

# CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

TUESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 10, 2026, AT 7:30 ▶ 4,669TH CONCERT

**Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage**

*Home of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center*

## **Escher String Quartet**

**Adam Barnett-Hart**, violin

**Robin Scott**, violin

**Pierre Lapointe**, viola

**Brook Speltz**, cello

**Paul Neubauer**, viola

## **The Escher String Quartet**

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
(1756–1791) **Quartet in D major for Strings, K. 575, “Prussian”**  
(1789)

▶ Allegretto

▶ Andante

▶ Menuetto: Allegretto

▶ Allegretto

BARNETT-HART, SCOTT, LAPOINTE, SPELTZ

**Chris Rogerson**  
(b. 1988) **Quintet for Two Violins, Two Violas, and Cello**  
(CMS Co-Commission, New York Premiere) (2024)

▶ Stratus

▶ Zephyr

▶ Nimbus

▶ Cumulus

▶ Storm

▶ Cirrus

BARNETT-HART, SCOTT, LAPOINTE, NEUBAUER, SPELTZ

## **INTERMISSION**

**Antonín Dvořák**  
(1841–1904) **Quartet in G major for Strings, Op. 106** (1895)

▶ Allegro moderato

▶ Adagio ma non troppo

▶ Molto vivace

▶ Finale: Andante sostenuto—Allegro con fuoco

BARNETT-HART, SCOTT, LAPOINTE, SPELTZ

CMS new music programming is supported, in part, by **Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation**, **The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc.**, **Valerie Coleman-Page and Jonathan Page**, and the **Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University**.

Paul Neubauer occupies the **Mrs. William Rodman May Viola Chair**.

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**Photographing, sound recording, or videotaping this performance is prohibited.**

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# From the Artistic Directors

Would anyone like to guess what happened in the late afternoon of March 15, 1770, in Lodi, Italy?

It is well documented that the 14-year-old Mozart composed his first string quartet, supposedly while waiting for a restaurant to open. There is a plaque on a nearby hotel that tells passersby that Mozart and his father stayed there while touring Italy. Mozart would go on to write 22 more, spanning his entire professional career. The quartet we hear today is at the other end of the timeline, composed near the end of his life.

The Dvořák quartet on today's program is actually the last one he composed, soon after his return from America, where he had spent three years directing the National Conservatory of Music in New York. In this work we can sense the joyful exuberance he must have felt upon returning to his beloved homeland. Despite this work's obvious Bohemian spirit, one can still detect, now and then, something that seems to have come from the New World, making this grand string quartet a truly multi-dimensional cultural experience.

It with great anticipation that we wait to hear Chris Rogerson's new quintet. His affinity for the string instrument family has led to commissions from today's most celebrated performers, and we are especially thrilled to watch him following in the footsteps of (guess who) in continuing the tradition of viola quintet composition. Yes, it was Mozart who invented the genre!

Enjoy the performance,



David Finckel



Wu Han

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



# Notes on the Program

By Nicky Swett

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

## Quartet in D major for Strings, K. 575, "Prussian"

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

### Composed in 1789

- ▶ First CMS performance on December 11, 1970, by the Guarneri String Quartet (violinists Arnold Steinhardt and John Dalley, violist Michael Tree, and cellist David Soyer)
- ▶ Duration: 24 minutes

In 1785, W. A. Mozart published a set of six string quartets dedicated to his friend, mentor, and casual quartet mate Joseph Haydn. Some critics admired the tonal and textural risks that Mozart took in these works and the emotional core he probed in the slow movements; others found the quartets inaccessible and even "barbarous." The composer's next installment in the genre, a one-off quartet written in 1786 for his publisher Anton Hoffmeister, was less outwardly adventurous than those dedicated to Haydn, but full of structural and melodic innovations resting beneath the surface. In 1789, Mozart began work on another group of six quartets to be dedicated to Frederick Wilhelm II, King of Prussia. King Frederick was an amateur cellist, and it is likely for this reason that Mozart features the instrument prominently in the three of these "Prussian" quartets he managed to complete before his death in 1791. Indeed, in certain movements of these last quartets, the cello is almost as prominent as the first violin. This parity helps to explain the set's second nickname, "Concertante," which implies that these works are chamber music, but also expressions of a competitive, soloistic impulse.

In the first of the "Prussian" Quartets, the Quartet in D major, K. 575, the opening tune

exemplifies Mozart's ability to create melodies made of long note durations that nonetheless have extraordinary momentum. Little bits of internal symmetry, playful grace notes, and an increase in the pace of the tune at the end of the phrase all combine to create a simultaneously serene and exciting theme. After a soaring transitional passage, the cellist begins the contrasting tune. In true "concertante" style, each musician in the group takes a turn presenting a section of this melody, before the exposition closes with a burst of activity in the violin. The development section starts with a shocking harmonic twist that implies a modulation to B minor, but instead winds up in sweet, sunny G major. At the end of the recapitulation, the viola and cello take on descending scales that the violin had played in the exposition, adding to the sense that Mozart is incorporating a more democratic distribution of roles into the quartet.

The *Andante* gradually develops into a touching duet between the cello and the first violin. Mozart orchestrates the themes very carefully so that the cellist never has to play uncomfortably high on the instrument, but the violins and viola can still play harmonies beneath the melody. In the second repeated section of the *Menuetto*, after a few aggressive, unison accented figures, Mozart presents thin, pointy gestures that are passed around the group. Though the harmonies that the gestures outline aren't particularly radical, the strange way in which Mozart isolates motifs in single instruments sounds momentarily modern. Arnold Schoenberg was a great admirer of Mozart's quartet writing, and he drew on moments like these,

in which the uniform texture breaks and individual players seem to be picking apart very simple figures, when writing his own quartets more than a century later. The finale is based on a theme that is very close in shape and mood to the opening melody of the first

movement, but there is a crucial difference: it is heard first in the cello and only afterward in the violin. The movement unfolds as a formally idiosyncratic rondo based on this refrain, which is colored each time it returns by virtuosic and witty variations.

Chris Rogerson

## Quintet for Two Violins, Two Violas, and Cello

► Born in 1988 in Buffalo, New York

### Composed in 2024

► This is the New York premiere of this piece.

► Duration: 25 minutes

When water evaporates, pockets of warm, moist air rise, combine, and are shaped by the prevailing winds into clouds. This billowy, white architecture in the atmosphere gives character to the sky, provides shade in sunny climates, and helps us to predict the weather. Clouds also have a mysterious quality, in part because scientists still don't fully understand the complex processes through which they form and dissipate.

Chris Rogerson's music is often inspired by natural phenomena and by the impressions of different landscapes he has gotten from his extensive travels around the world. His new String Quintet, which he wrote in 2024 for the Escher String Quartet, provides musical illustrations of four types of clouds, along with cloud-adjacent phenomena. In the hazy opening movement, he introduces us to a stratus cloud: a flat, gray, uniform blanket that covers the sky. When we walk or drive through fog, we find ourselves in the middle of a stratus cloud that has floated down to the ground. Rogerson starts the quintet with a remarkable, shining, dissonant chord, like the stacked whole-tone scales used by early 20th-century impressionists, but with dense, chromatic notes added to the top. He voices the chord so that it creates a shimmering sheet of sound, with little, expressive flickers of light provided by the first violin. Eventually, in an

array of harmonics, the sun pokes through, but the cloud cover soon returns.

In the second movement, we are swept along by a zephyr wind, a light breeze from the west that pushes clouds along. Rogerson produces a whispered, breathy sound for much of the movement using a suite of techniques, including harmonics from the lower strings, fleet bowing from the first violin, and light glissandos up and down the strings of all the instruments. By the third movement, a nimbus cloud has accumulated—the type of thick, dark, billowing cloud that is ready to unleash a thunderstorm. Rogerson's music is quiet and ghostly, evoking not the dramatic grandeur of such formations but the quiet, internal fear that they inspire. With the wafting cello solo of the fourth movement, he gives cumulus clouds—those friendly, puffy, pillow-like ones—notes of nostalgia, as if these cartoonish shapes bring to mind a memory of a beautiful day long in the past.

In the fifth movement, a climax built from figures introduced in the earlier movements, the clouds break into a menacing storm. Raindrop eighth-notes begin as a far-off pitter-patter, but quickly gain momentum and weight. Flurries of wind swirl around in concerto-like gestures in the first violin, recalling the torrential summer storm of Antonio Vivaldi's "Summer" from *The Four Seasons*. After the tempest comes to a roaring close, Rogerson dissipates the tension with a solemn prayer inspired by cirrus clouds, those high-altitude, wispy streaks of white that create extraordinary, faint patterns in the firmament.

Antonín Dvořák

## Quartet in G major for Strings, Op. 106

► Born September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Bohemia

► Died May 1, 1904, in Prague

### Composed in 1895

► First CMS performance on November 10, 1996, by the Orion String Quartet (violinists Daniel Phillips and Todd Phillips, violist Steven Tenenbom, and cellist Timothy Eddy)

► Duration: 38 minutes

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Antonín Dvořák and his family moved to New York City in the autumn of 1892 after he was hired to direct the National Conservatory of Music. He enjoyed a comfortable life in America, and the relocation proved professionally advantageous. The encounters he had with Black American songs and spirituals made a strong impression on him and directly influenced the works he wrote during his time in the United States, which became some of his most successful pieces. Still, he missed his home of Prague and his family there, and when he traveled back for the summer of 1895 he chose not to return to New York.

His first major project after deciding to remain in Bohemia was to complete a pair of string quartets. He had started working on one, the Quartet in A-flat major, in March of that year while he was still in New York. The other, a sprawling, ambitious work in G major, he wrote from scratch in a burst of inspiration between November and December of 1895. “I work so easily and everything goes ahead so well that I could not wish it better,” he wrote cheerily to a friend that December. The quartets were released together by his publisher Simrock the next year, and Dvořák requested and received an exorbitant fee that hints at the additional status he had accrued through his time in America.

In 1894, when he was in New York, Dvořák wrote an article on Franz Schubert for *The Century Magazine*. In it, he expressed particular admiration for Schubert’s chamber

music, which “attains a marvelous variety of beautiful tonal effects . . . his flow of melody is spontaneous, incessant, and irrepressible.” It is likely no coincidence that, after consolidating his thoughts on Schubert’s music, the next chamber works he composed had a distinctly Schubertian quality to them. Dvořák’s Quartet in G major, in particular, shares much with the final quartet of Schubert, which was written in the same key. The triplets that run through the *Allegro moderato* opening Dvořák’s piece give the music a smooth liveliness, which never feels rushed or anxious. Although the movement itself isn’t particularly long, each theme is developed at length before the next is introduced, which gives the music a patient, expansive quality that is among the most notable features of Schubert’s late works. And, like Schubert, Dvořák enjoys modulating by the interval of a third—often going from a key like G major, which has one sharp, to a key like B-flat major, with two flats. In string quartets, tonal shifts like this create stark color contrasts, because different keys activate the ringing open strings on violins, violas, and cellos to varying degrees. These modulations also provide for beguiling moments of transition when the composer must make his way back to the original key, which Dvořák often achieves using distinctive augmented chords that have a distinctive, slightly bitter flavor and can imply a multitude of sensible harmonic resolutions.

Dvořák bases the second movement of his quartet on a sweet violin melody that sounds a lot like tunes in the so-called “American” string quartet and quintet that he wrote in 1893. He writes brilliant accompanimental rhythms in this *Adagio ma non troppo*, often giving complex, fast figures to the secondary voices that add variety to the music without ever taking away from its lyricism. There’s a particularly

exciting place in which the cello repeats the bass notes in faster and faster rhythms, and then suddenly slows again in response to heavy accents in the viola. It is as if one player has seen another losing control and then compassionately, but sternly, helps them to regain composure. The *Molto vivace* is an urgent scherzo with two contrasting trio sections. One is a quick, distant, quiet fabric of chaotic polyrhythms with a melody that aims to soar but is always on shaky footing. The second trio is a substantial, down-tempo, pastoral dance that again sounds like earlier works written in his "American" style. When Aaron Copland sought to find an authentic, national sound for the ballets he wrote in the 1930s and 40s portraying the American West, he turned to themes like this one by Dvořák for inspiration.

The quartet's finale is a rondo based on a carefree, syncopated tune. The episodes between presentations of that theme strive to get as far away from the refrain as possible. A dramatic theme first shared by viola and cello sounds like the ominous portents of fate, and a later section reaches back to music from the first movement but gives it a chant-like, funereal character. In this movement, and in the second, Dvořák treats his folk-inspired themes with a remarkable level of rhythmic flexibility, allowing the gestures to push and pull in a rhetorical, sung fashion. His approach foreshadows what Béla Bartók would do decades later: writing in a slightly more accurate folk style that reflects the nuances of inflection and beat that characterize live performance.

*Program notes © Nicky Swett*

# **CMS** Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

## **WINTER FESTIVAL VIOLIN CELEBRATION**

With the invention of the violin, classical music as we know it was given an essential voice embraced to this day by history's greatest composers. CMS's Winter Festival celebrates the magnificent violin, which for centuries has played an indispensable role in the evolution of chamber music.

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Fri, Feb 20, 7:30 pm

*Bach, Tartini, Mozart, Beethoven*

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Tue, Feb 24, 7:30 pm

*Schubert, Brahms, Beach, Mendelssohn*

### **VIOLIN VISIONARIES**

Sat, Feb 28, 7:30 pm

*Janáček, Enescu, Ravel, Bloch*

### **DESTINATION: KREISLER**

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# About the Artists

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## Escher String Quartet

The Escher String Quartet has received acclaim for its profound musical insight and rare tonal beauty. A former BBC New Generation Artist and recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the quartet has performed at the BBC Proms at Cadogan Hall and is a regular guest at Wigmore Hall. In its home town of New York, the ensemble appears regularly at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

The quartet achieved critical success in their performances of the entire cycle of string quartets by Béla Bartók in single-concert format, both at Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Recordings of the complete Mendelssohn quartets and beloved Romantic quartets of Dvorák, Borodin, and Tchaikovsky were released on the BIS label in 2015–18 and were received with the highest critical acclaim.

Beyond the concert hall, the quartet is proud to announce the creation of a new non-profit, ESQYRE (Escher String Quartet Youth Residency Education). ESQYRE's mission as a non-profit classical music organization is to provide a comprehensive educational program through music performance and instruction for people of all ages. In addition to their non-profit work, the quartet has also held faculty positions at Southern Methodist University and the University of Akron.

Within months of its inception in 2005, the ensemble came to the attention of key musical figures worldwide. Championed by the Emerson String Quartet, the Escher String Quartet was invited by both Pinchas Zukerman and Itzhak Perlman to be Quartet in Residence at each artist's summer festival: the Young Artists Program at Canada's National Arts Centre, and the Perlman Chamber Music Program on Shelter Island, New York. The quartet was part of CMS's Bowers Program from 2007 to 2010.

The Escher String Quartet takes its name from the Dutch graphic artist M. C. Escher, inspired by Escher's method of interplay between individual components working together to form a whole.



## Paul Neubauer

Violist Paul Neubauer, hailed by the *New York Times* as a “master musician,” released two new albums in 2025 on First Hand Records, featuring the final works of two great composers: an all-Bartók album including the revised version of the Viola Concerto, and a Shostakovich recording that includes the monumental Viola Sonata. Appointed principal violist of the New York Philharmonic at the age of 21, Neubauer has appeared as soloist with the New York, Los Angeles, and Helsinki Philharmonics; the Chicago, National, St. Louis, Detroit, Dallas, San Francisco, and Bournemouth Symphonies; and the Santa Cecilia, English Chamber, and Beethovenhalle Orchestras. He has premiered viola concertos by Bartók (revised version), Friedman, Glière, Jacob, Kernis, Lazarof, Müller-Siemens, Ott, Penderecki, Picker, Suter, and Tower. A two-time Grammy nominee, Neubauer is artistic director of the Mostly Music series in New Jersey and serves on the faculties of the Juilliard School and Mannes College.

# About the Chamber Music Society

Founded in 1969, the **Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS)** brings the transcendent experience of great chamber music to more people than any other organization of its kind worldwide. Under the artistic leadership of cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, the multi-generational and international performing artist roster of 140 of the world's finest chamber musicians enable us to present chamber music of every instrumentation, style, and historical period.

Each season, we reach a global audience with more than 150 performances and education programs in our home at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on tour with residencies worldwide.

We offer a wide range of learning formats and experiences to engage and inform listeners of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of musical knowledge through our education programs. The Bowers Program, our competitive three-season residency, is dedicated to developing the chamber music leaders of the future and integrates this selection of exceptional early-career musicians into every facet of CMS activities.

Our incomparable digital presence, which regularly enables us to reach millions of viewers and listeners annually, includes our weekly national radio program, heard locally on WQXR 105.9 FM on Saturday and Monday evenings; radio programming in Taiwan and mainland China; and appearances on American Public Media's *Performance Today*, the monthly program *In Concert with CMS* on the PBS ALL ARTS broadcast channel, and SiriusXM's Symphony Hall channel, among others. The PBS documentary film *Chamber Music Society Returns* chronicles CMS's return to live concerts at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on a six-city national tour. It is currently available to watch on PBS Passport. Our website also hosts an online archive of more than 1,700 video recordings of performance and education videos free to the public.

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Fleur Barron, MEZZO-SOPRANO  
Paul Appleby, TENOR  
John Moore, BARITONE

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Anna Geniushene, PIANO\*  
Sahun Sam Hong, PIANO\*  
Gilbert Kalish, PIANO  
Anne-Marie McDermott, PIANO (Alice  
Tully and Edward R. Wardwell Piano  
Chair)  
Ken Noda, PIANO  
John Novacek, PIANO  
Evren Ozel, PIANO\*  
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Angus Webster, PIANO  
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Orion Weiss, PIANO  
Wu Han, PIANO  
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Yura Lee, VIOLIN  
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Cho-Liang Lin, VIOLIN  
Richard Lin, VIOLIN  
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James Thompson, VIOLIN/VIOLA

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*\*Denotes a 2024–2027 member of the Bowers Program, CMS's three-season residency for exceptional early-career musicians.*

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