

SATURDAY EVENING, JULY 13, 2024, AT 5:00 ▶ 4,451ST CONCERT

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

ANNA GENIUSHENE, piano
ESCHER STRING QUARTET
ADAM BARNETT-HART, violin
BRENDAN SPELTZ, violin
PIERRE LAPOINTE, viola
BROOK SPELTZ, cello

Summer Evenings II

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756 - 1791)

Quartet in B-flat major for Strings, K. 458,

"Hunt" (1784)

► Allegro vivace assai ► Menuetto: Moderato

▶ Adagio

▶ Allegro assai

BARNETT-HART, BRENDAN SPELTZ, LAPOINTE, BROOK SPELTZ

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

Quartet in E-flat major for Strings, Op. 12 (1829)

▶ Adagio non troppo—Allegro non tardante

▶ Canzonetta: Allegretto

▶ Andante espressivo

▶ Molto allegro e vivace BARNETT-HART, BRENDAN SPELTZ, LAPOINTE, BROOK SPELTZ

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1833-1897)

Quintet in F minor for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello, Op. 34 (1864)

- ▶ Allegro non troppo
- Andante, un poco adagio
- ▶ Scherzo: Allegro
- ▶ Finale: Poco sostenuto—Allegro non troppo GENIUSHENE, BARNETT-HART, BRENDAN SPELTZ, LAPOINTE, BROOK SPELTZ

The Summer Evenings Audience Engagement Initiative is underwritten, in part, by **Dr. Rita E. Hauser.** Additional support provided by **Judy and Tony Evnin**, **Leon Levy Foundation**, **The Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation**, and a **generous anonymous donor**.

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**.

The Chamber Music Society acknowledges with sincere appreciation **Ms. Tali Mahanor**'s generous long-term loan of the Hamburg Steinway & Sons model "D" concert grand piano.

Jerome L. Greene Foundation is the 2024–2025 CMS Season Sponsor.

All CMS digital programming is supported by the Hauser Fund for Media and Technology.

ABOUT TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

Dear Summer Evenings Listener,

At least once per summer, we enthusiastically bring you a world-class string quartet. While there are many string quartets around, very few make it to the very top. Why?

There are two reasons. First, the music composed for string quartet by everyone from the great masters to lesser-known innovators is very, very difficult to play well. Each instrument plays in its own range—the cello on the bottom, the viola about an octave higher, and the two violins dividing their low and high notes between them. The sound of a string quartet is therefore transparent: one can hear the individual players all the time, and each needs to be at the top of his or her game to make the whole sound good.

Secondly, composers generally loaded their string quartets with all the creative skills they had. They competed, each trying to write better quartets than the generation before. String quartet music became harder and harder to play, and finally the amateurs just couldn't keep up, so professional quartets were born (during the days of Beethoven). The great string quartets, such as the ones on tonight's program, have not gotten any easier to play; if anything, the standard has gone up and up, just as athletes run faster and faster miles. The Escher String Quartet, which is about to play for you, is at the front of the pack.

We have the added pleasure of welcoming pianist Anna Geniushene (gen-YOU-shenay) to the stage for her CMS debut. This stunning artist recently took the Silver Medal in the Cliburn Competition and joined the CMS artist roster through the Bowers Program.

The Quartet and Anna bring you an iconic selection of German and Austrian classics. A true meat-and-potatoes program, each of the works is so richly imbued with quality that it's impossible to say which is one or the other, but it doesn't matter. This is music for players and listeners to sink their teeth into, and we promise no ears will leave the hall hungry.

Enjoy the concert,

David Finckel
ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

Wu Han

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Quartet in B-flat major for Strings, K. 458, "Hunt"

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

- ▶ Born January 27, 1756, in Salzburg ▶ Died December 5, 1791, in Vienna
- Composed in 1784

The Quartet in B-flat major, K. 458, is the fourth in a set of six quartets that Mozart dedicated to his friend and mentor, Joseph Haydn. Mozart described these pieces (often dubbed the "Haydn" Quartets) as "the fruits of a long and laborious endeavor" and lovingly referred to them as his children in the dedication message. Haydn approved of the set, having said to Leopold Mozart (Wolfgang's father) after a reading of the second quartet, "I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me, either in person or by name." Indeed, the "Haydn" Quartets remain among Mozart's most highly acclaimed compositions.

The so-called "Hunt" Quartet is the most popular of the six, earning its nickname later from an anonymous editor due to the jaunty eighth-note gestures and **§** time signature of the first movement's opening phrase. The pastoral sensibility established in the first theme's horn call is echoed in the second theme with a trill-like motif. Often described as a shake, this recognizable five-note unit combines coy elegance with the rustic associations of a bird song or rustling leaves. The shake motif forms the backbone of the development section,

- First CMS performance on February 3, 1984, by the Emerson String Quartet (violinists Eugene Drucker and Philip Setzer, violist Lawrence Dutton, and cellist David Finckel)
- Duration: 27 minutes

where the minor mode briefly takes over in a hushed frenzy.

The Menuetto sheds any association with the "Hunt" moniker, opting instead for a graceful and reserved character. Occasional dotted rhythmic figures (short-long patterns) appear on final beats and, with their cheeky accents, pull focus away from the following downbeats—a subtle foil to the orderly formality of the Menuetto. The trio section's crisp staccatos in the inner voices contrast with the rounded legato lines of the outer sections.

Horn calls are a distant memory in the Adagio, a movement as emotionally intense as any Romantic-era quartet's slow movement. The measured pace, exposed first violin melodies, and expertly placed rests captivate the listener's attention. The shake motif is briefly reprised, albeit in a very different context. The spirit of the first movement returns in the lively Allegro assai finale. Full of energy yet retaining its Mozartean refinement and charm, this movement is a fitting conclusion to the work, balancing the weighty material that precedes it.

Inspired by their dedicatee's Op. 33 quartets, the six "Haydn" Quartets marked a turning point in Mozart's

string quartet writing, featuring innovative thematic treatment and an equal division of material across all four instruments. Haydn described his Op. 33 as having been written in "a new and special manner." Sustained by Mozart, these new conventions set

the standard for the Classical string quartet, with the "Hunt" as a leading exemplar. ◆

> Jack Slavin is a pianist, music educator, and arts professional based in New York City.

Quartet in E-flat major for Strings, Op. 12

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

- ▶ Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg ▶ Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig
- Composed in 1829

- First CMS performance on December 6, 2000, by the Guarneri String Quartet (violinists Arnold Steinhardt and John Dalley, violist Michael Tree, and cellist David Soyer)
- Duration: 25 minutes

By the age of twenty, Felix Mendelssohn was already a wellrespected composer, conductor, and pianist, and had embarked on a tour of Great Britain-the first stage of a Grand Tour that would later include travels to Italy, Switzerland, Bavaria, and France (see sidebar, next page). His time in Britain provided many sources of inspiration for later compositions: in London he attended Shakespeare plays and studied scores by Handel; in Scotland he trekked through dramatic landscapes and glimpsed the Hebrides from the coast. He also increased his fame as a performer, including as soloist in Beethoven's Emperor Concerto and as conductor of his own Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Along the way, he completed his Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 12. Although he had previously explored chamber genres such as the piano quartet, viola quintet, string octet, and others, this would become his first published string quartet.

The piece opens with a plaintive and inquisitive gesture in the first violin.

After a brief pause, graceful eighthnotes lead to a cadence. The stakes are

higher for the second iteration of the violin's gesture; the melodic contour is preserved, but this time the trajectory is from consonance to dissonance. Following the rests, a similar eighthnote figure ushers in a highly chromatic exploration in staccato groupings and descending half-step motifs. This searching introduction comes to an end with a soft, sustained dominant chord (B-flat major).

Though marked Allegro non tardante (fast, without delay), the melodious, lyrical nature of the first theme prevents the music from feeling rushed; rather, it has a reserved elegance evocative of earlier Classical-period quartets. Unusually, Mendelssohn introduces new thematic material in the development section. First heard in the lower register of the second violin, this melody is dark and foreboding. Following the initial statement, the gloomy second-violin theme and the movement's primary theme are fragmented and imitatively layered, creating an increasing sense of desperation. Toward the end of the movement, the second violin

reprises the development theme—simultaneously a haunting reminder and a warning of what is to come.

Rather than the expected slow second movement, Mendelssohn inserts a *Canzonetta*. The term is generally used to refer to a simple, often light-hearted, vocal piece common in the late-Renaissance and early-Baroque periods. This particular movement is similar in mood to its vocal predecessors; despite

ON TOUR

From the 17th through the 19th centuries, it was customary among wealthy British and Northern European young men to complete their education with travel through Europe known as the Grand Tour. This rite of (figurative and literal) passage often featured stops in several countries, though Italy was considered a principal destination due to its rich history stretching back through the Renaissance to classical antiquity. A sort of Enlightenment- and Romantic-era "study abroad," the Grand Tour was an opportunity for young artists and intellectuals who could afford it to observe paintings, sculptures, architecture, and music otherwise unavailable to them. Of course, many who took these tours had no such artistic aspirations, and were simply sons of the elite who spent their time collecting objects to decorate their homes, basking in the warmer weather of Southern Europe, gawking at the customs of locals, and enjoying amorous adventures. A large number of written accounts (with varying degrees of reliability) of Grand Tours survive.

No doubt, Mendelssohn was more diligent than most; it was during his extended travels that he found the inspiration for such works as the "Scottish" and "Italian" Symphonies and the *Hebrides* Overture. He also gave performances, completed important works, hobnobbed

Goethe in the Roman Campagna (1787) by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein. Oil on canvas. Städel Museum, Frankfurt. Goethe chronicled his own, somewhat belated, Grand Tour in his book Italian Journey.

with composers of the day such as Berlioz and Donizetti, and studied historical scores kept in private libraries—an essential task for an ambitious composer at a time when access to information was more limited than it is today.

- John Sherer

the G-minor tonality, it is amusing, buoyant, and dance-like. Suggesting a correlation to the scherzo-trio-scherzo form common in inner movements of string quartets, the G-minor Canzonetta bookends a contrasting section in G major. The violins usher in this quasitrio with sparkling, virtuosic sixteenthnotes over sustained notes in the lower strings. The players swap roles in the next phrase, with the bustling runs switching to the viola and cello.

The Andante espressivo is instantly reminiscent of the introduction to the first movement with its use of the three-note motif and its broadly lyrical and mellifluous sound. The first violin is center-stage here, with ornamented, impassioned melodies entering in an operatic fashion. Indeed, one such outpouring is marked con fuoco, or "with fire." Such dramatic recitatives notwithstanding, the movement ends softly on a sustained B-flat major chord, again referencing the slow introduction to the Allegro.

The final movement, marked *Molto* allegro e vivace, begins not in the tonic key of E-flat major (as would

be expected), but in the relative key of C minor. The running eighth-notes drive this frenzied, nervous music forward. Following a dramatic cadence roughly a third of the way through the movement, this forward momentum dissipates instantly as the second violin brings back its ominous first-movement development theme. By revisiting this theme (as well as other material from previous movements), Mendelssohn creates what is known as a cyclic form. Popularized in the Romantic era (though there are Classical examples as well), this is an approach to multimovement works in which earlier movements' musical ideas are reprised in later ones. In hindsight, the initial utterance of the second-violin theme in the Allegro non tardante is not just an out-of-place development theme, but a means of foreshadowing the darkness of the final movement. Good wins out, however, as E-flat major triumphs at the end of the Molto allegro e vivace, and closes the quartet on a quiet and peaceful note.

- Jack Slavin

Quintet in F minor for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello, Op. 34

JOHANNES BRAHMS

- Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg
- Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna

Composed in 1864

Brahms's Piano Quintet in F minor (for two violins, viola, cello, and piano) is regarded as one of the most significant accomplishments of the composer's middle period. Written when he was just 29 years old, Op. 34, as we will hear it today, is the result of several

- ▶ First CMS performance on March 16, 1975, by pianist Rudolf Serkin, violinists Pina Carmirelli and Pasquale Pellegrino, violist Luciano Vicari, and cellist Francesco Strano
- Duration: 40 minutes

revisions undertaken on the advice of three musicians who would turn out to be Brahms's lifelong friends: the conductor Hermann Levi, the violinist Joseph Joachim, and the pianist Clara Schumann. The resulting masterpiece is a richly interactive work that is lyrical, energetic, mercurial, virtuosic, and sonorously lush, just as Brahms's music is, unfailingly.

Brahms's chosen key for the work, F minor, signals immediately that it is destined to be frequently brooding and dramatic. The Romantic generation of composers, which included musicians such as Robert and Clara Schumann, Brahms, and Wagner, embraced minor keys for their associations with sadness and heavy emotions within the Western art canon. Minor mode was certainly used by the Classical-period composers (such as Mozart, Haydn, and earlyand middle-period Beethoven), but it was more often reserved for carefully deployed effect rather than serving as a work's defining preoccupation. Like his contemporaries, Brahms revels in the raw, emotional space of minor keys in three of this quintet's four movements, only to find in it opportunities to provide shimmering relief in unexpected, momentary shifts to the major-key world. Big contrasts are the name of the game in Op. 34. and from the mind of a supremely skilled composer such as Brahms, they are transportive.

The opening of the first movement, Allegro non troppo, begins with a unison statement in octaves that maps the emotional terrain before us. In the course of this busy movement, lighter-weight passages frequently peek out like sunshine in an otherwise stormy sky. The second movement arrives as sweet relief: it is primarily in the more optimistic major mode, and its character is both lyrical and gently indulgent. In this movement,

piano and strings interact in dialogue, exchanging little melodies in patient, if not always untroubled, succession. This movement is exquisitely, exuberantly Brahmsian. The Scherzo is a total shift in character from its predecessors, alternating passages of percussive, rhythmically charged motives with sudden, declamatory outbursts that release the generated rhythmic tension in glorious fashion. Then, out of nowhere, Brahms offers a section of sweet lyricism, only to return us to where we started with those choppy, quick motives, at which he does in fact hint, even in the moments of relative calm. The last movement again stands in complete contrast with its predecessor, particularly at first. Where the third movement was busy, possibly even frantic, the opening of the fourth movement is expansive, a little wistful, and dramatic in its wide leaps and sudden swells. Its relatively slow introduction (Poco sostenuto) gives way to a more active section (the promised *Allegro non troppo*) that returns the ensemble to energetic group utterances. These give way to mostly quieter passages of contrasting moods and characters. A rolling build to the movement's sudden conclusion compels attention to the very last. It is a tribute to Brahms's technical and artistic abilities that he was able to achieve such tremendous expression and largescale, structural coherence on this level before his 30th birthday. It did indeed signal great things to come. •

Dr. Ellen Exner is a former professor of musicology who now works for the Philadelphia Orchestra.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



ANNA GENIUSHENE

▶ Anna Geniushene's fresh, layered, and powerful interpretations defined her participation at the 2022 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition—and won her the coveted silver medal and the adoration of fans around the globe. Critics praised her "powerhouse sound, forceful musical personality, and sheer virtuosity" (Musical America) and likened her performance to "Cliburn at his best" (Gramophone). Born in Moscow on New Year's Day in 1991,

Anna made her recital debut just seven years later in the small hall of the Berlin Philharmonic. She has since developed a versatile career, with performances in major world venues such as the Town Hall in Leeds, National Concert Hall in Dublin, Museum of Arts in Tel Aviv, Teatro Carlo Felice in Genova, Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory, and Sala Greppi in Bergamo. A dedicated chamber musician, she has performed piano duo repertoire with her husband, Lukas Geniušas, and has collaborated with the Quartetto di Cremona. The 2024-25 season features her debut in Washington, DC, and multiple engagement across the United States; an Asian tour, including solo recitals in Singapore, China, and Taiwan; the season opening in Florence with Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto under Gábor Tákacs-Nagy; her debut at the Vienna Konzerthaus; and the beginning of her tenure in CMS's Bowers Program.



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 hometown of New York, the ensemble serves as season artists of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The 2023–24 season finds the Escher Quartet embarking upon a major project:

performances of the complete cycle of quartets by Béla Bartók, culminating in a single concert performance of all six at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The first-ever performance of all six Bartók quartets in chronological order was given by the Emerson String Quartet in March 1981, also at Alice Tully Hall, in honor of Bartók's centenary year.

Beyond Bartók, the Escher Quartet will return to many of the illustrious music centers and organizations in America, such as the Kennedy Center, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Phoenix Chamber Music Society, Duke University, Coleman Chamber Music Association, and Savannah Music Festival, among others.

The Escher Quartet has made a distinctive impression throughout Europe, with recent debuts including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Berlin Konzerthaus, London's Kings Place, Slovenian Philharmonic Hall, Les Grands Interprètes Geneva, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and Auditorium du Louvre. The group has appeared at festivals such as the Heidelberg Spring Festival, Budapest's Franz Liszt Academy, Dublin's Great Music in Irish Houses, the Risør Chamber Music Festival in Norway, the Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival, and the Perth International Arts Festival in Australia. Alongside its growing European profile, the Escher Quartet continues to flourish in its home country, performing at the Aspen Music Festival, Bravo! Vail, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Bowdoin Music Festival, Toronto Summer Music, Chamber Music San Francisco, Music@ Menlo, and the Ravinia and Caramoor festivals.

The 2022–23 season saw the release of two albums: string quartets by Pierre Jalbert and the Escher's studio recording of the complete Janáček quartets and Pavel Haas Quartet No. 2 with multi-award-winning percussionist Colin Currie (BIS Records). Recordings of the complete Mendelssohn quartets and beloved Romantic quartets of Dvořák, Borodin, and Tchaikovsky were released on the BIS label in 2015–18 and received with the highest critical acclaim, with comments such as "...eloquent, full-blooded playing. . . . The four players offer a beautiful blend of individuality and accord" (BBC Music Magazine). In 2019, DANCE, an album of quintets with Grammy Award-winning guitarist Jason Vieaux, was enthusiastically received. In 2021, the Escher's recording of the complete quartets of Charles Ives and Samuel Barber was met with equal excitement, including "A fascinating snapshot of American quartets, with a recording that is brilliantly detailed, this is a first-rate release all around" (The Strad). The quartet has also recorded the complete Zemlinsky String Quartets in two volumes, released on the Naxos label in 2013 and 2014.

Beyond the concert hall, the Escher Quartet is proud to announce the creation of a nonprofit organization, ESQYRE (Escher String Quartet Youth Residency Education). ESQYRE's mission is to provide a comprehensive educational program through music performance and instruction for people of all ages. In addition, the quartet has held faculty positions at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, 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 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 Escher 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.

ABOUT THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS) was founded in 1969 under the leadership and patronage of Alice Tully and the artistic direction of Charles Wadsworth, beginning a new era for chamber music in the United States. Through its many performance, education, and digital activities, CMS brings the experience of great chamber music to more people than any other organization of its kind. The performing artists constitute a multi-generational and international roster of the world's finest chamber musicians, enabling CMS to present chamber music of every instrumentation, style, and historical period. The Bowers Program, our competitive three-season residency, is dedicated to developing the chamber music leaders of the future and integrates this selection of extraordinary early-career musicians into every facet of CMS activities. CMS reaches a growing global audience through a range of free digital media, including livestreams, an online archive of more than 1,500 video recordings, and broadcasts that are distributed to millions of listeners around the world.

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