

# CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 19, 2026, AT 5:00 ▶ 4,702ND CONCERT

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

*Home of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center*

## Shanghai Quartet

**Weigang Li**, violin

**Angelo Xiang Yu**, violin

**Honggang Li**, viola

**Sihao He**, cello

## The Shanghai Quartet

**Joseph Haydn** **Quartet in G minor for Strings, Hob. III:74, Op. 74,  
No. 3, "The Rider"** (1793)

- ▶ Allegro
- ▶ Largo assai
- ▶ Menuetto: Allegretto
- ▶ Finale: Allegro con brio

**Tan Dun** **Feng Ya Song (String Quartet No. 1)** (1982, rev. 2018)

- (b. 1957)
- ▶ Feng (folk song)
- ▶ Ya (art song / court music)
- ▶ Song (ritual song)

## INTERMISSION

**George Gershwin** **Lullaby for String Quartet** (c. 1919–20)

(1898–1937)

**Antonín Dvořák** **Quartet in F major for Strings, Op. 96, "American"** (1893)

(1841–1904)

- ▶ Allegro ma non troppo
- ▶ Lento
- ▶ Molto vivace
- ▶ Finale: Vivace, ma non troppo

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**.

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# From the Artistic Directors

Dear Listener,

It is a great pleasure to welcome the extraordinary Shanghai Quartet to our stage today. This will be their third appearance at CMS. Since we first heard them (before our CMS days), the Shanghai has evolved into one of the strongest quartets in the world. A glance at their biography tells the story: an enormous international concert career, dozens of recordings (including Beethoven and Bartók cycles), and commissions and premieres from a long, international list of today's most important composers.

At the venerable age of 43 years, the Shanghai is just shy of the 47 years that the Emerson String Quartet reached before retiring from this very stage. But the Shanghai is still a very young quartet: we must mention, with great pride, their recent induction of two of the finest CMS Bowers Program artists we have ever known, violinist Angelo Xiang Yu and cellist Sihao He. A quick glance at the amazing Beethoven *Grosse Fuge* on their website reveals an ensemble of ferocious youthful energy coupled with musical maturity. Their future holds virtually unlimited possibilities.

The Shanghai's history is unique. They are the first quartet (or perhaps even classical ensemble) to have been formed in China after the Cultural Revolution died out, allowing Western music to once again be studied and performed. One can only imagine how hungry their first listeners were for music such as they are about to play for us. In this way, the Shanghai is almost the Borodin Quartet of China. The Borodin, founded in 1945, survived the Stalin regime's vicious artistic oppressions, performing practically a humanitarian service for terrified Russian music lovers. These quartets share a badge of honor that goes beyond the music.

Let's give the Shanghai our warmest welcome, and enjoy the concert,



David Finckel



Wu Han

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



# Notes on the Program

By Kathryn Bacasmot

Joseph Haydn

## Quartet in G minor for Strings, Hob. III:74, Op. 74, No. 3, “The Rider”

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

### Composed in 1793

- ▶ First CMS performance on April 30, 1982, by the Gabrieli Quartet (violinists Kenneth Sillito and Brendan O’Reilly, violist Ian Jewel, and cellist Keith Harvey)
- ▶ Duration: 21 minutes

In 1790, after nearly three decades of service as music director for the Esterházy court, Joseph Haydn’s responsibilities lessened dramatically. Prince Anton had inherited the family estates upon the death of his father, Nikolaus, and dissolved the orchestra, keeping Haydn on the payroll only to provide music for special occasions. When the violinist and impresario Johann Peter Salomon heard of Haydn’s changed situation, he promptly invited the composer to come to London. Haydn was already renowned in the city, where his works were featured in some of the earliest public concerts. Several influential Londoners had already attempted to present Haydn for nearly ten years, making Salomon’s success a celebrated feat. Engraved on the stone marking his resting place in Westminster Abby are the commemorative words, “He brought Haydn to London in 1791 and 1794.”

As the gravestone notes, Haydn made two trips to London. He was summoned back to Vienna by Prince Anton, returning in the summer of 1792 and meeting the young Ludwig van Beethoven in Bonn en route. During this period, Haydn attended to various responsibilities and began giving lessons to Beethoven, who had since moved to Vienna. Toward the

end of 1792, and into 1793, Haydn composed two sets of string quartets, Op. 71 and Op. 74—sometimes collectively referred to as the Apponyi quartets, after their dedicatee Count Anton Georg Apponyi—as well as symphonies and piano works to take back to London, where he arrived again in February 1794.

These quartets were written under unique circumstances: Haydn understood that they would be performed in a public concert rather than the private setting that was more typical for chamber music at the time. A bold gesture opens the third quartet of the Op. 74 set, with all parts in unison vaulting upward, decorated with a series of winking grace notes on each repeated note. This repeated-note motif becomes one of the movement’s defining characteristics. Another thematic idea emerges in a lilting dance-like melody. The instruction for “mezza voce,” or half voice, is inscribed at the beginning of the second movement, emphasizing its elegant restraint. As it unfurls, its mood remains remarkably expansive and dramatic, playing out like a grand operatic quartet or a splendid symphonic slow movement. A stately *Menuetto* follows for the third movement, with an emphasis on all parts moving together in parallel or bouncing lightly to add dimension. A more serious *Trio* section, punctuated with strong accents on certain notes, introduces a bit of tension. The nickname “The Rider,” which became attached to the quartet over time, was due to the galloping rhythm heard periodically in the exuberant final movement. A spritely theme lifts the quartet and propels it to a sunny conclusion.

Tan Dun

## ***Feng Ya Song* (String Quartet No. 1)**

► Born August 18, 1957, in Simao, Hunan Province, People's Republic of China

**Composed in 1982, revised in 2018**

► This is the first CMS performance of this piece.

► Duration: 23 minutes

“You know two people from Hunan. One of them is Mao Zedong. Another one is me.” This is how composer Tan Dun has introduced himself in interviews, with a slightly mischievous smile. The fact he shares is a poetic coincidence, as it was the death of Mao, and the end of certain government-imposed restrictions, which marked the beginning of Tan Dun and his classmates’ discovery of modern Western music at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Encountering composers like Bartók, Cage, Shostakovich, and Messiaen sparked an urge to follow in their footsteps as innovators. It was a “new wave” of Chinese composition, experimenting with the integration of Western and Chinese compositional techniques and tradition.

Tan Dun’s bold debut in the West took place in 1983, when he won second place at the Dresden International Weber Chamber Music Competition with his string quartet, *Feng Ya Song*, which he had completed the previous year. He was the first Chinese composer to receive the award, and his subsequent phase of exploration and ambition led him to Columbia University in 1986 to pursue a doctorate in music.

Typically translated as *Ballade-Ode-Hymn*, the title *Feng Ya Song* is a nod to the three stylistic sections of the *Shijing* (The Book of Songs), considered the oldest collection of ancient Chinese poetry, compiled by Confucius in the 5th century BCE. However,

none of the original music from any of the works in the *Shijing* survives, so Tan Dun drew from Chinese folk and ethnic minority musical traditions for raw material. His goal with this work was to find a new way of blending Chinese and European musical traditions by identifying points of compatibility that pushed beyond the 19th-century methods of blending East and West, which he worried would simply sound like a copy of Debussy. He accomplished this by emphasizing intervals that appear in both cultures’ music, such as the tritone, major second, and minor seventh, and by utilizing specific features of Chinese instrumental music, such as an alternating the tempo between acceleration and slowing down.

The sonata-form first movement uses a tone row, where a melody is built out of a specific pattern of twelve notes. Notably, we hear the viola first, in an extended solo; the instrument is meant to imitate an ancient Chinese flute. A second viola solo demonstrates the tempo shifts common in the Chinese tradition: the music suddenly picks up speed and remains lively until a sudden pause brings a return to the opening tempo, as the viola recalls its initial melody. The second movement begins with a brief dialogue between violin and viola, while strumming in the cello mimics the qin, a seven-string zither. Within the peaceful movement, the composer integrates two songs, *Mei Hua San Nong* (Plum Blossoms) and *Yolan* (The Solitary Orchid). The third movement begins with a dramatic flourish as the cello and violin introduce melodic material derived from the first movement, which will continuously reappear as the music drives powerfully toward the stark ending.

George Gershwin

## **Lullaby for String Quartet**

- ▶ Born September 26, 1898, in Brooklyn, New York
- ▶ Died July 11, 1937, in Hollywood, California

### **Composed c. 1919–20**

- ▶ First CMS performance on May 7, 1995, by the Orion String Quartet (violinists Todd Phillips and Daniel Phillips, violist Steven Tenenbom, and cellist Timothy Eddy)
- ▶ Duration: 9 minutes

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George Gershwin's career in music started in Tin Pan Alley, the stretch of West 28th Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenue that became famous in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for its concentration of music publishers. There, the teenage Gershwin worked as a song plugger, a pianist whose role was to promote the newest hits to potential customers. Before long, Gershwin's talents were recognized and sought after. By the time he was 20 years old, he had signed a contract as a staff composer for T. B. Harms music publishing, earning a steady income of \$35 per week (around \$800 per week today) for any music he might write. The following year, one of these songs, "Swanee," sung by Al Jolson, became a hit, and with the show *La La Lucille*, Gershwin also became a bona fide Broadway composer.

Formal training in Gershwin's youth was primarily in the form of piano lessons with Charles Hambitzer, who was a member of the Waldorf Astoria Orchestra, which presented regular performances and dinner music to entertain hotel guests. Yet regardless of his burgeoning professional success, Gershwin wanted to further his studies as a composer, partly because he aspired to branch out into the classical genre. Toward that end, in 1919 he began studying theory and orchestration with

Hungarian violinist and composer Edward Kilenyi, an orchestra colleague of Hambitzer. Kilenyi, who wrote extensively about his time working with Gershwin, recalled being introduced to him by Hambitzer as a talented individual who was "uncommonly serious in his search for knowledge of music." Kilenyi later affirmed Gershwin's eagerness to learn, writing, "After explaining and illustrating to him harmonic examples and quotations from great masterworks he not only understood them but retained them musically and intellectually and then he could—as he did—employ them later brilliantly in his own works in his own individual ways."

One of those works was Gershwin's first exercise in writing so-called "serious music," the *Lullaby*, which is technically a student composition for Kilenyi as an exercise in harmony. This gentle work, with its sumptuously warm, lush harmonies, was not performed for the public until October 29, 1967, when the Juilliard String Quartet presented it at the Library of Congress. Until then, the work had only been performed among family and friends. Gershwin's brother, Ira, who described the *Lullaby* as "charming and kind," recalled, "As a quartet it was played in the next several months at a number of private musicales of his many musician friends before—sometimes after—they'd get down to the more serious business of classical quartets and quintets." Fittingly, the work emphasizes harmony by presenting a simple melody that effectively frames and highlights the shifting chords over the sweetly swaying rhythm. Gershwin would take these lessons and apply them in works like *Rhapsody in Blue* just a few years later.

Antonín Dvořák

## Quartet in F major for Strings, Op. 96, "American"

► Born September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Bohemia

► Died May 1, 1904, in Prague

### Composed in 1893

► First CMS performance on October 15, 2000, by the Orion String Quartet (violinists Daniel Phillips and Todd Phillips, violist Steven Tenenbom, and cellist Timothy Eddy)

► Duration: 27 minutes

Josef Kovařík was a violinist and violist of Czech descent who grew up in the small town of Spillville, Iowa, with a population of approximately 350 people. In 1888 he traveled back to his family's homeland to further his music studies at the Prague Conservatory. During Kovařík's time there, Antonín Dvořák had accepted a professorship to teach composition and instrumentation, and the two became acquainted with each other.

In 1891, Antonín Dvořák was offered the position of Artistic Director and Professor of Composition at the newly founded National Conservatory of Music of America in New York City, established by Jeannette Thurber, a visionary philanthropist who sought to foster the growth of musical arts and education in the United States. On September 26, 1892, Dvořák and his family arrived at their new home at 327 East 17th Street, accompanied by Kovařík, who would function as Dvořák's de facto assistant, guiding him through the new country and its culture.

Dvořák's time in the United States proved both exciting and challenging, particularly when the Panic of 1893 began to impact the Conservatory's ability to pay him reliably. Moreover, he was intensely homesick and had grown tired of city life. That summer, Dvořák and his family traveled with Kovařík

to Spillville, finding refreshment there under the open skies and among the Czech immigrant community. He wrote to a friend, "We like it very much here and, thank God, I am working hard and I'm healthy and in good spirits." It was there that Dvořák composed the String Quartet in F major and the String Quintet in E-flat major, both known by the nickname "American."

The Quartet in F major has become one of Dvořák's most beloved works. It is infused with an optimistic energy and memorable melodies, beginning with the soaring viola solo that opens the first movement. When the violin introduces the sweet second theme, the magic lies in its straightforward, unadorned character. Dvořák later reflected on this quality of the quartet, "I wanted to write something for once that was very melodious and straightforward, and dear Papa Haydn kept appearing before my eyes, and that is why it all turned out so simply." A more tender spirit pervades the melancholy second movement, where the melody, even when passed between the instruments, consistently floats atop the gently bobbing accompaniment. The expansiveness of the music evokes the endless prairie, which Dvořák described as "nothing but huge tracts of land and fields—that is all the eye can see." The animated third movement alternates between a concise syncopated melody and a wistful secondary theme. The fourth movement is a buoyant rondo, a form in which a main theme returns several times, punctuated by contrasting sections. Here, the main melody skitters over a bounding accompaniment, while the intervening passages sing sweetly, bringing the work to a spirited end.

*Program notes* © Kathryn Bacasmot

# About the Artists

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ERIN BAYANE



## Shanghai Quartet

For over four decades, the Shanghai Quartet has stood at the forefront of the international chamber music scene, acclaimed for its rich tone, emotional range, and versatility across musical traditions. Formed in 1983 at the Shanghai Conservatory, the ensemble rose to prominence after relocating to the United States and touring globally for more than 35 years.

Since 2020, the Quartet has been based in China, where they serve on the faculty of the Tianjin Juilliard School and hold residencies with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and major conservatories in Shanghai and Beijing. Despite their teaching commitments, they continue an active international performance schedule.

Recent and upcoming highlights include concerts at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Festival Pablo Casals, and full Beethoven cycles in the US, Europe, and China. The 2025–26 season brings them to the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Society of the Four Arts, and more.

The Shanghai Quartet is widely admired for its collaborations with legendary artists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Yuja Wang, Wu Man, and Chanticleer, as well as major string quartets. They are renowned champions of new music, having premiered works by Krzysztof Penderecki, Tan Dun, Bright Sheng, and Du Yun.

Their extensive discography includes more than 30 recordings, covering core repertoire and cross-cultural projects. They have appeared on PBS's *Great Performances* and in the 2020 feature documentary *Behind the Strings*.

# 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 enables 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 performances and education events free to the public.

# Artists of the 2025–26 Season

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Sahun Sam Hong, PIANO\*  
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Tully and Edward R. Wardwell Piano  
Chair)  
Ken Noda, PIANO  
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Evren Ozel, PIANO\*  
Juho Pohjonen, PIANO  
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Gilles Vonsattel, PIANO  
Angus Webster, PIANO  
Kenneth Weiss, HARP/SICHHORD  
Orion Weiss, PIANO  
Wu Han, PIANO  
Wu Qian, PIANO

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Aaron Boyd, VIOLIN/VIOLA  
Stella Chen, VIOLIN  
Francisco Fullana, VIOLIN  
Chad Hoopes, VIOLIN (Susan S. and  
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Bella Hristova, VIOLIN  
Paul Huang, VIOLIN  
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Sean Lee, VIOLIN  
Yura Lee, VIOLIN  
Lun Li, VIOLIN\*  
Cho-Liang Lin, VIOLIN  
Richard Lin, VIOLIN  
Daniel Phillips, 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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*Updated on February 28, 2026*

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