

*To The Orion String Quartet*



We have treasured our relationship  
with you over the years.  
Thank you for all the beautiful music.

With love,  
*The Westchester Chamber Music Society*



Sunday, October 22, 2023  
Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester  
Rye, New York

*The Westchester Chamber Music Society*  
*presents*

THE ORION STRING QUARTET

Daniel & Todd Phillips, *violins*

Steven Tenenbom, *viola*

Timothy Eddy, *cello*



Franz Schubert (1797-1828)  
*String Quartet No. 15 in G Major, Op. 161/D887*  
*Allegro molto moderato*  
*Andante un poco moto*  
*Scherzo: Allegro vivace*  
*Allegro assai*

*Intermission*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)  
*String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Major, Op. 130*  
*with Grosse Fuge, Op. 133*  
*Adagio, ma non troppo—Allegro*  
*Presto*  
*Andante con moto, ma non troppo*  
*Alla danza tedesca. Allegro assai*  
*Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo*  
*Grosse Fuge*  
*Overture*  
*First fugue*  
*Meno mosso e moderato*  
*Interlude and second fugue*  
*Thematic convergence and coda*

*Following the concert, there will be a  
Question & Answer session with the quartet.*

## About the Performers

**The Orion String Quartet**, established in 1987, took its name from the eponymous constellation as a metaphor for the personality each musician brings to the group in its collective pursuit of the highest musical ideals. Violinist brothers Daniel Phillips and Todd Phillips, the violist Steven Tenenbom, and the cellist Timothy Eddy have performed virtually the entire catalog of string quartet literature and contributed to the expansion of the repertoire with over twenty commissions. The quartet has worked with such distinguished musicians as Sir András Schiff, Rudolf Serkin, Isaac Stern, Pinchas Zukerman, and the Beaux Arts Trio, and has collaborated on projects designed to bring chamber music to new audiences, such as their venture with choreographer Bill T. Jones and the Arnie Zane Dance Company.

**Daniel Phillips**, *violin*, enjoys a versatile career as an established chamber musician, solo artist and teacher. Mr. Phillips has performed as soloist with many of the country's leading symphonies and at festivals and seminars worldwide. He has also been serving on the summer faculties of the Banff Centre, Heifetz Institute, and the Colorado College Music Festival. He is a member of the renowned Bach Aria Group, and has toured and recorded with the likes of Gidon Kremer, Kim Kashkashian, and Yo-Yo Ma. Daniel Phillips is Professor of Violin at the Aaron Copland School of Music of Queens College, and on the faculties of the Mannes College of Music and the Bard Conservatory.

**Todd Phillips**, *violin*, has performed as guest soloist with leading orchestras throughout North America, Europe, and Japan. Mr. Phillips has appeared at the Mostly Mozart, Ravinia, Santa Fe, Marlboro and Spoleto Festivals, and with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Chamber Music at the 92nd Street Y, and New York Philomusica. He has made guest appearances as conductor/leader with chamber orchestras worldwide, and collaborated with such renowned artists as Rudolf Serkin, Jaime Laredo, Richard Stoltzman, Peter Serkin and Pinchas Zukerman. Mr. Phillips serves on the violin and chamber music faculties of New York's Mannes College of Music, Rutgers University, Manhattan School of Music, and Bard College Conservatory of Music.

**Steven Tenenbom**, *viola*, has established a distinguished career as a chamber musician, soloist, recitalist and teacher. He has worked with composer Lukas Foss and jazz artist Chick Corea, and appeared as guest artist with such ensembles as the Guarneri and Emerson String Quartets, the Beaux Arts and Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trios, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He has performed as soloist throughout the United States and Japan. His festival credits include Mostly Mozart, Aspen, Ravinia, Marlboro, June Music Festival, Chamber Music Northwest, Music from Angel Fire, and Bravo! Colorado. Mr. Tenenbom is on the faculties of Curtis, Juilliard, Bard, and Mannes.

**Timothy Eddy**, *cello*, has earned distinction as a recitalist, soloist with orchestra, chamber musician, recording artist, and teacher of cello and chamber music. He has performed with numerous

symphonies, and has appeared at the Mostly Mozart, Ravinia, Aspen, Santa Fe, Marlboro, Lockenhaus, Spoleto and Sarasota music festivals. He has won prizes in numerous national and international competitions. Mr. Eddy is currently Professor of Cello at Juilliard and Mannes, and he was frequently a faculty member at the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Workshops at Carnegie Hall. He has recorded a wide range of repertoire from Baroque to avant-garde.



## Program Notes

by Joshua Berrett, Ph.D.

This concert is a truly memorable event. It marks the final appearance in Westchester County by the renowned Orion String Quartet before the group disbands next year. It also features two landmark works that push the genre of the string quartet to extremes, written barely six months apart by two giants of the Austro-German tradition living in Vienna at the same time—two immortals who never met face-to-face during their lifetimes.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

### *String Quartet No. 15 in G Major, Op. 161/D887*

Schubert's *String Quartet No. 15* is his very last. Written in ten miraculous days, June 21-30, 1826, it forms part of a trinity that includes the near-contemporaneous "Rosamunde" and "Death and the Maiden" quartets. But in many respects, it stands on its own as an utterly unique compositional marvel.

Woody Allen movie buffs might be interested to know that portions of the opening *Allegro molto moderato* are included in the soundtrack of his 1989 comedy-drama *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. Certainly, the introduction to this sonata-form movement, an AAB in miniature, is remarkable in its volatility, planting the seeds of much that will grow in the body of the movement. Within the unsettling first minute alone we encounter the following: the subdued sound of a G-major chord which almost instantaneously morphs into the minor as part of a sudden crescendo leading to an explosive G-minor chord marked *double forte*. Of course, shifts from major to minor modes are quintessential Schubert, but rarely as mercurial as heard here. An assertive descending dotted rhythmic idea followed by a hushed two-note iambic motif are then presented. This constitutes the first A. A2 serves as an answer on the dominant minor; that is D minor. B serves as a quiet, very brief transition to the movement proper.

The descending dotted rhythmic idea emerges as the primary theme cushioned by mysterious descending chromatic tremolos. In fact, tremolos abound in this movement, sometimes providing a textural "bed" and elsewhere attached to triplet rhythms, as is the

case with the treatment of the second theme. But even before the arrival of this second theme, much drama plays out with a vaulting iambic motif as we transition to the new key area. This second theme is a halting melody moving only a few steps at a time. But Schubert injects considerable developmental drama into his treatment of this second theme—well before we reach the actual development. The development itself begins with some mysterious, scurrying tremolo triplets, a foil for the *sturm und drang* that ensues. Schubert eventually anticipates his recapitulation with a descending syncopated melodic line for first violin over a dominant pedal. The recapitulation itself begins with an air of quiet mystery. And as musical elements fall into place, it is worth noting that Schubert reverses the order of those opening mercurial shifts in mode, moving this time from minor to major.

The *Andante un poco moto* is a refrain structure falling neatly into five sections plus coda—that is, A1-B1-A2-B2-A3-coda. The movement is centered, more or less around E minor; in other words, ambiguity prevails. The A melody, introduced by the cello, is classic Schubert, with its initial longing, ascending, melodic minor seventh. Think, by the way, of the opening of “Somewhere” from *West Side Story*. Stark contrast comes with the B sections, introduced by an ominous “tramp-tramp” before we are plunged into a nightmare abyss. Dark tremolos and unisons abound together with lightning-flash ascending scales. Prominent too are the periodic ascending minor-third desperate cries played by first violin and viola in octaves. Are they perhaps calling out “Schubert”? For the record, Schubert was stricken with an illness around this time, one never definitively diagnosed, possibly tertiary-stage syphilis. The coda restores a sense of calm, and the movement ends in E major.

The *Scherzo: Allegro vivace* in D major is an example of delightful fleet-footed “one-to-the bar” Mendelssohn-type music. The contrasting *Allegretto* trio is introduced by a cello and first violin duet. Turning to the finale, an *Allegro assai*, we are faced again with ambiguity on multiple levels. Is this a sonata form or a rondo? Then again, the meter of 6/8 and prevailing tarantella rhythm are compromised by recurring syncopations. As for key, despite some uncertainty as to whether we are in the primary key G major or minor, we arrive at the finish in the major after an exhilarating ride.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)  
*String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Major, Op. 130*  
*with Grosse Fuge, Op. 133*

Beethoven had the aristocracy in the palm of his hand. There are names like Count Waldstein, Princes Lichnowsky and Lobkowitz, Countesses Therese and Josephine Brunswick, Archduke Rudolf, Count Razumovsky, and quite a few more. Associating with Beethoven boosted their reputations, while Beethoven, as a freelance composer and performer, depended on them to advance his career. With the approach of his final years, Beethoven's stature was such that he could name his price. This is clear from a letter of November 9, 1822, sent from St. Petersburg by Prince Nicolas

Galitzin, a self-described “passionate amateur of music” and student of the cello. He asks that Beethoven “compose one, two, or three new quartets, for which it would be a pleasure to recompense you fully whatever sum you might name. I would accept the dedication with gratitude.” The quartet trilogy in question refers to the Op. 127, Op. 130 (with the original *Grosse Fuge* as finale) and Op. 132. Incidentally, opus numbers simply indicate order of publication and in no way reflect the *furor poeticus* of the creative process. In fact, it was almost three years before Beethoven was able to complete the Galitzin commission, so preoccupied was he with his *Missa Solemnis*, the Ninth Symphony, the “Diabelli” Variations, and the Bagatelles, Op. 119.

Completed in January 1826, the Op. 130 explores new architectural possibilities. It consists of a deliberately unbalanced succession of six movements—a mix of extremes—the most expansive, the most esoteric, the most earthy, the most vulnerable, and more. The first movement is a sonata form not quite like any other Beethoven created. It presents us with the hesitant and the propulsive, bringing slow and fast tempi together to form one overall thematic group. Passages of dense driving polyphony are juxtaposed with simple unisons or hushed and hesitant phrases. That said, the hallmarks of Beethoven style are present in abundance, particularly those off-beat accents and the masterful use of simple motifs.

What follow are four movements, each of them a distinctive character piece. The *Presto* second movement has a wild quality. Cast in B-flat minor and major, it can come across as half-crazed in its juxtaposition of extremes of dynamics, different meters, and textures. The third movement, *Andante con moto, ma non troppo*, shifts to the tonal universe of D-flat major; it is a delectable intermezzo, neither slow nor fast. The spirit of the German country dance prevails in the fourth movement, an *Allegro assai, Alla danza tedesca* in triple meter. G major and C major help project all that is genial and sunny.

Beethoven bares his soul in the E-flat major *Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo*. The four instruments, and particularly the first violin, are the voices in a heart-rending drama. Beethoven here expands upon a kind of instrumental recitative heard in the closing measures of the funeral march from his “Eroica” Symphony and the finale of his Ninth Symphony. The music reaches the height of intensity two thirds of the way through, with the expressive marking for the first violin of *beklemmt*, meaning oppressed, suffocated, anxious. We are looking into the abyss. Stammering and hesitant, the first violin voices its anguish over an underpinning of agitated triplets in the remote key of C-flat major. This music was reportedly devastating in its impact on Beethoven himself. We have as a reliable witness, the second violinist Karl Holz, a member of the celebrated Ignaz Schuppanzigh quartet that premiered so many of Beethoven’s works. He recalled that the *Cavatina* “cost the composer tears in the writing, and brought out the confession that nothing he had written had so moved him, in fact, that merely to revive it afterwards in his thoughts and feelings brought forth renewed tears.”

Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* has been approached with a certain gingerly respect since it was first heard in March 1826, or else has been denounced as "Armageddon," dismissed as "incomprehensible like Chinese," and "a confusion of Babel." On a related front, opinion remains divided over the question of "amputating" these 741 measures of music from the body of Op. 130. In fact, Beethoven left us with two choices: the Op. 130 can be performed either with the original finale, the *Grosse Fuge*, also known as his Op. 133, or with the substitute finale that he was persuaded by his publisher to provide. Do we settle for a genial contredanse finale or do we instead affirm that in the *Grosse Fuge* all of the preceding five movements of Op. 130 find their resolution? It is worth noting that a close look at the trajectory of Beethoven's output reveals a discernible pattern with regard to finales. There are at least five mighty masterpieces predating the Op. 130 where we find expansive, highly complex finales—music dense with polyphony and a whole lot more. They are the "Eroica" Symphony, Op. 55; the "Razumovsky" Quartet, Op. 59, No. 3; the "*Hammerklavier*" Piano Sonata, Op. 106; the Op. 110 Piano Sonata; and the Ninth Symphony, Op. 125.

The original version for string quartet—there is also a piano version Beethoven made—is filled with many challenges for the performer. There are tricky cross-rhythms, awkward leaps, ongoing debates about some of the notation itself. As for the work's architecture, there is disagreement as well. But, for present purposes and in broad outline, we can think of it as made up of five sections as follows: *Overture*; *First fugue*; *Meno mosso moderato*; *Interlude and second fugue*; *Thematic convergence and coda*.

*Overture* is like a preview of coming attractions. There is a bold opening unison statement presenting the primary unifying theme of the fugues. In the key of G major, it is an eight-note theme that climbs chromatically upward while also serving as a link with the preceding movement, the *Cavatina*, also in G major. At various points in the course of the work, this theme is also subjected to such treatments as diminution (smaller note values in double time), augmentation (larger note values slowing it down to half the speed), and retrograde (versions of it played backwards). Secondary details hard to miss are the huge leaps of tenths and twelfths, a relaxing melody in even sixteenth notes, and some ferocious trills.

Now, almost two hundred years after it was written, Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* has yet to become part of the standard quartet repertoire. Its demands on both performer and listener are considerable. By the same token, a cult has developed around it. Some have responded to its gaunt rough-edged quality, hearing it as a precursor of atonality or the sounds heard in the *Salome* of Richard Strauss. Others, like the pianist Glenn Gould, have said: "For me, the *Grosse Fuge* is not only the greatest work Beethoven ever wrote but just about the most astonishing piece in musical literature." Igor Stravinsky is on record as having said: "The Great Fugue . . . now seems to me the most perfect miracle in music. It is also the most absolutely contemporary piece of music

I know, and contemporary forever. . . . I love it beyond everything.”

Mark Steinberg, first violinist of the Brentano String Quartet, has put it most eloquently: “It is one of the great artistic testaments to the human capacity for meaning in the face of the threat of chaos. Abiding faith in the relevance of visionary struggle in our lives powerfully informs the structure and character of the music.”

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## Coming Up



November 5, 2023

### **The Alexander String Quartet**

Zakarias Grafilo, *violin*

Yuna Lee, *violin*

David Samuel, *viola*

Sandy Wilson, *cello*

The Alexander plans to perform

Haydn: *Quartet in C Major, No. 3, Op. 33, “The Bird”*

Ravel: *Quartet in F Major*

Shostakovich: *Quartet in A Major, No. 2, Op. 68*



December 3, 2023

### **Frisson Winds**

March 10, 2024

### **The American Brass Quintet**

April 21, 2024

### **The Momenta Quartet**





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