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In Cooperation with the University of the Pacific's Conservatory of Music Present

Poiesis Quartet

2:30 pm, Sunday November 1, 2026 --Faye Spanos Concert Hall-UOP



Sarah Ying Ma, violin;
Coco Mi, violin;
Jasper de Boor, viola;
Drew Dansby, cello

Lauded for their "palpable chemistry and remarkable warmth" (San Francisco Classical Voice), the Poiesis Quartet is the First Prize and Commission Prize winners of the 2025 Banff International String Quartet Competition. In 2023, they were named the Grand Prize and Lift Every Voice Prize winners of the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition, as well as Gold Medal and BIPOC Prize winners at the 2023 St. Paul String Quartet Competition.

Derived from ancient Greek, the word Poiesis means "to make", specifically to create something that has never existed before. With a focus on expanding the string quartet repertoire with vibrant new works from emerging composers, the quartet infuses each performance with unique moments of synchronicity and verve.

Program And Program Notes

Common Place Little Perils	Max Lang
Forest of Taldeni	Maya Irizarry Lambright
To Unpathed Waters, Undreamed Shores	Michi Wiancko

Intermission

Pisachi (Reveal)	Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate
String Quartet	Maurice Ravel

Max Lang: Commonplace Little Perils
I. Dawn Song
II. Beautiful Dangers
III. Wildfire Sunsets

"Commonplace Little Perils" was inspired by the composer's experience working as a wrangler on a Colorado ranch, learning to read the landscape for the beauty and the subtle signs of danger, and relating these to the daily experiences of people of color and queer people. The composer is also a poet and they have written a poem, recited in fragments by the performers, which, combined with the use of imaginative instrumental techniques, conjures in the listener's mind an aural "landscape" at once both powerful and fragile. The movements are played without pause.

Common Place Little Perils

a small terror is common to me now—

my eyes on the skies
eyes on the pines
stretching fourteen times my height

how much smoke covered the sky?
how dark?
how dismal?

the mountains bone dry
no rain for weeks
kindling ready to meet its match

i wonder how long it will take
before i get lost in some kind of sickness.
i am seeing eye to eye with the mountains—
hopefully not tomorrow

in every beautiful thing there is danger
in every dangerous thing there is beauty

there are trees, black like plague,
against the light of the dawn

what they don't tell you about the wildfire smoke
is that it makes you spend more time with the sunsets.
they're hazy
full of impending doom
but my god
they're brilliant

Maya Irizarry Lambright: Forest of Taldeni

An attempt to imagine a utopia where safety and security can be achieved, this piece is composed with a mixture of traditional notation and improvisation on graphical and text notation. The result is an unusual combination of sounds—fragments of melodies, percussive effects, slow bends—with outbursts of both frank emotion and mysterious calm.

Michi Wiancko: To Unpathed Waters, Undreamed Shores

I. Pelagic Within
II. Dream of the Xerces Blue
III. Central Park Microbial
IV. Invisible Eviction
V. Crying, Together
VI. Follow the Water
VII. Rise Up

Michi Wiancko is a multi-faceted violinist and composer whose work emphasizes artistic challenge and creativity. "To Unpathed Waters, Undreamed Shores" was created to explore both the beauty of the natural world and humanity's intricate relationship to it. The first three movements are meditations on the depths of the ocean, an extinct butterfly, and the amazing biodiversity of "Central Park". "Invisible Eviction" evokes a planet on fire while "Crying, Together" holds space for mourning. We return to water, to the rivers that inevitably flow back to the open seas. The final movement is both an exhortation to celebrate and an invitation to reflect on the fragility of nature.

Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate (b. 1968-2013)
Pisachi (Reveal)

A citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, Tate infuses traditional classical structures with American Indian melodies, rhythms, and forms, producing richly textured, intensely nuanced artistic works. Influenced by Pueblo and Hopi music, Pisachi was composed to pay tribute to his Southwest Indian cousins through the lens of classical repertoire. The viola paraphrases a Pueblo dance in the first epitome, which will recur throughout the work. Exploring the intricate, luminescent harmonies and subtle rhythms of these traditions, the composer weaves a tautly constructed yet delicate tapestry.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
String Quartet (1903-1905)
I. Allegro moderato—Très doux
II. Assez vif—Très rhythmé
III. Très lent
IV. Vif et agité

That Ravel tried and failed to win prizes in piano, harmony, fugue, and composition at the Conservatoire is, along with his multiple failed attempts at securing the coveted Prix de Rome, one of the great scandals in the history of music. That he was composing masterpieces still played today during these difficult years is awe-inspiring.

The String Quartet, begun in 1903 is one of these. Thematically, the first movement is a straightforward sonata but the construction of the melodies and harmonies allow Ravel to slide elegantly between diatonic, whole-tone, and octatonic harmonies (with an occasional pinch of pentatonicism added for good measure). The result is a rich ebb and flow that remains elusive.

The second movement starts with a frankness that contrasts sharply with the first, with the pungency of pizzicato, the interplay of duple and triple meters, and a taut motivic structure. The contemplative third movement is, as it were, the work's center of gravity. Here, allusions to the first movement are interspersed with declamatory motives, whispered secrets, and eloquent soliloquies. If the third movement is contemplative, the fourth is almost contemptuous. Written mostly in an odd meter, with savage repeated notes and stark chords, references to themes of the first movement provide uneasy moments of relative calm.

Program Notes by Carl Serpa

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