



# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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## Beo String Quartet

JASON NEUKOM, violin  
ANDREW GIORDANO, violin  
SEAN NEUKOM, viola  
ALICIA STORIN, cello

2:30 pm, Sunday, October 20, 2024  
Faye Spanos Concert Hall  
University of the Pacific

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**STRING QUARTET IN G MINOR, OP. 74, NO. 3, "RIDER",** HOB.III:74 (1793)

**JOSEPH HAYDN**  
(1732–1809)

Allegro  
Largo assai  
Menuetto: Allegro—Trio  
Finale: Allegro con brio

**STRING QUARTET NO. 3, "MISHIMA"** (1985)

**PHILIP GLASS**  
(b. 1937)

1957: Award Montage  
November 25: Ichigaya  
1934: Grandmother and Kimitake  
1962: Body Building  
Blood Oath  
Mishima—Closing

**DANCE OF THE YAO PEOPLE, (瑶族舞曲)** (1952) *Arr. Yiwun Jiang*

**LIU TIESHAN & MAO YUAN**  
(b. 1923 & 1926–2022)

— INTERMISSION —

**STRING QUARTET NO. 1 IN C MINOR, OP. 51, NO. 1** (1866-73)

**JOHANNES BRAHMS**  
(1833–1897)

Allegro  
Romanze: Poco adagio  
Allegretto molto moderato e comodo  
Un poco più animato—Allegro

The Beo Quartet appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists, [www.chambermuse.com](http://www.chambermuse.com)

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## Artist Profile

The eclectic and highly polished Beo String Quartet takes their name from the Latin word *beari* meaning "to bless, make happy and gladden." Founded in 2015, Beo has created a niche for itself as a daring, genre-defying ensemble whose performances are compared to those of the best among 21st century international string quartets.

On January 31, 2023, Beo made an auspicious New York debut at the distinguished Morgan Library and Museum.

The New York Classical Review called their debut "outstanding . . . the sheer sound of the quartet was invigorating and deeply satisfying. As was their artistry, which came across in both the programming and the playing . . . skill, passion, and strength . . . sheer expressive force."

And The New York Concert Review raved about Beo's "absolute purity of intonation [and] supernatural one-ness of interpretive intent that animates the best quartets.

With an astonishing 65 world premieres to its credit and 140 concert works played throughout the United States, South America, and Europe, the iconoclastic Beo String Quartet does what it loves best: performing, teaching, outreaching, composing, recording, and having fun with music from the iconic (Beethoven) to today's most exciting composers (Gabriela Ortiz, Missy Mazzoli, Phillip Glass) to popular styles. Beo has built its own recording studio and launched its own recording label, NeuKraft Records.

## Haydn: *String Quartet in G Minor*

In 1790 at the death of Prince Nicolaus, Haydn was pensioned from his service as Kapellmeister for the Hungarian Esterházy household and travelled to London where he was fêted as the greatest living European composer. Stimulated by this new grandness, Haydn reached the climax of his career. An innovative approach is particularly evident in his final string quartets that he penned at this time.

The first movement of Op. 74/3 opens with a bold introduction and a silence: a call to attention. It also contains a syncopation that recurs in many forms in the movement. The shape of the main material moves from shadows to illumination, unsure motion to a lilting ballet, apprehension to relief. The finale employs a similar overall design but, without introduction and at a faster pace, it launches into a dark, dramatic gallop, hence the moniker "Rider" or "Horseman." Haydn augments the harmonies as a more romantic theme, gradually dispersing the tension with ever-emerging light. The fast perpetual motion preserves an unbroken groove as the horseman gallops from anxiety to victory.

Between these bookends, Haydn offers one of his most glowing and stirring slow movements followed by a minuet. Like the movements that flank them, the inner movements are also three-part forms. The slow movement introduces a four-part hymn-like songfulness that turns luminous with a precise tempo, radiant harmonies and rich enhancements. The minuet contrasts this song with a spirited dance and its inner trio. In both movements, Haydn does the opposite of his outer sonata movements: rather than dispelling the initial darkness, the middle movements temporarily intersperse it like a cloud on an otherwise sunny day.

The string quartet barely existed as a concept at the beginning of Joseph Haydn's career: according to him, it was a place for experimentation, invention, and ultimately, artistic brilliance, a laboratory where original ideas and methods could be tested. Haydn's quartets became the proving ground for his symphonies and the other large forms which received the benefits of his ever-growing mastery.

## Glass: *String Quartet No. 3*

String Quartet No. 3 originally appeared as part of the score for "Mishima" by film maker Paul Schrader. The film follows a complex narrative structure which divides the life of this famous contemporary Japanese novelist (and to some, a crackpot) into three parts: childhood, mature years, and last day of his life. Film intercuts produced a shifting kaleidoscopic vision of Mishima's life. The six scenes of childhood were filmed in black and white and scored for string quartet, performed in the film by the Kronos Quartet. When he wrote the film music, Glass planned to extract the string quartet section from the film score, and the present work is the result. It is his only quartet with a specific program.

If you've heard almost anything else from Glass, the first movement will surely sound familiar. It is moody, dark, and minor-key, with undulant figures and abrupt but subtle shifting rhythms and meters. Listen to how the music swells and ebbs, building to moments of more power, as when the cello supports the ensemble with its motion in the lower register.

The second movement is the shortest, very much in the moody, preoccupied place as what came before, but without the power. Almost mournful, it implies an interlude.

What follows is a spirited opening, one of the most outwardly intense and inventive moments of the

quartet. The remainder of the movement is largely more linked, determined, and employs some excellent dissonance and color. You may visualize a convoy cruising on its way to an important destination. But it abruptly fades leading to the fourth movement.

The fourth, another short gesture, is classic Glass: not somber like the second movement. Rather it appears firm, with great commanding gesture and rhythmic intensity.

Unexpectedly, the fifth movement, titled 'Blood Oath,' perhaps the one most expected to be violent or tragic, inexplicably has perhaps the most optimism so far. It has a similar rhythmic drive, but with a spring in its step that is new. There is trivial change until the middle of the movement when all the instruments play in higher register. Harmonies drift like shifting sands until the opening motif returns.

The final movement picks up a bit of that springiness, but it is eclipsed by a magnificent sigh from the violins. It is sentimental, not sorrowful but nostalgic. There is a delightful rhythmic appeal, but above all, a softness. Like the fourth movement, the rhythms and shifting meters (like gears whizzing away) suddenly come to a slow stop, as if the convoy was out of gas.

Glass' music retains relentless unison arpeggiation patterns to create a hypnotic and mantra-like state, and with its short duration this quartet poses little fear of repetitive stress injuries.

#### **Tieshan/Yuan: *Dance of the Yao***

Premiered in Beijing in 1953, *Dance of the Yao People* is one of the best known and most popular Chinese instrumental compositions of the second half of the 20th century. Collaboratively composed by Liu Tieshan and Mao Yuan, it was inspired by a form of

traditional festival music of the Yao people of southern/southwest China.

Inspired by their folk songs, Liu Tieshan composed *Long Drum Dance of the Yao People* in 1951 during a visit to Youling village in northern Guangdong province. Mao Yuan, another composer, adapted this piece into an orchestral arrangement in 1952. The work achieved wide attention in 1954, it was disseminated throughout China. Arrangements have also come from Taiwan.

It is a multi-sectional medley of contrasting elements, beginning in 2/4 meter at a slow tempo as a haunted yearning song, moves to 3/4 meter, then returns to 2/4 meter as a high energy dance for the finale.

The song has been used in numerous advertisements and as the basis for several pop songs in both China and the United States. It forms the first 18 notes of the 1998 song "When You Believe," as recorded by Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey, is used in the 1985 soundtrack for the Commodore 64 game *The Way of the Exploding Fist*, and covered by heavy metal band Cacophony on *Black Cat* from the 1988 album *Go Off!*

#### **Brahms: *Quartet in C Minor***

Brahms proved persistent in challenging his demons: rather than acceding to a creative block, his self-criticism compelled him to forge ahead. The inhibiting demon was, of course, Beethoven, and the string quartet was a genre where comparisons were unavoidable.

Brahms himself said he had composed and discarded as many as 20 string quartets (which he used to paper his walls and ceiling) before finally, in 1873 at age 40, consenting to publish his first two works as Opus 51. Before this, he had written a pair

of string sextets; two piano quartets; a piano quintet; and a trio for violin, horn, and piano, all forms in which he could avoid direct comparison with Beethoven.

Did he oust the demon? Keller<sup>1</sup> says that "he had created a masterwork, one that throughout bears his immediately identifiable language, rich in poignant harmonic suspensions, rhythmic displacements, ...and melting lyricism."

The overall predominant nature of the quartet is restive and forceful. The first movement is volatile in its sense of both key and meter. While the opening scale and downward leap dominate and even extend their influence on the finale, the harmonic motion is so flowing that any perception of arrival or relief is thwarted.

For all the tenderness and beauty of the second movement, it still has a feeling of sadness, infused by nervously halting rhythms, especially in the middle section. The movement is much slower and calmer and is largely homophonic at the beginning and end, with all of the instruments moving together rhythmically.

The third movement largely brings back the restless rhythmic variations that are characteristic of the first movement. The trio in the middle offers a lighter and happier feel, but hastily goes back to the somber tone of the rest of the movement.

The intensity that denoted the opening Allegro returns in the final movement and mirrors some of the motifs in the first movement. It is polyphonic in nature, with each instrument playing their own melodic lines.

notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

<sup>1</sup> Keller, James M.: *Chamber Music: A Listener's Guide*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

# 68<sup>TH</sup> SEASON

## 2024-2025

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