



MSM ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

AMERICAN STRING QUARTET

Peter Winograd and Laurie Carney, violin

Matthias Buchholz, viola

Wolfram Koessel, cello

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026 | 3 PM
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PROGRAM

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918) String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10

I. *Animé et très décidé*
II. *Assez vif et bien rythmé*
III. *Andantino, doucement expressif*
IV. *Très modéré*

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897) String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 51, no. 2

- I. *Allegro non troppo*
- II. *Andante moderato*
- III. *Quasi Minuetto, moderato*
- IV. *Finale. Allegro non assai*

PROGRAM NOTES

Quartettsatz in C Minor, D. 703

Franz Schubert

Born in Vienna, January 31, 1797; died in Vienna, November 19, 1828

In December 1820 Schubert composed a first movement in C minor and forty-one measures of a second movement in A-flat major for what was probably to be a full-length string quartet. The manuscript ends there, much to everyone's regret. As with his "Unfinished" Symphony, one can only speculate as to the reason he never completed it.

The *Quartettsatz* marks a new phase in Schubert's writing for string quartet that includes the A minor, D minor ("Death and the Maiden"), and G major Quartets and could be extended to include the great Quintet in C major. No longer was he writing for his family's quartet—brothers Ferdinand and Ignaz as first and second violinists, himself as violist, and his father as cellist—and therefore with certain technical limitations removed, his imagination was free to consider players of consummate skill.

The hushed repeated-note opening theme and its various stormy, agitated offshoots display a virtuosic character. Schubert dramatically contrasts these with his signature kind of sweet lyricism—as in the beautiful second theme mentioned and in the exposition's closing theme. Schubert reveals here in the opening section of his sonata form a three-key harmonic structure that he favored frequently: between the traditional tonic and dominant key areas (in this case C minor and G major) he incorporated a more unusual key for his lovely second theme (A-flat major), which is related to the outer two by intervals of a third. In making the sonata form his own, Schubert opts not to invoke the opening theme at the outset of the recapitulation, but rather saves its recurrence for the short coda at the end of this captivating movement.

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String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10

Claude Debussy

Born in St. Germaine-en-Laye, August 22, 1862; died in Paris, March 25, 1918

Debussy composed his only String Quartet in 1893 amid work on his orchestral *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. The chamber work marks the transition between Debussy's youthful and mature styles—bridging the academic

world of his Paris Conservatory training with the dreamy, coloristic world of the *Faune*. In a larger sense it both glances back to the nineteenth-century heritage of Wagner and Franck and looks to the future with original and imaginative ideas that would influence the course of music.

The Quartet is Debussy's only work that bears an opus number and names a key, as if he were thinking of the weighty history of the genre. The work's tonal center may be G, but "minor" tells little about Debussy's harmonic scheme. The first movement relies heavily upon the centuries-old Phrygian mode on G and on D. The second movement alternates and combines G major *pizzicato* chords with an accelerated and chromatically altered version of the first movement's opening motive, further blurring distinctions between major and minor. The slow movement, placed third in the order of movements, centers around D-flat, the remotest possible key from "home."

Completed in February 1893, the Quartet was premiered December 29 by the Ysaÿe Quartet on a concert that brought Debussy's music to the notice of many for the first time. Critics initially seemed somewhat baffled—some were uncomfortable with the Quartet's original ideas, others felt the allure of its new sounds and suspected their importance for the future.

The Quartet exhibits a certain cyclicalism or the reuse of themes across movements—not as distinctly unmistakable entities in the manner of his conservatory teacher Franck but as alterations of previous ideas. This creation of new possibilities contributes to the music's fluid quality. Variants of the first movement's main theme appear throughout the Quartet, some more obviously related than others. Debussy relied more on the motive's rhythmic characteristics and general contours than on its harmonic scheme and exact melodic details.

In the *scherzo*, the texture and timbre immediately strike the ear even as the thematic ideas clearly derive from the first movement's main motive, beginning with the viola's quickened and obsessively repeated version. The murmuring accompaniment in the next section, over which the first violin plays an elongated version of the motive, provide a coloristic effect that Debussy was to employ frequently, particularly in his orchestral works.

The often noted Russian character of the slow movement probably has its roots in Debussy's sojourn in Russia as part of a piano trio employed by Madame Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky's patroness. Whereas the movement indulges in a kind of Romantic-period expression, it also foreshadows the new style of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*.

The finale bridges the preceding movement by opening in the same remote key and quiet mood. *Recitative*-like musings from cello and first violin

alternate with all four parts echoing chromatic and rhythmic variants of the main motive. The bridging continues in an animated passage that harks back to the textures and rhythms of the *scherzo*. Debussy then launches the finale proper with an agitated theme above shifting open-fifth chords. He recalls passages of all the movements, but in altered form so they seem to evolve rather than reprise. Tempo and textural changes abound, which apparently unsettled some of the early critics. The final exciting coda offers yet another look at the germinal motive.

Debussy optimistically called the work “*Premier quatuor*” as if he expected more to follow. He began a second quartet the following year, primarily to please his friend, composer Ernest Chausson, who had been surprisingly disappointed with the “First.” The two had a falling out, however, and Debussy never returned to the project. The *Premier quatuor* also contributed to the professional animosity between Debussy and Ravel. When Ravel’s Quartet in F appeared in 1902, the parallels with Debussy’s work were obvious—such as the shadowy accompanimental sixteenth-note figures in the first movement and the *pizzicatos* in the *scherzo*—igniting a firestorm in the press about the quartets’ rival virtues. Debussy is said to have written to the younger, harassed composer urging him not to change a note of his work, but this letter has never come to light.

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String Quartet in A minor, Op. 51, no.2 **Johannes Brahms**

Born in Hamburg, May 7, 1833; died in Vienna, April 3, 1897

Brahms apparently wrote about twenty quartets before the Opus 51 Quartets, but his own dissatisfaction caused him to destroy them all. His high standards kept him working and reworking the Opus 51 Quartets for as many as eight years before he considered them worthy of performance and publication. The Joachim Quartet, founded in 1869 by his Hungarian violinist friend Joseph Joachim, gave the premiere of the A minor Quartet on October 18, 1873. Brahms’s biographer Max Kalbeck asserts that not only the first performance but the dedication would have gone to Joachim, except that the two were at odds during this time over plans for a Schumann festival. The dedication went instead to Brahms’s friend Dr. Theodor Billroth, a well-known physician and chamber musician.

Even though Joachim did not receive the dedication, he is more greatly honored by the actual music of the A minor Quartet: Brahms wove into his main theme the notes F–A–E, standing for “*Frei, aber einsam*” (Free, but lonely), which was Joachim’s personal motto. Following Joachim’s lead Brahms had chosen as his own motto F–A–F “*Frei, aber froh*” (Free, but happy), which he also wove into the musical texture of the Quartet, inextricably linking composer and violinist.

Both Opus 51 Quartets begin with sonata-form first movements, but Brahms opted for quite different proportions in each case. The exposition of the present A minor Quartet is more than twice as long as its development and thus much more expansive than the first-movement exposition of its companion C minor Quartet. The shorter development in the A minor first movement is somewhat balanced by the fact that the recapitulation is a varied one, thus in some ways providing a continuation of the thematic development. Brahms indulges in his fondness for parallel thirds and sixths in the lovely second theme. Throughout he shows his love of textures that contrast duple and triple divisions of the beat.

The expressive main theme of the major-mode slow movement displays sophisticated dovetailing and mirroring of motives, which avant-garde composer Arnold Schoenberg greatly admired. The following *marcato* (marked) theme shows Brahms's love of "learned" contrapuntal devices by presenting a canon between first violin and cello, to which the vibrating effect (*tremolo*) of the second violin and viola adds drama. In the sweet theme that contrasts with this dramatic passage, it sounds like Brahms may have paid tribute to the opening of Beethoven's first "Razumovsky" Quartet, Op. 59, no. 1. Brahms cleverly allows his main theme to reappear in the first violin in the warm "wrong" key of F major, before returning to the home key with the melody in the cello.

Apart from its triple meter the *Quasi Minuetto* movement has little to do with the dance form. Drone-like open fifths in the cello hint at a rustic or folk quality, and two lively episodes interrupt the minuet, removing it even a step further from the traditional stately dance. Moreover, when the *Tempo di Minuetto* resumes it is with all the sophistication of Brahms's contrapuntal skill: the first violin and viola play the episode's theme in longer note values in canon, while the second violin and cello play a variant of the *Minuetto* theme also in strict imitation. A more literal return to the *Minuetto* occurs after the second contrapuntal section.

Brahms saved the dance element in this Quartet for the *Finale*, a *rondo* in Hungarian style—another way of honoring Joachim. Of special interest is the way in which the predominantly three-bar phrases of the *rondo* theme return later in four-bar phrases. One would normally consider the former more unusual, yet Brahms's genius creates such natural three-bar phrases that the "regular" four-bar ones at the end seem unusually long. The coda offers an encyclopedia of variations of the same theme: imitation between the cello and first violin, two-note fragments, and freely augmenting the note values. A quick passage in shorter note values features the characteristic dotted rhythm (long-short-long) for viola and cello, and a frenzied rush of eighth-notes brings the work to a brilliant close.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

American String Quartet

Internationally recognized as one of the world's foremost quartets, the American String Quartet marks its 51st season in 2024–25. Critics and colleagues hold the Quartet in high esteem and many of today's leading artists and composers seek out the Quartet for collaborations. The Quartet is also known for its performances of the complete quartets of Beethoven, Schubert, Schoenberg, Bartók, and Mozart. The Quartet's recordings of the complete Mozart string quartets on a matched set of Stradivarius instruments are widely held to set the standard for this repertoire. To celebrate its 35th anniversary, the Quartet recorded an ambitious CD, *Schubert's Echo*, released by NSS Music. The program invites the listener to appreciate the influence of Schubert on two masterworks of early 20th-century Vienna. In addition to quartets by European masters, the American naturally performs quartets by American composers. Their newest release, *American Romantics* (Apple Music, 2018), is a recording of Robert Sirota's *American Pilgrimage*, Dvořák's "American" quartet, and Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. The American also champions contemporary music. The Quartet has commissioned and premiered works by distinguished American composers Claus Adam, Richard Danielpour, Kenneth Fuchs, Tobias Picker, Robert Sirota, and George Tsontakis. The Quartet has recorded on the Albany, CRI, MusicMasters, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, RCA, and Apple Music labels. The Quartet's discography includes works by Adam, Corigliano, Danielpour, Dvořák, Fuchs, Prokofiev, Schoenberg, Sirota, and Tsontakis. The Quartet's innovative programming and creative approach to education has resulted in notable residencies throughout the country. The Quartet continues as artists in residence at Manhattan School of Music (1984–present) and the Aspen Music Festival (1974–present). The ASQ also teaches in Beijing, China, and travels widely abroad. Formed in 1974 when its original members were students at the Juilliard School, the American String Quartet was launched by winning both the Coleman Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Award in the same year.

Peter Winograd, violin

Peter Winograd joined the American String Quartet, Artists in Residence at Manhattan School of Music, in 1990. He gave his first solo public performance at the age of 11, and at age 17 he was accepted as a scholarship student of Dorothy DeLay at the Juilliard School. Recognized early as an exceptionally promising young artist, Winograd was a top prizewinner in the 1988 Naumburg

International Violin Competition. He then made his New York debut to critical acclaim and has since appeared as a guest soloist with numerous orchestras and in recital across the country and abroad, including annual collaborative performances with cellist Andrés Díaz at the Florida Arts Chamber Music Festival. In 2002 Winograd performed the Sibelius Violin Concerto with the Hartford Symphony; his father, Arthur Winograd, was the featured guest conductor. Peter Winograd has been a member of the violin and chamber music faculties of the Manhattan School of Music and the Aspen Music School (where the American is Quartet in Residence) since 1990. Born into a gifted musical family, Winograd began his studies with his parents. His mother was a professional pianist, and his father was the founding cellist of the Juilliard Quartet and a conductor of the Hartford Symphony in Hartford, Connecticut, where Winograd grew up. He holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from Juilliard. His wife, violinist Caterina Szepes, is a regular participant in the Marlboro Festival and a member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. His violin is by Giovanni Maria del Bussetto (Cremona, 1675).

Laurie Carney, violin

A founding member of the American String Quartet, Laurie Carney comes from a prodigious musical family. Her father was a trumpeter and educator, her mother a pianist, and her siblings all violinists. She began her studies at home and at the age of 8 became the youngest violinist to be admitted to the Preparatory Division of the Juilliard School. At 15 she was the youngest to be accepted into Juilliard's College Division. Ms. Carney studied with Dorothy DeLay and received both Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from Juilliard. She has shared the stage with many of the world's leading artists, including Isaac Stern, Yefim Bronfman, Pinchas Zukerman, and Frederica von Stade, and been featured in Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with the Bournemouth Symphony and the Basque (Spain) Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Carney frequently performed duo recitals with Guarneri Quartet violist Michael Tree. She was featured in the New York premiere of Giampaolo Bracali's *Fantasia*. Robert Sirota wrote his Sonata No. 2, *Farewell*, for Ms. Carney in 2013. She recorded it in 2014 along with an earlier work, *Summermusic*, with pianist David Friend on a CD of Sirota's music entitled *Parting the Veil: Works for Violin and Piano* (Albany Records).

Since receiving the Walter W. Naumburg Award in 1974 with the American String Quartet, Ms. Carney has performed across North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Israel, including special projects with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, New York City Ballet, and Mark

Morris Dance Group. The quartet has an extensive discography, ranging from the complete Mozart quartets to the many contemporary works written for them. A member of the faculty of Manhattan School of Music since 1984 and of Aspen Music Festival since 1974, she has held teaching positions at the Mannes College of Music, Peabody Conservatory, the University of Nebraska, and the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. Her frequent master classes have taken her to California, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, and New Mexico. Ms. Carney performs the duo repertory with her husband, cellist William Grubb. Her nonprofessional interests include animal rights and environmental concerns.

Her violin is by Carlo Tononi (Venice, 1720).

Matthias Buchholz, viola

Matthias studied in his hometown Hamburg, in Cincinnati, Detmold, and at the renowned Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Among his teachers were Bruno Giuranna, Michael Tree, Alexander Schneider, and Karen Tuttle.

He won top prizes at the Deutscher Musikwettbewerb Bonn 1978, the Fischoff and the Coleman competition in Los Angeles 1982, as well as the International Viola Competition Budapest 1984.

Since 1976, Buchholz has performed as a soloist and chamber musician in most European countries, in Canada and the U.S.A., as well as in South America, Russia, India, and Asia. He was a member of the Brahms Quartet (Hamburg), the Ridge Quartet (New York), and the Heine Quartet (Cologne). Since 1991 he has performed in numerous concerts and recorded more than 25 recordings with the Linos-Ensemble, who was awarded an ECHO-KLASSIK 2017 for their recording of the Franz Schmidt Quintet.

He was invited to perform at the Marlboro Festival, at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, the Salzburg Festwochen, Rheingau Festival, Library of Congress (Washington D.C.), Tokyo- and Seoul Spring Festival, Hitzacker, Mondsee, Este, Lyon Musicades and Warsaw Spring Festival, where he shared the stage with the Vermeer-, the Petersen-, the Auryn- and Fine Arts Quartet, as well as being inspired by musicians like Benny Goodman, Heinz Holliger, Rainer Kussmaul, Anner Bylsma, Viktor Tretjakov, Christian Polterá und Cecile Licad and members of the Guarneri Quartet.

From 1990-2024 he held a position as Professor for Viola at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz in Cologne and at the HEM Genève 2013-2018. A passionate teacher since very early on, he has given masterclasses in the United States, Korea, China, Japan, and most European countries. His former students are

working today successfully as orchestra members, principal violists, and teachers at major conservatories around the globe.

In September 2024 he joined the American String Quartet as their violist and as part of the quartet's residency at Manhattan School of Music. He is also a member of the teaching faculty at Manhattan School of Music in New York City. Matthias plays on a viola made by Pietro Ferati in Siena from 1785, as well as an anonymous instrument from 1730, presumably made by a Flemish luthier.

Wolfram Koessel, cello

Since his Carnegie Hall debut in 1994, cellist Wolfram Koessel has performed as a chamber musician, recitalist, and soloist throughout the world. *Strad* magazine praised his "exceptionally attractive cello playing." As a soloist he has performed concertos throughout the United States as well as with Japan's Osaka Symphony Orchestra and orchestras in Germany and South America. Cellist of the American String Quartet, Artists in Residence at Manhattan School of Music, he also has appeared often with the New York Metamorphoses Orchestra, which he cofounded in 1994. His collaborations include performances with the legendary tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain, dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, and cellist Yo Yo Ma, among many others. Koessel also appears with a wide range of ensembles, including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Trio+ (a group he formed with violinist Yosuke Kawasaki and pianist Vadim Serebryani), which performs creative and collaborative concerts throughout Japan, the United States, and Canada. Koessel served as music director of the Mark Morris Dance Group from 2004 to 2008 and has toured extensively with the company both nationally and internationally, performing in several performances. In 2018 he travelled with them to Israel performing Bach's Third Cello Suite in several performances. He resides with his wife, pianist and writer J. Mae Barizo, and his daughter in Manhattan.

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