Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

SATURDAY EVENING, JULY 26, 2025, AT 5:00 ▸ 4,600TH CONCERT

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage
Home of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Viano Quartet
Lucy Wang, violin
Hao Zhou, violin
Aiden Kane, viola
Tate Zawadiuk, cello

Summer Evenings VI

Joseph Haydn
(1732–1809)

Quartet in D minor for Strings, Hob. III:83, Op. 103 (1803)
▸ Andante grazioso
▸ Menuet ma non troppo presto
ZHOU, WANG, KANE, ZAWADIUK

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791)

Quartet in G major for Strings, K. 387 (1782)
▸ Allegro vivace assai
▸ Menuetto: Allegro
▸ Andante cantabile
▸ Molto allegro
ZHOU, WANG, KANE, ZAWADIUK

INTERMISSION

This concert is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend and long-time subscriber **Constance Wiley**.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Fugue in E-flat major for String Quartet, Op. 81, No. 4 (1827)

WANG, ZHOU, KANE, ZAWADIUK

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Quartet in A major for Strings, Op. 41, No. 3 (1842)

- Andante espressivo—Allegro molto moderato
- Assai agitato—Un poco adagio—Tempo risoluto
- Adagio molto
- Finale: Allegro molto vivace

WANG, ZHOU, KANE, ZAWADIUK

The Summer Evenings Audience Engagement Initiative is underwritten, in part, by **Robert S. Feldman and Katherine Vorwerk**. Additional support provided by the **Musicians Advocacy Fund**, **Leon Levy Foundation**, **Judy and Alan Kosloff**, a **generous anonymous donor**, and with public funds from the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

This concert features members of the Bowers Program, CMS's residency for outstanding early career musicians. The Bowers Program is supported by **Ann S. Bowers**. Additional support by the **Marion F. Goldin Charitable Fund** and **Colburn Foundation**.

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From the Artistic Directors

Dear Listener,

Welcome to a program which is the dream of many chamber music lovers: a quartet concert. It is an established phenomenon that some listeners become so engrossed in the quartet genre that they care for little else. Here and there, entire chamber music series devote themselves exclusively to string quartets. Their audiences compare ensembles, discuss merits or deficiencies in interpretation and technique, and for some lucky quartets, follow their artistic maturation for decades. In such places, individual string quartet members are often hosted by families—usually the same family—for every visit.

(This leads to a wonderful true story: for virtually its entire career, the great Guarneri String Quartet performed annually for the Denver Friends of Chamber Music. The quartet members stayed with four hosts and became attached to them, like family. When violist Michael Tree's hosts decided to move away, he was mortified. *Except* that when they sold the house, it was written into the contract that the new owners *had to* host Michael every time he came, and they did, and Michael got himself a second Denver family.)

We would like to share just a couple of observations about the ensemble you are about to hear, the Viano Quartet. Perhaps people wonder what we look for in a quartet. It's difficult to understand why so few make it to the top. Let us share a fact that we know from experience to be true: it is very, very difficult not only to play string quartets at a world-class level, but also to stay together, be happy, and make a life of it. The standards have gone up and up. Today, every member of a quartet has to play his or her instrument at the level of a polished soloist (which is true across the chamber music spectrum). Few quartets exist who specialize in certain repertoire, as quartets now are expected to play everything from Haydn onward with equal skill. On top of all that, the members need to genuinely like and respect each other, both giving and taking criticism with equal grace and sensitivity. The Viano Quartet has all of the above, and that's why they are here.

On the mystery of "quartet power," as it were, no one describes it better than author Julian Johnson, whose marvelous book *Who Needs Classical Music?* should be required reading for all of us—audiences and artists alike. We will leave the last word to him:

"Live performance makes visible the outer surface of a largely inward activity. To watch a string quartet perform is to witness a complexity and

refinement of interaction that is matched by very few human activities. The exchange between musicians is characterized by a sensitivity, sophistication, and elaboration that articulates the limits of human potential. The interaction heard in the music, and enacted physically in the gestures of the musicians, is both intellectual and emotional and something else at the same time. It also has to do with a quality of mutual care, respect, and understanding, with being part of a collective and yet independent. Each part has a particularity, an identity established and simultaneously transcended in its relation to other parts. From this interaction of individual freedom and togetherness arises something that exceeds the limits of the everyday. It is a metaphor for the best and most cherished human activities and characteristics."

Enjoy the concert,

David Finckel Wu Han
ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

Notes on the Program

By Jack Slavin

Joseph Haydn
Quartet in D minor for Strings, Hob. III:83, Op. 103

- Born March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Lower Austria
- Died May 31, 1809, in Vienna

Composed in 1803

- First CMS performance on January 25, 2009, by the Escher String Quartet (violinists Adam Barnett-Hart and Wu Jie, violist Pierre Lapointe, and cellist Andrew Janss)
- Duration: 11 minutes

Across the nearly 70 quartets that preceded the piece heard today, Haydn defined the genre, earning him the nickname "father of the string quartet." He established many of the characteristics that we associate with the traditional string quartet, including the four-movement structure with fast outer movements framing a slow movement and a minuet.

In the late 1790s Haydn was occupied with a number of projects, including large-scale sacred vocal compositions. Despite juggling several major works, he accepted a commission from Prince Franz Lobkowitz for a string quartet cycle. The first two Lobkowitz quartets, Op. 77, Nos. 1 and 2, were completed in 1799. Haydn would not return

to the genre for a few years, overwhelmed by other commitments and battling declining physical and mental health. Pressured by publishing conventions of the time to complete at least three of the six promised pieces, Haydn pivoted to composing this D-minor quartet. The inner movements heard today were completed by the summer of 1803, but he was ultimately unable to finish the work due to his health. In a letter to a publisher from 1799, Haydn, then 67, wrote of the difficulties he was starting to face:

> "Every day the world compliments me on the fire of my recent works, but no one will believe the strain and effort it costs me to produce them. Some days my enfeebled memory and the unstrung state of my nerves crush me to the earth to such an extent that I fall prey to the worst sort of depression[.]"

In December of 1802, he wrote to another editor: "I only wish that I could have back ten years of my advanced age, so that I could provide you with something new of my composition—perhaps, despite everything—it can still happen." And indeed, it did: though not a complete work, these two movements showcase Haydn's artistry and skill when it comes to the quartet genre.

The *Andante grazioso* is simple and elegant. Its lyrical opening theme establishes a warm texture in the key of B-flat major. The middle section deviates from the standard playbook; starting with the relatively distant key of G-flat major, a driving sixteenth-note motif ventures into even more remote tonalities. The *Menuet* opens boldly, with firmly articulated dotted rhythms in D minor, the intended key of the full quartet. The lighter *Trio* section adds some whimsy to the unexpectedly serious material of the outer sections. Haydn's penchant for musical humor emerges with the use of unexpected rests and dynamic contrasts. A daring upward scale in the first violin brings the movement (and the quartet) to a close.

It was certainly not Haydn's intention to leave the quartet unfinished; this was simply an unfortunate consequence of aging and illness. And yet, one might consider it only fitting that the father of the string quartet would leave—or be forced to leave—the door ajar for future composers.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Quartet in G major for Strings, K. 387

- Born January 27, 1756, in Salzburg
- Died December 5, 1791, in Vienna

Composed in 1782

- First CMS performance on December 2, 1998, by the Guarneri String Quartet (violinists Arnold Steinhardt and John Dalley, violist Michael Tree, and cellist David Soyer)
- Duration: 33 minutes

In 1781, Haydn published his Op. 33 string quartets, written—in his own words—in "an entirely new and special way." Scholars are divided on this claim; some see it as a sales pitch, while others have written extensively about the set's musical innovations, including treatment of thematic material and a departure from the traditional structure of melody in the first violin and accompaniment in the other three parts. Regardless of the veracity of Haydn's claim, the Op. 33 quartets intrigued Mozart and led him to dedicate his own set of six quartets to Haydn. It is clear from the many revisions and corrections visible in the manuscript that Mozart was not exaggerating when he referred to these so-called "Haydn" quartets as "the fruit of a long and laborious effort."

The first of the set, completed in December 1782, is heard on today's program.

The first theme of the *Allegro vivace assai* plays with stark dynamic contrasts while subtle chromatic gestures foreshadow the more extensive chromaticism Mozart employs throughout the movement. The development is punctuated by spiraling sixteenth-note runs across the four parts, driving harmonic exploration. Following a series of bustling scales that make their way throughout the ensemble, the movement comes to a close in a crisp *pianissimo*. The *Menuetto* begins with downward slurs in the first violin and meek replies from the other players. The texture becomes more complex as each instrument takes on chromatic scales, continuing the thread introduced in the first movement. The trio begins ominously with an ornamented outline of a G-minor chord, the parallel minor of the quartet's home key. Despite such a bold opening, this section retains the delicate *piano* textures that have characterized the quartet thus far.

Venturing into the luminous key of C major, the *Andante cantabile* offers a warm, mellifluous contrast to the preceding material. After two movements marked by precise articulations, clear textures, and contrasts between *pianissimo* and *forte,* the *Andante*'s embrace of a rich, full sound is a welcome respite. The first violin takes the lead with a beautiful aria while the rest of the ensemble maintains the harmonic structure.

The finale of the quartet is a testament to Mozart's mastery of not only the contrapuntal tradition of the Baroque era, but also the sonata-form conventions and refined style of his own time. Both of the movement's themes are fugatos, while transitional passages are cast in a more standard Classical texture.[1] The first theme begins with a simple whole-note gesture which is complemented by syncopated countersubjects. The lively second fugato begins in the cello and makes its way upward through the ensemble. A chromatic passage, recalling the melodic language of prior movements, introduces the development section. With each entrance of the whole-note theme, Mozart explores a new tonality, thereby adhering to the formal conventions of the Classical sonata (which call for harmonic instability in the development) while incorporating rigorous counterpoint.

The complexity of musical discourse in this quartet makes Mozart's admiration for Haydn's Op. 33 quartets abundantly clear. The feeling was mutual; when Haydn heard Mozart's set of quartets dedicated to him, the older composer said to Mozart's father: "I tell you before God, as an honest man, your son is the greatest composer whom I know by person or by name: he has taste, and the greatest knowledge of composing."

[1] A *fugato* passage is written in fugal style, but is not a complete fugue and does not necessarily adhere to all the rules of strict counterpoint.

Felix Mendelssohn

Fugue in E-flat major for String Quartet, Op. 81, No. 4

- Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg
- Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig

Composed in 1827

- First CMS performance on February 24, 2009, by the Orion String Quartet (violinists Daniel Phillips and Todd Phillips, violist Steven Tenenbom, and cellist Timothy Eddy)
- Duration: 5 minutes

The Fugue in E-flat major for String Quartet is the fourth in a set of short movements published posthumously. Mendelssohn never intended for these pieces to be combined in a single opus; indeed, this fugue was a relatively early work written at the age of 18, while the others followed many years later. The teenage Mendelssohn already displayed an understanding of and commitment to counterpoint that was unparalleled among his peers thanks to extensive study of the works of J. S. Bach. Just two years following this fugue's composition, he would go on to conduct the famed revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* to celebrate the centenary of one of the Baroque master's most epic compositions.[2] Other milestones in Mendelssohn's Bach-centric endeavors include editions, arrangements, and even a fundraising initiative for a monument to be erected outside the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, where Bach served as cantor for the last 27 years of his life.

One of many fugues Mendelssohn composed under the influence of Bach, this piece likewise reflects the inspiration he took from the late Beethoven string quartets, themselves masterclasses in contrapuntal writing. The fugue's subject, or main theme, is introduced by the viola: a gently rolling line echoed by the other instruments' entrances. The lush, lyrical opening is followed by a second subject characterized by oscillating eighth-notes and heightened chromaticism. In true mastery of the form, Mendelssohn unites the two subjects to conclude the fugue.

[2] There is now evidence that points to 1727 as the first performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*, but Mendelssohn's 1829 performance was intended as a centenary celebration, given the evidence available to him at the time.

Robert Schumann

Quartet in A major for Strings, Op. 41, No. 3

- Born June 8, 1810, in Zwickau, Saxony
- Died July 29, 1856, in Endenich, near Bonn

Composed in 1842

- First CMS performance on March 20, 1977, by the Tokyo String Quartet (violinists Koichiro Harada and Kikuei Ikeda, violist Kazuhide Isomura, and cellist Sadao Harada)
- Duration: 30 minutes

The Op. 41 String Quartets were composed during Schumann's so-called "Year of Chamber Music," following intensive study of the string quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The influence of this Viennese Classical tradition is evident in certain formal structures of the A-major quartet, though in other aspects the work departs from its Classical skeleton.

The slow introduction—a nod to Beethoven—begins with a falling fifth in the first violin, a motif which becomes the first theme of this movement in traditional sonata form. This falling fifth is speculated to be one of Schumann's many musical ciphers representing his wife, Clara Wieck. In early 1842, Schumann accompanied Wieck, a prominent pianist, on one of her many concert tours, before returning home alone to continue his work as editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik.* If the falling fifth is indeed a symbol for Clara, then the beginning of this quartet is a poetic gesture befitting of a lonely Schumann. If it is not coded to mean Clara, the fifth nevertheless imbues the introduction and first theme with a distinct melancholy. The second theme, on the other hand, plays into Classical conventions with a lyrical cello melody and an offbeat accompaniment in the upper parts which lends a sense of lightness. While it contains some descending fifths, it does not share the slightly dejected feel of the truly falling fifths in the first theme.

The falling fifth reappears throughout the movement, as thematic material is expected to do in a sonata form. Its last iteration, however, is unexpected. Absent from the *pianissimo* tonic chords in the second- and third-to-last measures, the cello chimes in with a descending fifth from E to A in the last measure. Having gone through the extensive developmental processes of a sonata, it is surprising to see a snippet of thematic material at the very end; the listener assumes that the material has already been worked through completely. Instead of arousing curiosity, though, Schumann uses this final gesture to bring a sense of closure to this emotional movement; it is not only harmonic closure (a simple A would have sufficed), but also motivic closure as the fixation with Clara's yearning fifths appears to be resolved.

The *Assai agitato* gets its anxious quality in part from the metrical placement of each gesture on the third beat. The phrase feels rushed as a result of this off-beat pattern, as if the melody is being delivered in short bursts. Fiery, accented triplets in the first variation contrast with the hushed theme. In the *un poco Adagio* variation, Schumann extends the bursts of the main theme in order to weave a longer melodic line for the first time in this movement.

This lyricism is echoed in the romantic opening melody of the slow movement that follows. In the second section, however, a persistent dotted rhythm in the second violin creates a suspenseful driving pace in the background of the more dramatic section. The last movement, a jubilant rondo, relies on this dotted figure for its main theme. The drama of the previous movements is all but forgotten as this movement races toward a sunny finale.

About the Artists

KEVIN CONDON

Viano Quartet

Praised for their "virtuosity, visceral expression, and rare unity of intention" (*Boston Globe*), the **Viano Quartet** is one of the most sought-after ensembles today and a recipient of the prestigious 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant. Since soaring to international acclaim as the first-prize winner at the 13th Banff International String Quartet Competition, they have traveled to nearly every major city across the globe, captivating audiences in New York, London, Berlin, Hong Kong, Vancouver, Paris, Beijing, Toronto, Lucerne, and Los Angeles. They are currently in residence at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Bowers Program from 2024 to 2027.

During the 2025 summer season, the quartet will debut at Klavier-Festival Ruhr, CMS Summer Evenings, Tippet Rise Arts Center, and Saratoga Performing Arts Center. Their many return visits include Music@Menlo, Mt. Desert Festival of Chamber Music, Chamber Music Northwest, and the McGill International String Quartet Academy. Their debut album *Voyager* was released with Platoon Records in July 2025.

The Viano Quartet has collaborated with world-class musicians including Emanuel Ax, Fleur Barron, Sir Stephen Hough, Miloš Karadaglić, Mahan Esfahani, and Marc-André Hamelin. Dedicated advocates of music education, they have given classes at institutions such as Northwestern University, University of Victoria, Colburn Academy, Duke University, and SMU Meadows School of the Arts. Each member of the quartet is grateful to the interminable support from their mentors at the Curtis Institute and Colburn Conservatory, including members of the Dover, Guarneri, and Tokyo string quartets.

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Updated on June 17, 2025

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