



# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

*in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music present*

## ARIEL QUARTET

**GERSHON GERCHIKOV**, violin  
**ALEXANDRA KAZOVSKY**, violin  
**JAN GRÜNING**, viola  
**AMIT EVEN-TOV**, cello

2:30 PM, Sunday, April 23, 2017  
Faye Spanos Concert Hall  
University of the Pacific

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**ROBERT SCHUMANN** **QUARTET IN A MAJOR, OP. 41, NO. 3** (1842)  
(1810–1856) Andante espressivo — Allegro molto moderato  
Assai agitato  
Adagio molto  
Finale: Allegro molto vivace — Quasi Trio

**MOHAMMED FAIROUZ** **PROPHECIES** (2016)  
(b. 1985) Yaqūb  
Saleh  
Dawoūd  
Yousef  
Mūsa  
Suleiman  
Yishak  
Ibrahīm

— *INTERMISSION* —

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** **QUARTET IN A MINOR, OP. 132** (1825)  
(1770–1827) Assai sostenuto — Allegro  
Allegro ma non tanto  
Molto Adagio — Andante — Heiliger Dankgesang  
eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen  
Tonart. Molto adagio — Neue Kraft fühlend:  
Andante — Molto adagio — Andante — Molto  
adagio: Mit innigster Empfindung  
Alla Marcia, assai vivace — Più allegro — Presto  
Allegro appassionato — Presto

ARIEL QUARTET APPEARS by arrangement with Melvin Kaplan Inc.  
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[www.melkap.com](http://www.melkap.com) ★ [www.arielquartet.com](http://www.arielquartet.com)

## ARTIST PROFILE



Characterized by its youth, brilliant playing, and soulful interpretations, the **Ariel Quartet** has quickly earned a glowing international reputation.

The Quartet was formed in Israel sixteen years ago when its members were young students and have been playing together ever since. Recently awarded the prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award, the Quartet serves as the Faculty Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, where they direct the chamber music program and perform their own annual series of concerts.

The Ariel Quartet's 2015-16 season featured their debut at Carnegie Hall, as well as a major collaborative project with the clarinetist David Krakauer. Highlights of the Quartet's 2014-15 season included a groundbreaking Beethoven cycle performed at New York's SubCulture that featured a midnight performance of the *Grosse Fuge*; a performance featuring music by three generations of Israeli composers at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; performances resulting from the Cleveland Quartet Award in Kansas City, Austin, and Buffalo; and a tour of South America.

The Ariel Quartet performs widely in Israel, Europe, and North America, including two record-setting Beethoven cycles, performed before all the members of the quartet turned thirty. The Ariel continues to astonish with its performances of complete works by memory and has remained committed to performing extensively in Israel. In addition, the Ariel has collaborated with the pianist Orion Weiss; violist Roger Tapping; cellist Paul Katz; and the American and Jerusalem String Quartets. The Quartet has toured with the cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and performs regularly with the legendary pianist Menahem Pressler. Additionally, the Ariel was quartet-in-residence for the Steans Music Institute at the Ravinia Festival, the Yellow Barn Music Festival, and for the Perlman Music Program, and was the Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-In-Residence at the Caramoor Festival.

## Schumann: Op. 41, No. 3

Robert Schumann wrote nothing but piano music until age 30 and did not venture into chamber music until 1842, although he made plans to do so as early as 1839, writing to Clara Weick, his future wife, that he found himself “looking forward to the quartets with great joy.”

But since Schumann cultivated each new field of music he entered with extraordinary intensity and exclusiveness, due in part at least to his excitable and enthusiastic temperament, he abandoned the chamber music project and plunged into vocal music and within a period of one year wrote more than 100 songs. These lyrical exaltations culminated in his marriage to Clara in 1840. The following year was dedicated to orchestral music exclusively, and it was not until 1842 that Schumann finally returned to the string quartet project.

Perhaps feeling that he could not trust to the muse of the moment or his practical familiarity as a pianist to provide the clear and soundly articulate musical thought and judgment to craft the balance, blend and contrasts of the four instruments, he spent April of that year studying the works of his models: Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. And inspiration they were, for he completed the three string quartets of Opus 41 in June and July of that year, and the remainder of that year saw the completion of his piano quintet, the *Fantasiestücke* for piano trio, and the E Major piano quartet.

This intense state of composition was followed by a period of mental exhaustion resulting in a seriously overtaxed nervous system. But there is no such strain in the A Major quartet. The four movements are original, natural, full of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic creation, and mostly of a light-hearted nature.

As a critic, Schumann thought a quartet should be a conversation among the four voices that both builds on historical models and takes on its own direction that expands the form. Opus 41 practices what he preached and presents the three quartets on a very human scale.

The quartets are dedicated to Felix Mendelssohn who was present at their premier at the home of Ferdinand David.<sup>1</sup>

The first movement, in sonata form, opens with a delicate, subtle tempo that generates a dreamy introduction and establishes a signature motive of a falling fifth like a deep sigh (or is he perhaps calling “Cla-ra”?) that recurs throughout the movement. Listen for modulations of key signature leading to a dramatic pause. Gentle calmness follows that reveals the two main themes separated by a floating bridge. The expressive first theme reveals the song-writing talents of the composer, while the second shows the inspiration of the composer as a pianist in a lilting melody in the cello and first violin. There is a turbulent development of the first theme juxtaposed with the falling fifth, and the movement closes with a final falling fifth in the cello.

Schumann chooses a theme and variation for the second movement. This is a change-up not only from the traditional scherzo in this position but also in that it seems to be a theme preceded by three variations. The “theme” is a series of collected short, hurried, syncopated phrase groups, and you might think of the “variations” as responses to each other rather than variations in the traditional sense. There is another variation following the theme that continues the turbulent development. A coda modifies the mood entirely by shifting to major mode. It provides a serene epilog of comfort after the terse, agitated violence and painful sentimentality of the preceding variations.

The *Adagio molto* is the longest, most lyrically intense, and most profound movement of the quartet. A heart-warming song-without-words reveals Schumann’s rhapsodic romanticism. It is quickly confounded by a second, troubled impression that portends obliteration of the song in the intense surging and swelling pandemonium of a ponderous military march. But warm lyricism softens the march, which fades into the mild conclusion.

The finale, in contrast to the third movement, is a sprightly and free rondo that advances with good humor and sweeps away all that has gone before. A gallery of contrasting musical ideas gather

around a recurring refrain that is realized in final, expanded pageantry by the coda, which sprints off to an upbeat finish.

Schumann’s three string quartets communicate in a more broadly communal manner than his private songs and piano works. They seem to be pieces for a discerning public, pieces for continuation of a grand tradition.

## Fairouz: *Prophesies*

Mohammed Fairouz is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers working today. Hailed by The New York Times as “an important new artistic voice” and by BBC World News as “one of the most talented composers of his generation,” his large-scale works engage major geopolitical, philosophical themes with persuasive craft and a marked seriousness of purpose. Fairouz’s cosmopolitan outlook reflects his transatlantic upbringing and extensive travels. His catalog encompasses virtually every genre, including opera, symphonies, vocal and choral settings, chamber and solo works.

As an artist also involved with major social issues,<sup>2</sup> Fairouz seeks to promote cultural communication and understanding. Recent major works have included his “grandly ambitious” (Opera News) third symphony, *Poems and Prayers* that interweaves texts of Arab poets Fadwa Tuqan and Mahmoud Darwish, the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, and prayers such as the Aramaic Kaddish. His fourth symphony, *In the Shadow of No Towers* for wind ensemble, about American life in the aftermath of 9/11, premiered in 2013 at Carnegie Hall and was described by Steve Smith of The New York Times as “technically impressive, consistently imaginative, and in its finest stretches deeply moving.”

Mohammed Fairouz’s *Prophesies* is a musical journey through the heritage and history of the Islamic and Jewish spiritual roots, exploring their unique

<sup>1</sup> It was for David that Mendelssohn composed his violin concerto

<sup>2</sup> <https://onbeing.org/blog/welcome-to-the-age-of-narcissism/>

musical characteristics. The eight movements bear the titles of the two religions' different forefathers, highlighting the often-ignored fact that both faiths share some of their most prominent founding figures.

### Beethoven: Op. 132

At his life's end, when he had not heard a sound for almost 30 years, Ludwig van Beethoven created a pearl of great beauty and splendor.

He began to lose his hearing in 1796 and completed Op. 132 in 1825, just 2 years before his death. One must wonder what a score must have meant to him at this point. Throughout his troubled life, music was the one perpetual focus of his existence, and at the end he was able to speak simply from his heart without fear of criticism or outrage. But he would never hear what he had created. Was the score itself his complete work of art?

By this time Beethoven had ceased to compose in all other musical forms and chose to write exclusively for string quartet. His last five quartets, written between May 1824 and November 1826, became the *sine qua non* of the repertoire and (even though bewildering audiences) simultaneously expressed his ideas in the clearest possible manner.

Although some of this music may have been written to satisfy or indulge the audience, much of it was private and represents a lone Beethoven grappling with his musical concepts. Consequently, for more than fifty years following his death, these late quartets were rarely performed.

In this late period, Beethoven's admiration for J.S. Bach provided inspiration. In the opening of the A Minor Quartet's first movement, we hear a simple four-note statement comprising two half-step intervals, the first rising and the second descending, separated by a large leap played slowly in the cello that the other strings one-by-one pick up and begin developing. Are you reminded of a Bach fugue? This modest, nearly ubiquitous statement is the work's signature. Can you spot the pairs of half-steps present in

almost every motive in every movement? Listen for it everywhere.

But this *cantus firmus* is interrupted abruptly by an interjected passionate arpeggio in the first violin—the first of many such distinctive contrasts. There are two themes in this movement, the first dark and the second pleasantly poetic, which together form a troubled ambience throughout.

In the wake of this emotionally complex first movement, the dancelike second movement seems relatively simple. However, it has an intricate contrapuntal structure: the opening movement seems both elegant and somber but soon a tender melody interlaces itself and irregular rhythms give the dance a peculiar, ambiguous inflection. The trio section relieves this anxiety becoming more open, simple, and innocent, evoking bagpipes and childlike play. Listen for a brief, ominous, threatening, seemingly unprovoked interruption in the flow of music by the cello and viola. It is an alarming instant, perhaps signifying the darkness lying in wait for our tenuous joy. It is hurriedly dissipated by return of the bagpipes and then by the dancing, but an omen remains as the movement ends.

The heart and soul of the quartet is the "*Heiliger Dankgesang*" ("Holy Song of Thanks to the Deity from a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode"), with one of the sections noted "*Neue Kraft fühlend*" ("Feeling new strength"). This is Beethoven's expression of gratitude for his recovery from a serious stomach and liver illness in April 1825, allowing him to complete the quartet by May. This slow movement was conceived as an extended *Canzona* with alternating sections in the Lydian mode.<sup>3</sup> This is an ancient mode, with a slightly different color than the major and minor scales on which most music of Beethoven's era is based, and accordingly enigmatic in sound, evocative of devotion.

It unfolds as a series of double variations, with the second of the two alternating themes being in a more flowing tempo than the first. The contrast between the themes is overwhelming: the first is a slow choral with austere individual phrases punctuated

by brief contrapuntal interludes, and the second, in a new key, more confident, expressing that feeling of renewed strength. At the third and final appearance, Beethoven has written in the score "Mit innigster Empfindung" ("with the most intimate feeling"). The movement builds to a climax of almost extraordinary passion, redolent of love and appreciation of the transcendent. The denouement leads to a practically total tranquility and a sense of peace.

An *alla marcia* returns us from the heavenly to the worldly. This march repeatedly softens into more gentle, spirited music, as if hesitant to choose a direction to head. We are not quite prepared for a glorious end even with all that has preceded. Indecision gains the initiative and a quickening of pace escorts in a recitative in the first violin accompanied by quaking tremolos underneath, and the final movement begins.

Marked *Allegro appassionato*, the conclusion is a rondo that evokes passages from the earlier movements. For example, the main theme is lyrical but listen for the first movement's opening four-note motif. The movement does not develop in sequence; the contrasting elements are forced together. The main theme develops poignant inflections, and the rhythmic underlying voices grow in strength. After a quiet fugal section the main theme and accompaniment unite into the swift, highly rhythmic final section. Moving into the "wrong" key of A Major but affording a sense of attaining freedom, the frenzied music is stripped down to a series of quick chords and the quartet's closing cadence.

The nearly 200-year-old String Quartet No. 15 in A minor, Op. 132 remains innovative, compelling, captivating in its structure, ageless, and more absorbing each time one hears it. It is a complete work of art both audible and in score.

—notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

<sup>3</sup>Using B natural rather than B flat in a scale starting on F; the white keys on a piano from F/F

# 61<sup>ST</sup> SEASON 2016-2017

*Presented in Cooperation with  
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## Windsync

2:30 PM Sunday, September 11, 2016

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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## La Catrina Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, October 16, 2016

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## Hermitage Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, November 9, 2016

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## Fauré Quartett

2:30 PM Sunday, February 5, 2017

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## Ariel Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, April 23, 2017

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- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
- There is no smoking in the building.
- Please turn off cellular telephones and disengage audible signals on digital devices during concert.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the 2016-17 Season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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### February Trivia Answer:

Only one of Fauré's chamber  
works *does not* include piano:  
the string quartet of 1924 written  
when he was 79, his final  
chamber composition.

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