering in a passage of dissonant chords in alternating registers — a device which will become an ending motif for each section of the work — and prodding the viola to initiate a new ascent, completed by the first violin, to close the opening expository statement. An animated dialogue

between viola and cello ensues, marked *appassionata*. The second violin joins in as the pace of exchange between instruments increases. Complex harmonies return to close the section, as the viola offers a distillation of previous linear material. A short, free, contrasting, lyrical section gradually builds in intensity, leading once again to an alternation of complex chords, which in turn initiate a development of the movement's opening. Here each instrument in turn offers a brief soliloquy, lastly the cello, who continues at length, finally inducing, yet again, the seemingly inevitable complex harmonies. An imitative passage now leads to a development of the earlier viola-cello dialogue, this time between the two violins, who increase the intensity to bring about a climactic moment. The music pauses. The complex chord of the movement's beginning again builds up, though a whole step higher. This time it is the cello who makes the ascent, and the movement closes with a final return of alternating chords.

The second movement begins as a nervous, agitated music bursts in, veering between rapid outbursts accompanied by repeated notes, and tense, slower-moving tremolo passages. Running 16th-note figures with repeated note accompaniments finally manage to assert themselves, punctuated by brief, slower moving, note-against-note duets, until heavily accented ostinato figures overtake things. The anxious music of the opening returns, in varied form, and the entire story is retold, from new perspectives, with new embellishments.

String Quartet No. 4, “Icarus in Flight”

Composed in 2018, my fourth string quartet, subtitled *Icarus in Flight*, was commissioned by the ClimateMusic Project, a San Francisco-based organization that works with world-class scientists, composers, musicians, artists, and technologists to stimulate the creation and staging of science-guided music paired with visual experiences to inspire people to engage actively on the issue of climate change.

Focusing on human drivers of climate change, *Icarus in Flight* models the earth's changing climate during the period 1880 projected out to 2080, using historical data on population growth, carbon emissions and land-use transformation to control certain aspects of the music:

- Population growth controls the average density of musical events over time, increasing, in the worst case, by a factor of 9. In this context, density means the number of musical events in a given time period (if more than one instrument initiates an event at the same time it is still considered one event).
- Carbon emissions control the frequency range of the music, from lowest to highest pitch, increasing gradually from a perfect fifth in the middle register to a span of 6.25 octaves, before collapsing to almost nothing.
- With respect to land-use, an increase from 13% to 43% of the earth's land surface devoted to human use (i.e. habitation, agriculture, grazing, etc.) is represented by the increasing proportion of music that is played with specialized timbres (tone colors), including mainly pizzicato, tremolo bowing, and bowing close to the bridge (producing a fragile timbre characterized by a greater proportion of high frequency partials).

The invention of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic material was left entirely to my own musical imagination, with the intent of creating a richly textured piece of music, replete with motives, themes, developments and formal structures, through which the climate data inevitably and inexorably emerge.

To accomplish this, extensive advance planning was necessary. The 200-year time span traversed by *Icarus in Flight* was first divided into three large sections, to be played without pause: Part 1, the years 1880 to 1945, when the data are growing slowly; Part 2, the years from 1945 to 2015, when growth accelerates exponentially; and Part 3, the years from 2015 to 2080, our recent past, and our climate future. Each year of historical time occupies approximately nine seconds of musical time, the entire piece lasting about 30 minutes.

The three main sections were then divided into a total of 47 subsections, ranging in duration from 18 to 43 seconds, as shown in the accompanying chart. For each subsection it was then determined: the number of musical events to occur; the frequency range, from lowest to highest pitch; and the number of musical events to be colored by non-*arco ordinario* playing techniques.

In the final large section, representing the future, and comprised of 18 subsections, the controlling data alternate between the scientifically defined best — and worst-case future scenarios, RCP 2.6 and RCP 8.5. RCPs, or Representative Concentration Pathways, are climate scenarios used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to project future greenhouse gas concentrations, and their resulting

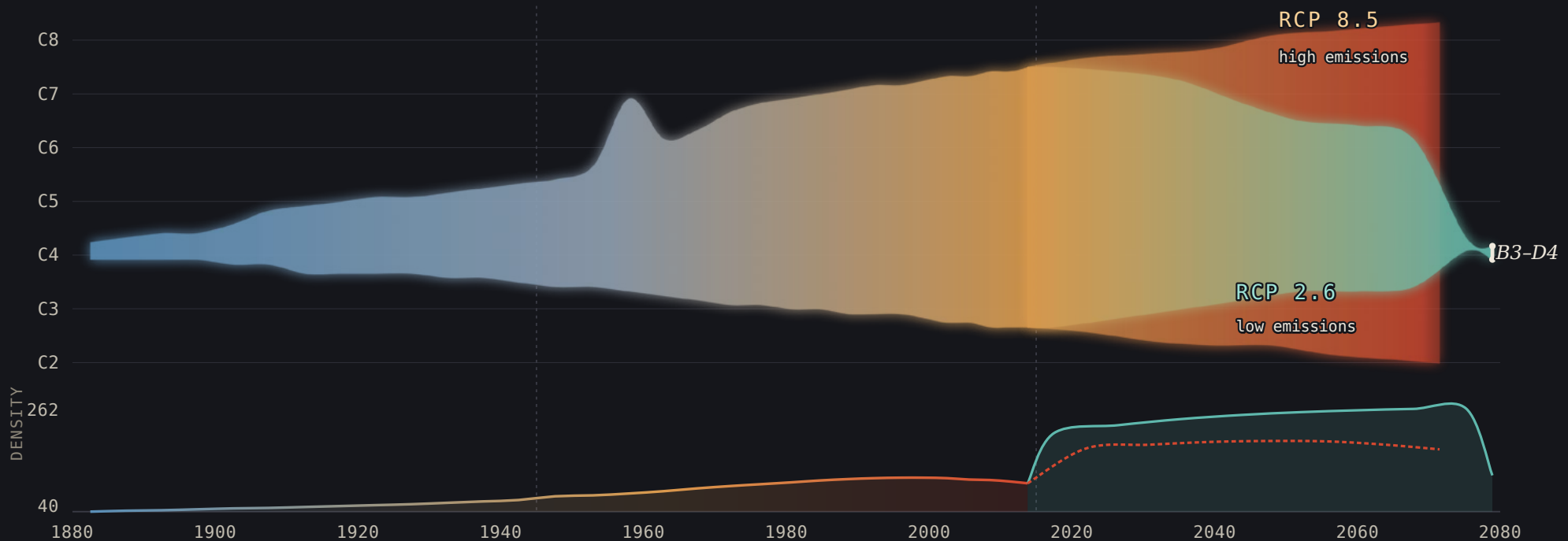
impact on the Earth's energy balance. In a nutshell, RCPs provide a quantification, under a certain set of conditions, of the amount of energy retained in the earth's atmosphere, rather than radiated into space, measured in watts per square meter.

A final twist: the era of international cooperation on climate change begins circa 1979. If one listens closely, one can hear fleeting moments of repose on the consonant interval of a 3rd or a 6th, marking the dates of important international meetings.

The subtitle of the quartet, *Icarus in Flight*, offers a metaphor for the trajectory of climate change. Imprisoned by King Minos on the isle of Crete, the brilliant Athenian inventor and craftsman Daedalus fashioned wings of feathers, fixed in place with wax, for himself and his son, Icarus, so to escape from the isle by flight. Daedalus warned his son against flying too high, to avoid the wax-melting heat of the sun. As Icarus launches himself slowly from earth and, gradually at first, makes his ascent, will Daedalus' warning be a sufficient safeguard? Alas, elated by the thrill of flight, Icarus ignored his father's admonitions, venturing high into an environment too warm to sustain him.

ICARUS *IN FLIGHT*

FORMAL PLAN (DATA VISUALIZATION)



A CLIMATE ARC · 1880-2080

Icarus in Flight sets two centuries of climate data to music. Population growth drives event-density; carbon emissions drive the frequency range — a narrow fifth opening toward a 6.25-octave span. At 2015 the future forks between RCP 2.6 and 8.5, before collapsing onto a final, B3-D4 dyad.

CHART LEGEND

TESSITURA frequency range (carbon emissions)
 DENSITY events per subsection (population)
 RCP 2.6 best / 8.5 worst case
 COLOR heat / time (cool 1880 → hot 2080)

ICARUS IN FLIGHT

FORMAL PLAN (DATA POINTS)

PART I

1880-1945

DUR	DENSITY	TESSITURA
40	40	B3-D#4
40	42	B3-E4
40	43	B3-F4
40	45	B3-F4
40	47	Bb3-G4
40	48	Bb3-Bb4
40	50	Ab3-B4
40	52	Ab3-C5
40	54	Ab3-Db5
40	56	Ab3-Db5
40	59	G3-D5
40	62	G3-D#5
40	65	F#3-E5

PART II

1945-2015

DUR	DENSITY	TESSITURA
42 $\frac{2}{3}$	73	F3-F5
41 $\frac{1}{3}$	75	F3-Ab5
40	79	E3-B6
38 $\frac{2}{3}$	84	Eb3-D6
37 $\frac{1}{3}$	90	D3-E6
36	95	Db3-Ab6
34 $\frac{2}{3}$	99	Db3-Bb6
33 $\frac{1}{3}$	103	C3-B6
32	107	C3-C7
30 $\frac{2}{3}$	110	B2-C#7
29 $\frac{1}{3}$	112	B2-D7
28	113	B2-D7
26 $\frac{2}{3}$	113	Bb2-D#7
25 $\frac{1}{3}$	112	A2-E7
24	109	A2-E7
22 $\frac{2}{3}$	108	Ab2-F7
21 $\frac{1}{3}$	105	Ab2-F7
20	101	Ab2-F#7

PART III

2015-2080

DUR	DENSITY	RCP	TESS.
40	209	2.6	Ab2-F#7
32	176	8.5	G2-G#7
40	226	2.6	Bb2-F7
30	184	8.5	F2-A7
40	239	2.6	C3-Eb7
28	190	8.5	E2-Bb7
40	248	2.6	D3-Bb6
26	192	8.5	E2-C#8
40	254	2.6	E3-F#6
24	191	8.5	D2-D8
40	258	2.6	E3-F6
22	184	8.5	C#2-D#8
40	261	2.6	F3-D6
20	174	8.5	C2-E8
40	262	2.6	C#4-E4
18	118	2.6	B3-D4

String Quartet No. 5

String Quartet No. 5, composed in 2021, is set in three movements, played without pause. The first movement opens with an athletic idea that is essentially a single line, passed around from instrument to instrument, as it spans a range of more than four octaves. Recurrences of this material give the movement some of the characteristics of rondo form. Following this first statement of the material, a repeated-note idea provides a transition to the first episode, positing a more quietly energized music, with the violins set as a duo contrapuntally against the duo of the lower strings. This first episode increases in intensity as it leads to the first recurrence of the opening material. A second episode features the first violin offering a passionate, yet lyrical statement, again with counterpoint below. Now appears a longer section, leading with the earlier repeated-note idea, and combining with it fragments of the opening material, which eventually take over. The episode closes with an extended statement of the repeated-note idea, and somewhat abruptly, a quiet violin-cello duet emerges, a canon by inversion—foreshadowing some of the character of the second movement—with second violin and viola quietly activating harmonic material. The music transforms itself into a chorale, the four instruments first playing in concerted fashion, then beginning to differentiate themselves, as the growing intensity brings in a final statement of the opening material. A coda reminisces over the very first episode. The second movement is an extended recitative, through composed, richly colored with tremolos, pizzicati, jeté bowing and sul ponticello effects, and

motivated by a recurring motto: a short, expressive, upward glissando, evoking an intake of breath. The music is restless, but not excitedly so, flowing now and then into an overt lyricism. Halfway through the movement, a variation on the violin-cello duet from the first movement returns.

The final movement, marked *Allegro con brio*, breaks in upon the reverie. The glissandi of the second movement's motto are now given scope, building up harmonies that punctuate passages of excited running figures. The central section of the movement offers up a capricious scherzando: the material is stated four times, each time with variation, and each time leading to different consequences, the last of which brings back the glissandi and running figures of the movement's opening. The piece ends as the four instruments engage in animated colloquy, eventually descending to the low register, offering a final reminiscence of the second movement's glissando motto, and closing with a flourish.

— Richard Festinger

RICHARD FESTINGER HAS BEEN a prominent and highly regarded figure in American contemporary music since the early 1980s. An early interest in jazz in the 1970s took him to Boston, where he worked with Gary Burton, Herb Pomeroy and Mick Goodrick at the Berklee School of Music, and he subsequently led his own groups as a jazz performer in the San Francisco Bay area before studying composition with Andrew Imbrie at the University of California in Berkeley.

Festinger's work as a composer, comprising more than 80 compositions across a wide variety of genres, has been widely recognized for its elegance and emotive power. Frank J. Oteri, writing for the 2011 Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, describes Festinger's music as "notable for its combination of propulsive energy with an impeccable sense of poise and balance." In his article on Festinger's recordings in the *Journal of the Society for American Music*, Joshua Levine writes of Festinger's work as "vibrant, skillfully wrought... intellectually and viscerally compelling music." WQXR Radio has called him "an American master."

The numerous awards and honors that have accrued to him include major commissions from the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund for music, the Argosy and Barlow Foundations, the Philadelphia Music Project, and the American Composers Forum. He is a recipient of the George Ladd Grand Prix de Paris, and the American

Academy of Arts and Letters has twice recognized his work, with both the Walter Hinrichsen Award and an Academy Recording Award.

Some notable recent commissions include his *String Quartet No. 3* (2015), commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Foundation for the Afiara Quartet; *Cummings Settings* (2016), written for the Resonant Bodies Festival in New York; the song cycle *Careless Love* (2017) written for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players; *Icarus in Flight* (2018), commissioned by the Climate Music Project for the Telegraph String Quartet; the cantata for chorus and chamber orchestra *Worlds Apart* (2020), written for the Boston Cantata Singers; and his *String Quartet No. 5* (2021).

A longtime resident of Northern California, in 1985 Festinger founded the well-known San Francisco based contemporary music ensemble Earplay, which he continues to direct. In 1990 he joined the music faculty of San Francisco State University as professor of music theory and composition, and served from 2010 to 2018 as Artistic Director of the Morrison Artists Series, San Francisco's longest established presenter of professional chamber music concerts. He serves on the boards of Earplay, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Irving M. Klein International String Competition, and the League of Composers/International Society for Contemporary music. More recordings of his works are available on the Bridge, Centaur, CRI, CRS and Naxos International labels.



The **Verona Quartet** (Jonathan Ong and Dorothy Ro, violins; Abigail Rojansky, viola; Jonathan Dormand, cello) is recognized as a premier ensemble of its generation, praised by The New York Times as an “outstanding ensemble... cohesive yet full of temperament.” Recipients of the 2020 Chamber Music America Cleveland Quartet Award and the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Association’s 2025 Educator Award, the ensemble has earned a reputation for its “bold interpretive strength” (*Calgary Herald*) and “opulent sonority” (*The Strad*). The Quartet serves on the faculty of Oberlin

College and Conservatory as Quartet-in-Residence and as Artistic Directors of the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance. The ensemble’s rise to international prominence was fueled by a swift succession of top prize wins at Wigmore Hall, Melbourne, Osaka, M-Prize, and Fischhoff International Chamber Music Competitions, as well as the 2015 Concert Artists Guild Competition.

A string quartet for the 21st century, the Verona Quartet pairs versatile programming with imaginative collaborations that bridge the time-honored canon and new, interdisciplinary works. Notable commissions and premieres include works by composers Christopher Theofanidis, Julia Adolphe, Texu Kim, and Sebastian Currier, as well as Michael Gilbertson’s Pulitzer Prize-nominated Quartet. The Quartet recently celebrated several world premieres, including a work for string quartet, yangqin (Chinese dulcimer), and dancer by Cheng Jin Koh, commissioned by The Smithsonian Institution in honor of the centennial of the Freer Gallery of Art. The 2025 season marks the launch of a new project with American tenor Ben Bliss, featuring the American Songbook alongside art song literature. Past ventures highlight the group’s versatility, ranging from live-performance art installations with artist Ana Prvački to collaborations with the GRAMMY-winning folk trio I’m With Her.

The **Telegraph Quartet** (Eric Chin and Joseph Maile, violins; Pei-Ling Lin, viola; Jeremiah Shaw, cello) formed in 2013 with an equal passion for the standard chamber music repertoire and contemporary, non-standard works alike. Described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as “...an incredibly valuable addition to the cultural landscape” and “powerfully adept... with a combination of brilliance and subtlety,” the Telegraph Quartet is a previous recipient of the prestigious Walter W. Naumburg Chamber Music Award and the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition.

The Quartet is currently the Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Michigan. They have performed in concert halls, music festivals, and academic institutions across the United States and abroad, including New York City’s Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Town Hall, San Francisco’s Herbst Theatre, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music’s Chamber Music Tuesdays, Philharmonie de Paris, and at festivals including the Chautauqua Institute, Music in the Vineyards in Napa Valley, Interlochen Arts Festival, Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival, and the Emilia Romagna Festival. Prior to their residency at the University of Michigan, the Telegraph was the Quartet-in-Residence at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music between 2017-2024.



A fervent champion of 20th and 21st century repertoire, the Telegraph Quartet co-commissioned and gave the west coast premiere of John Harbison’s String Quartet No. 6. They premiered Richard Festinger’s String Quartet no. 4, *Icarus in Flight*, a musical representation of climate change data from 1880 to 2080; and premiered Robert Sirota’s String Quartet No. 3, *Wave Upon Wave*, at Weill Recital Hall for their Carnegie Hall debut in 2018, sponsored by the Naumburg Foundation.



The **Jasper String Quartet** (J Freivogel and Karen Kim, violins; Andrew Gonzalez, viola; Rachel Henderson Freivogel, cello) is celebrated as one of the preeminent American string quartets of the twenty-first century. Hailed by *Gramophone* as “flawless in ensemble and intonation, expressively assured and beautifully balanced,” the Quartet is highly regarded for its interesting programming, striving to evocatively connect the music of underrepresented and living composers to the canonical quartet repertoire.

A recipient of Chamber Music America’s prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award (2012), the Quartet’s playing has been described as “sonically delightful and expressively compelling” (*The Strad*). The Quartet has released eight albums. Its most recent release, *Insects and Machines: Quartets*

of *Vivian Fung* (2023), was praised by *Strings Magazine* as being “intensely dramatic throughout, demonstrating both their advocacy of new music and their transcendent mastery.” The Quartet’s 2017 release, *Unbound*, was named by The New York Times as one of the year’s 25 Best Classical Recordings.

Formed at Oberlin Conservatory, the Jasper String Quartet launched their professional career in 2006 at Rice University, and continued its training with the Tokyo String Quartet as Yale University’s Graduate Quartet-in-Residence in 2008. That same year, the Quartet swept through the competition circuit, winning the Grand Prize and 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 the first ensemble honored with Yale School of Music’s Horatio Parker Memorial Prize. The Jasper String Quartet is named after Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada.

CREDITS

String Quartet No. 2, *From the Beginning* recorded

December 4, 2023 at Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA

Richard Festinger, producer

Christopher Moretti, engineer

String Quartet No. 4, *Icarus in Flight* recorded

October 20-21, 2021 at Saint Stephen's Church, Belvedere, CA

Richard Festinger, producer

David v.R. Bowles, engineer

String Quartet No. 5 (2021) recorded

September 22, 2024 at Oktaven Audio, Mount Vernon, NY

Richard Festinger, producer

Ryan Streber, engineer

#2 Commissioned by Earplay for its 20th Anniversary Season (earplay.org)

#4 Commissioned by the ClimateMusic Project (climatemusic.org)

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