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**Surprising Piano Quartets**

**PROGRAM**

**Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847)  
Quartet in C minor for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello, Op. 1 (1822)

Allegro vivace

Adagio

Scherzo: Presto

Allegro moderato

Wu Qian, piano; Chad Hoopes, violin; Paul Neubauer, viola; Gary Hoffman, cello

--INTERMISSION (discussion with the artists)--

**Richard Strauss** (1864-1949)  
Quartet in C minor for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello, Op. 13 (1883-84)

Allegro

Scherzo: Presto

Andante

Finale: Vivace

Wu Qian, piano; Alexander Sitkovetsky, violin; Yura Lee, viola; Gary Hoffman, cello

**NOTES ON THE PROGRAM**

**Quartet in C minor for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello, Op. 1 (1822)  
Felix Mendelssohn (Hamburg, 1809 – Leipzig, 1847)**

Mendelssohn was a child prodigy. He may have been one of the most impressive musical prodigies who ever lived, maybe even better than Mozart. His young success is all the more remarkable because, unlike many child prodigies, he didn’t come from a musical family. His grandfather was the Enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn and his father, Abraham, was a successful banker first in Hamburg then Berlin. Also unlike many prodigies, Felix received a first rate general education with a strong grounding in the classics, including reading Shakespeare in German translation. His music education was likewise classically oriented. With his teacher Carl Friedrich Zelter, he studied the music of past great composers like Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Handel. Zelter also led the Singakademie, which performed sacred vocal works by composers from the 18th century and earlier. Mendelssohn sang in the ensemble beginning at age 11 and was introduced to many older works that were otherwise not publicly performed.

By age 13, Mendelssohn had already written a wide variety of works but he decided to make his public composition debut with this piano quartet. He may have intended it as a tribute to Mozart, who had famously written two of them, or as a way of staying out of Beethoven’s shadow as he didn’t write any mature piano quartets. But in any case, the quartet is incredibly advanced for a composer who was barely a teenager when he wrote it. In the stormy key of C minor, the first movement begins almost hesitantly in the strings before launching into a full Classical-style sonata form. The second movement, a beautiful chordal ballad, has a fascinating episode where each string instrument enters in turn until the violin comes in on a gorgeously dissonant C-flat. The C minor scherzo features sparkling piano runs around a trio for viola, cello, and piano left hand. The last movement revisits the first movement with the same form and similar first theme, but in a faster, more impetuous tempo to end this remarkable debut by one of the most precocious composers of the 19th century.

**Quartet in C minor for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello, Op. 13 (1883-84)  
Richard Strauss (Munich, 1864 - Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 1949)**

Strauss wrote this early piano quartet at 20 years old when he was still absorbing new influences and finding his mature voice. His years of experimentation would eventually lead to a focus on operas and tone poems, but first he wrote an impressive body of chamber music. His two piano trios, string quartet, cello sonata, and other chamber works were followed by this piano quartet. It came at a time of intense discovery of all the musical styles around him in Romantic Germany. Strauss had a somewhat old-fashioned musical upbringing because his father, a horn player, disliked all modern music (even though, as a member of the Munich Court Orchestra, he was acquainted with it). So, naturally, the young adult Strauss was enamored with new music. His first obsession was Brahms, perhaps because the older composer considered his music a continuation of the German tradition. Strauss would soon move on and develop a much more lasting attachment with Wagner’s music that would set the course for the rest of his life.

Strauss composed the piano quartet in 1884 at the height of his fascination with Brahms. He was assimilating Brahms’ music at rapid speed, weaving it into his own youthful, cultivated style. The first movement, in particular, was written under Brahms’ spell, with large-scale dramatic sweep, and firm control over the many themes and their development. But fiery flashes, starting right in the sixth measure, are all Strauss. The two middle movements are a heavy-yet-skittering scherzo and a touching slow movement that moves from minor to major. The final movement is another epic, long-form essay in C minor that is more intricately wrought that the rest of the piece; its independent lines may recall Schumann. The quartet was well received—Strauss premiered it with members of the Halír Quartet on December 8, 1885, and it won a prize for best piano quartet from the Berlin Tonkünstler Verein.

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**About the artists**

**Gary** **Hoffman** is one of the outstanding cellists of our time, combining instrumental mastery, great beauty of sound, and a poetic sensibility. He gained international renown upon his victory as the first North American to win the Rostropovich International Competition in Paris in 1986. A frequent soloist with the world’s most noted orchestras, he has appeared with the Chicago, London, Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco, Baltimore, and National symphony orchestras as well as the English, Moscow, and Los Angeles chamber orchestras, the Orchestre National de France, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Netherlands and Rotterdam philharmonics, the Cleveland Orchestra for the Blossom Festival, and The Philadelphia Orchestra. He has collaborated with such celebrated conductors as André Previn, Charles Dutoit, Mstislav Rostropovich, Pinchas Zukerman, Andrew Davis, Herbert Blomstedt, Kent Nagano, and Jesús López-Cobos. He performs in major recital and chamber music series throughout the world, as well as at such prestigious festivals as Ravinia, Marlboro, Aspen, Bath, Evian, Helsinki, Verbier, Mostly Mozart, Schleswig-Holstein, Stresa, Festival International de Colmar, and Festival de Toulon. He is a frequent guest of string quartets including the Emerson, Tokyo, Borromeo, Brentano, and Ysaÿe. In 2011, Mr. Hoffman was appointed Maître en Résidence for cello at the prestigious Chapelle de Musique Reine Elisabeth in Brussels. He has a new release of Elgar’s Cello Concerto and Bloch’s Schelomo on the La Dolce Volta label with Orchestre de Liège and Christian Arming. He performs on a 1662 Nicolo Amati cello, the “ex-Leonard Rose.”

Acclaimed by critics for his exceptional talent and magnificent tone, American violinist **Chad Hoopes** has remained a consistent performer with many of the world’s leading orchestras since winning First Prize at the Young Artists Division of the Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition. He is a 2017 recipient of Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Career Grant. Highlights of past seasons include performances with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, and Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse for the French premiere of Qigang Chen’s concerto La joie de la souffrance. He has performed with leading orchestras, including the San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Houston, and National Symphonies, as well as the Minnesota, Colorado Music Festival, and National Arts Centre Orchestras. He has additionally performed recitals at the Ravinia Festival, the Tonhalle Zürich, the Louvre, and at Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series in New York City. His debut recording with the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra under Kristjan Järvi featured the Mendelssohn and Adams concertos and was enthusiastically received by both press and public. His recording of Bernstein’s Violin Sonata with pianist Wayne Marshall was recently released. Born in Florida, he began his violin studies at the age of three in Minneapolis, and continued his training at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He additionally studied at the Kronberg Academy under the guidance of Professor Ana Chumachenco, who remains his mentor. An alum of CMS’s Bowers Program, he plays the 1991 Samuel Zygmuntowicz, ex Isaac Stern violin.

Violinist/violist **Yura Lee** is a multifaceted musician, as a soloist and as a chamber musician, and one of the very few that is equally virtuosic on both violin and viola. She has performed with major orchestras including those of New York, Chicago, Baltimore, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. She has given recitals in London’s Wigmore Hall, Vienna’s Musikverein, Salzburg’s Mozarteum, the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. At age 12, she became the youngest artist ever to receive the Debut Artist of the Year prize at the Performance Today awards given by National Public Radio. She is the recipient of a 2007 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the first prize winner of the 2013 ARD Competition. She has received numerous other international prizes, including top prizes in the Mozart, Indianapolis, Hannover, Kreisler, Bashmet, and Paganini competitions. Her CD Mozart in Paris, with Reinhard Goebel and the Bayerische Kammerphilharmonie, received the prestigious Diapason d’Or Award. As a chamber musician, she regularly takes part in the festivals of Marlboro, Salzburg, Verbier, and Caramoor. Her main teachers included Dorothy DeLay, Hyo Kang, Miriam Fried, Paul Biss, Thomas Riebl, Ana Chumachenko, and Nobuko Imai. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, Ms. Lee is on the faculty at the USC Thornton School of Music.

Violist **Paul Neubauer** has been called a “master musician” by the New York Times. He recently made his Chicago Symphony subscription debut with conductor Riccardo Muti and his Mariinsky Orchestra debut with conductor Valery Gergiev. He also gave the US premiere of the newly discovered Impromptu for viola and piano by Shostakovich with pianist Wu Han. In addition, his recording of the Aaron Kernis Viola Concerto with the Royal Northern Sinfonia was released on Signum Records and his recording of the complete viola/piano music by Ernest Bloch with pianist Margo Garrett was released on Delos. Appointed principal violist of the New York Philharmonic at age 21, he has appeared as soloist with over 100 orchestras including the New York, Los Angeles, and Helsinki philharmonics; National, St. Louis, Detroit, Dallas, San Francisco, and Bournemouth symphonies; and Santa Cecilia, English Chamber, and Beethovenhalle orchestras. He has premiered viola concertos by Bartók (revised version of the Viola Concerto), Friedman, Glière, Jacob, Kernis, Lazarof, Müller-Siemens, Ott, Penderecki, Picker, Suter, and Tower and has been featured on CBS's Sunday Morning, A Prairie Home Companion, and in Strad, Strings, and People magazines. A two-time Grammy nominee, he has recorded on numerous labels including Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA Red Seal, and Sony Classical and is a member of SPA, a trio with soprano Susanna Phillips and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. Mr. Neubauer is the artistic director of the Mostly Music series in New Jersey and is on the faculty of The Juilliard School and Mannes College.

**Alexander Sitkovetsky** was born in Moscow into a family with a well-established musical tradition. His concerto debut came at the age of eight and in the same year he moved to the UK to study at the Menuhin School. He recently debuted with the Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra in Tennessee and the Hong Kong Sinfonietta and made return visits to the English Symphony Orchestra, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Camerata Salzburg. Further appearances include various chamber music festivals, tours with the Sitkovetsky Trio, and extensive periods of chamber music in Australia and the US. Recent concerto performances include appearances with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Munich Chamber Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Moscow Symphony Orchestra, St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de Bolivia, National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra, Residentie Orkest, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Welsh National Opera Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Philharmonia Orchestra. He directs and performs as a soloist regularly with chamber orchestras, including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, London Mozart Players, Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra, New York Chamber Players, Camerata Zurich, and a recent tour with the Netherlands Youth Orchestra. He is a founding member of the Sitkovetsky Trio, who regularly perform throughout Europe and Asia, and an alum of CMS’s Bowers Program.

Winner of a 2016 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, as well as classical music’s bright young star award for 2007 by The Independent, pianist **Wu Qian** has maintained a busy international career for over a decade. She has appeared as soloist in many international venues including the Wigmore, Royal Festival, and Bridgewater halls in the UK, City Hall in Hong Kong, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. As a soloist she has appeared with the Konzerthaus Orchester in Berlin, the Brussels Philharmonic, the London Mozart Players, I Virtuosi Italiani, the European Union Chamber Orchestra, and the Munich Symphoniker. She won first prize in the Trio di Trieste Duo Competition and the Kommerzbank Piano Trio competition in Frankfurt, and has received numerous other awards. Recent appearances include performances in the UK, Germany, USA, Korea, Australia, Spain, and The Netherlands and collaborations with Alexander Sitkovetsky, Leticia Moreno, Cho-Liang Lin, Clive Greensmith, and Wu Han. Her debut recording of Schumann, Liszt, and Alexander Prior was met with universal critical acclaim. She is a founding member of the Sitkovetsky Piano Trio with which, in addition to performing in major concert halls and series around the world, she has released two recordings on the BIS label and also a disc of Brahms and Schubert on the Wigmore Live Label. Wu Qian is an alum of CMS's Bowers Program.