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Telegraph Quartet

ERIC CHIN, violin

JOSEPH MAILE, violin

PEI-LING LIN, viola

JERAMIAH SHAW, cello

2:30 pm, Sunday, September 14, 2025

Faye Spanos Concert Hall University of the Pacific

STRING QUARTET IN C MAJOR, OP. 54, NO. 2 (1748)

Vivace

Adagio

Menuetto – Trio

Finale: Adagio – Presto – Adagio

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

(1732–1809)

STRING QUARTET NO. 2 IN A MINOR (1915-17)

Moderato

Allegro molto capriccioso

Lento

BÉLA BARTÓK

(1881–1945)

— INTERMISSION —

STRING QUARTET NO. 7 IN F MAJOR, OP. 59, NO. 1 (1806)

Allegro

Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando

Adagio molto e mesto—

Thème russe: Allegro

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770–1827)

Telegraph Quartet is represented by Gina Meola at Jensen Artists
646.536.7864, ext. 4, JensenArtists.com ▪ telegraphquartet.com

The Artists

Now celebrating its 12th season together, the **Telegraph Quartet** formed in 2013 with an equal passion for the standard chamber music repertoire and contemporary, non-standard works alike. Described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "...an incredibly valuable addition to the cultural landscape" and "powerfully adept... with a combination of brilliance and subtlety," the Telegraph Quartet was awarded the prestigious 2016 Walter W. Naumburg Chamber Music Award and the Grand Prize at the 2014 Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition. The Quartet has performed in concert halls, music festivals, and academic institutions across the United States and abroad, including New York City's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, San Francisco's Herbst Theatre, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's *Chamber Masters Series*, and at festivals including the Chautauqua Institute, Interlochen Arts Festival, Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival, and the Emilia Romagna Festival. The Quartet is currently the Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Michigan.

Beyond the concert stage, the Telegraph Quartet seeks to spread its music through education and audience engagement. In the fall of 2017, the Quartet traveled to communities and schools in Maine with Yellow Barn's *Music Haul*, a mobile performance stage that brings music outside of the concert hall to communities across the U.S. The Quartet has given master classes at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Collegiate and Pre-College Divisions, through the Morrison Artist Series at San Francisco State University, and abroad at the Taipei National University of the Arts and in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Telegraph has also served as artists-in-residence at the Interlochen Adult Chamber Music Camp. In November 2020, the Telegraph Quartet launched ChamberFEAST!, a chamber music workshop in Taiwan a week-long chamber music intensive with students from Taiwanese schools and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. In the summers of 2022 and 2024, the Telegraph Quartet traveled to Vienna to work with Schoenberg expert Henk Guittart in conjunction with the Arnold Schoenberg Center, researching all of Schoenberg's string quartets.

Haydn: *Quartet No. 2*

The three Op 54 quartets are the first of the 12 quartets that Haydn wrote for the Hungarian violinist Johann Tost. From 1783 to 1788 Tost played in the Esterházy orchestra of which Haydn was music director. When Tost left Esterházy in 1788 to freelance in Paris, Haydn allocated 6 quartets to him with an entreaty to secure a publisher. Tost was successful, and they were published in Paris as Op 54 & 55.

This C major quartet is a work of a mastermind, the greatest of the dozen, thoughtful and groundbreaking, generating passion and emotion from Tost's Hungarian-seasoned brilliance. The opening 6 bars set the scene with a daring statement, but where a lesser composer might have concluded the opening phrase earlier, Haydn adds, in the piano, an interrogatory two notes: "*Really?*" There is a reflective pause, followed by a repeat of the statement and question before Haydn moves into a remote key and we stride into the balance of the movement.

This question shapes the core of the extraordinarily slow movement. It starts with a weighty chorale-like 8-bar phrase in the lower three parts. The motif restates practically unchanged while the first violin interweaves an all-pervading, improvisatory magic. This ambiguity is unresolved, with the violin incorporating anguished discordance just before the conclusion. The mood lightens in the immediately following Menuetto, which just before its end echoes the "*Really?*" motif, this time in rising chromatic trembles. These doubts are compellingly dismissed but instantly recur more insistently in the minor key Trio, again with stabbing tormented discord.

The Finale is one of Haydn's most unique: a long Adagio, disturbed by a short, restless Presto, and concluding with more of the Adagio. The rising question opens the movement, but after a few bars' contemplation, Haydn gives us one of his most beautiful passages: the cello plays simple, long, slow, rising arpeggios while the violin intertwines a very different enchantment from that of the slow movement, resolving all doubts. The dazzling Presto acts as a comic foil, but the recurring Adagio reinstates calm content.

Bartok: *Quartet No. 2*

Béla Bartók was a Hungarian composer, pianist, ethnomusicologist, and teacher, noted for the Hungarian flavor of his major musical works, which comprise orchestral works, string quartets, piano solos, several stage works, a cantata, and a number of settings of folk songs for voice and piano.

Bartók spent his childhood and youth studying the piano with his mother and later with a succession of teachers. He began to compose small dance pieces at age nine, and two years later he played in public for the first time, including a composition of his own in his program.

Following the lead of another renowned Hungarian composer, Ernő Dohnányi, Bartók undertook his professional studies at the Royal Hungarian Academy of Music. He developed rapidly as a pianist but less so as a composer, but his discovery in 1902 of the music of Richard Strauss encouraged his enthusiasm for composition.

Soon after Bartók finished his studies in 1903, he and the Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály began a collaboration. A vast reservoir of authentic Hungarian peasant music was subsequently revealed by the research of the two composers. Both composers not only transcribed many folk tunes for the piano and other media but also merged into their original music the melodious, rhythmic, and textural elements of peasant music. In the end, their own work became infused with the folk spirit.

Though Béla Bartók's music was irregularly performed outside Hungary during his lifetime, many of his compositions, including the string quartets and the Concerto for Orchestra, later entered the standard concert repertory. Within 25 years after his death, many of Bartók's works had become known as having their place among the classics of Western music.

The Second String Quartet, completed in 1917, shows the span and variation of Bartók's modern style. The sequence of the piece is that of a classical tragedy, Shakespearean in scope and weight. The first movement opens with a soaring motif based on the interval of a seventh - a

quintessentially atonal figure. Yet it intertwines with tonal themes, including an amazingly gentle minor-key motif that has a strongly medieval quality. Kodály, who judged the three movements of this quartet as "life episodes," heard "peaceful life" in the first movement, and for all its churning passions, the movement does certainly leave an impression of peacefulness at the end.

The second movement exhibits Bartók's "barbaric" style. Serious Bartókians will say that that the melodic material is much indebted to the Arabic music the composer explored on his North African trip, but a Hungarian accent is also distinct. Bartók, like a one-man microcosm of music history, absorbed and merged contrasting styles and cultures and possessed them as his own.

When asked to analyze the form of the Quartet's middle movement, Bartók called it "a kind of rondo, with a developmental section in the middle." Listeners will more likely hear a sort of ABA form: a movement of frantic intensity and velocity that rests for a while in a middle section where short episodes marked "more tranquil" alternate with others marked "less tranquil."

The ominous, penetrating last movement (Kodály heard it as "suffering") is remarkably sorrowful because it is as steady as the second movement is vibrant. Long stretches are rhythmically static, and the parts that do move are often interrupted by silence. The finale is bleak and sorrowful, music of intense expression that may reflect the grief of the time of its composition.

Beethoven: Quartet No. 7

When Beethoven began the three string quartets published as his Opus 59, he had already composed many of his middle-period masterpieces.

One of the composer's most enthusiastic and effusive supporters was Russia's ambassador to Vienna, Count Andreas Razumovsky, who commissioned the three Opus 59 Quartets, which now bear his name. He was supportive in another important way: He employed a quartet of string players whose talents allowed Beethoven the opportunity to hear his music played with precision and virtuosity.

The debut of Beethoven's new Op.59, No.1 quartet caused reactions of incredulity and

disbelief from musicians and public alike. The quartet's size alone, clearly twice as long as any of Beethoven's earlier quartets and longer than five(!) of his nine symphonies, caused musicians to react adversely. As the specialized and expressive demands put on the players had never been seen in chamber work, some of Beethoven's most dependable friends thought he might even be playing a joke on them. One violinist, whose recommendation Beethoven had requested concerning fingering for the violin parts, confronted Beethoven regarding the artistic legitimacy of the Op.59, No.1 quartet. Beethoven's response to him was firm: "Oh, it is not for you, but for a later age."

The first movement in Sonata form launches with one of Beethoven's most noble themes and sets the stage for the genial mood to follow. It is hard for us to imagine today, but Beethoven's choice to set the initial appearance of the first theme in the cello part so defied the conventions of the time that his friends would mock Beethoven pitilessly, with rehearsal sessions regularly ending in wild laughter.

Beethoven cleverly adorns the first theme with triplets and cheerful eighth notes that help keep the music aloft. Moments of apprehension and darkness in the exposition are quickly displaced by bright optimism. The core of the first movement is a marvelous fugue that begins with the second violin, moves to the viola and first violin, and ends in the cello before breaking apart for the return of the music from the opening of the movement.

The *scherzando* second movement was another hot spot of debate because of the utter ease of the first few measures. The movement opens with a rhythmically engaging four bar phrase comprised of just one repeated note played by the cello. Beethoven would later employ this idea in the creation of the slow movement of his Seventh Symphony. This rhythmic motive serves as the structural foundation for the music throughout the movement while more interesting melodic material is explored.

One of the characteristics of the second movement is the way Beethoven divides and shares the music among the four instruments of the quartet. This clever

handling of the texture creates a sense of freshness in the music and allows the two primary themes to reinvent themselves throughout the movement.

There are two theories to Beethoven's inspiration for the extraordinarily beautiful *Adagio e molto mesto* (slow and very sad) third movement. On surviving sketches of the movement, Beethoven wrote the words "*Eine Trauer-weide oder Akazien-Baum aufs Grab meines Bruder*" ("A weeping willow or an acacia on the grave of my brother"). Either Beethoven was remembering the brother who was born a year before him, but who only survived for one week, or he was ironically mourning his other brother Casper, who had recently married a woman whom Beethoven loathed.

The music provides entry into one of Beethoven's darkest and most deeply personal landscapes. The lonely opening theme in the first violin, which is thrown against a backdrop of dark harmonies in the lower three voices, is echoed in the cello and extended. A more hopeful second theme, played first in the cello and then passed to the first violin, provides a brief glimmer of hope before the feelings of utter despair return. Although the music is generally sad in nature, the persistent extent of the movement demonstrates some of Beethoven's most ethereal writing.

The slow movement moves to the finale without pause, as the first violin plays a series of virtuosic running scales, ultimately landing on a trill. The cello introduces the cheerful "Theme Russe" that Beethoven promised to Count Razumovsky, and as the first violin develops the theme, the joyous mood of the music immediately washes away the effects of the slow movement. Moments of boisterous enthusiasm give way to episodes of grace and intimacy, but in the end, the enthusiasm of the music can't be suppressed. The closing bars provide us with a fitting end to one of the true giants of the string quartet repertoire.

notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

69TH SEASON

2025-2026

*Presented in Cooperation with
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Telegraph Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, September 14, 2025
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Trio 180

2:30 PM Sunday, February 15, 2026
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