

Sunday | November 2 | 3pm  
Groton Music Center's Meadow Hall

## **Viano Quartet**

**Lucy Wang** violin

**Hao Zhou** violin

**Aiden Kane** viola

**Tate Zawadiuk** violoncello

**Joseph Haydn** String Quartet in D Major, Op. 76, no. 5

Allegretto

Largo cantabile e mesto

Minuet – Trio

Finale. Presto

**Felix Mendelssohn** String Quartet No. 3 in D Major, Op. 44, no. 1

Molto allegro vivace

Menuetto. Un poco Allegretto

Andante espressivo ma con moto

Presto con brio 988

## **INTERMISSION**

**Anton Webern** Langsamer Satz

**Dmitri Shostakovich**

**String Quartet No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 117**

Moderato con moto

Adagio

Allegretto

Adagio

Allegro

This afternoon's program will run approximately two hours, including intermission.

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## String Quartet in D Major, Op. 76, no. 5

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Haydn's devotion to his students—including Mozart and, briefly, Beethoven—earned him the affectionate nickname “Papa.” This sobriquet, with its fecund connotations, easily extends to Haydn's compositional output. With more than 100 symphonies and 68 quartets to his name (nearly triple the amount composed by Mozart or Beethoven), the informal titles “Father of the Symphony” and “Father of the String Quartet” seem quite apt. His quartets expanded the expressive possibilities of the genre, giving them a greater air of sophistication and seriousness. By the time he had published the six quartets of Opus 76, Viennese audiences viewed the quartet as a prestigious artform where composers could voice their most serious ideas.

Haydn was sixty-four when he began the Opus 76 quartets (his final completed set). Their composition followed his return to Vienna from London, his second triumphant visit to the esteemed music capital. Historian Charles Burney wrote, “the sight of that renowned composer so electrified the audience, as to excite an attention and a pleasure superior to any that had ever been caused by instrumental music in England.” Opus 76 was published in 1800, the same year Beethoven completed his first set of quartets.

The quartet opens with a graceful theme similar to “With verdure clad,” an aria from his oratorio *The Creation*. Rather than traditional tripartite sonata form, the movement's structure is built upon variations of this theme. A stormy interlude replete with dazzling violin scales and fierce cello accompaniment briefly interrupts the proceedings. Following a return of the opening material and a dramatic pause, the movement concludes with a driving coda.

Many of Haydn's quartets and symphonies have taken on nicknames related to a specific element of the piece (famous examples include the Symphony No. 45, nicknamed “Farewell” for the anticlimactic coda that sees the players file out one at a time; Symphony No. 94, whose sudden blaring chord in the slow movement earned it the sobriquet “Surprise”; and the “Sunrise” Quartet of Opus 76). This quartet became known as the “Largo” for its slow second movement, the heart of the piece. Marked *Cantabile e mesto* (“songlike and sad”), its lyrical melody eventually winds its way into dark harmonic waters. Viola and cello initiate the gloomy central section, accompanied by an insistent heartbeat pulse. The movement concludes with a return of the contemplative opening theme.

The pastoral mood of the opening returns in the brief third movement, while the rising and falling contour of the minuet theme echoes the opening of the Largo. Chirping violins round out the elegant minuet. An ensuing minor-key trio with rumbling cello suggests the threat of a distant thunderstorm.

The quartet concludes with an unrestrained rustic dance. Haydn's use of canon evokes the Renaissance *caccia* (Italian for "hunt") while crisp staccati evoke hunting horns. The movement provides a breathless bravura showpiece for the quartet that wouldn't feel out of place in a raucous tavern.

## **String Quartet in D Major, Op. 44, no. 1**

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

The trio of Opus 44 quartets sprang from a period of idyllic happiness for Mendelssohn. He had recently become music director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Under his direction, the orchestra became one of Europe's most prestigious, and Mendelssohn became Germany's preeminent musician. In the spring of 1837, he and his wife Cécile were wed; the following year they welcomed their first child, Karl. Mendelssohn completed the set of quartets later that year. Though the D-major quartet, Mendelssohn's favorite of the trio, is first in the set, it was the last to be finished. The set is dedicated to Oscar I, who was then Crown Prince of Sweden (his son, Oscar II, would become immortalized as the face of the canned fish company which bears his name).

The first movement is irrepressibly ebullient, opening with a soaring principal theme and excitedly buzzing tremolos. The mood is one of uncontrollable happiness, calling to mind an entry from Mendelssohn's diary. "It is too lovely and delightful to see a wee little fellow like that, who has brought his mother's blue eyes and snub nose into the world with him, and knows her so well that he laughs whenever she comes into the room," he wrote two months after Karl's birth. "They both look so happy—I don't know what to do with myself for joy." Even the wistful minor-key episodes are too brief to sour the mood. Following a sparsely textured canon of rising and falling dotted melodies, the exuberant opening material returns, carrying the movement to a jubilant conclusion.

To provide contrast from the lively opening, Mendelssohn wrote a placid and lilting minuet for the second movement rather than the scherzo that had become commonplace by the 1830s. The minor-key trio moves with a restless triplet melody initiated by the first violin. The minuet material returns in the closing section, undisturbed save for a brief returning of the roving triplets in the final bars.

Plucked strings from the viola and cello, as well as a continuous stream of staccato notes from the second violin, imbue the tender third movement with buoyancy. The first violin's restrained, *cantabile* melody, balanced in symmetrical phrases, avoids oversentimentality. A miniature cadenza and long, soft trill initiate a coda which ends in an almost defeated whisper.

Mendelssohn first encountered the *saltarello*, an Italian folk dance, on his Grand Tour of Europe. He borrowed its lively rhythms for the finale of his “Italian” Symphony, telling his sister Fanny, “It will be the jolliest piece I have ever done.” *Saltarello* rhythms provide the same giddy energy to the finale of the quartet. Slow, stately interludes provide moments of respite, but unrestrained mirth ultimately carries the day.

### ***Langsamer Satz***

Anton Webern (1883-1945)

Anton Webern was a twenty-year-old doctoral student when he entered one of the most significant relationships of his life. Following an argument with a potential composition teacher, he sought lessons with a little-known professor named Arnold Schoenberg. Likely Schoenberg’s first private pupil, Webern became one of his most devoted disciples and a core member, along with Alban Berg, of what came to be called the Second Viennese School. Schoenberg and his students pushed beyond the bounds of tonal music, writing dissonant and thorny atonal works and devising a new method of twelve-tone composition.

*Langsamer Satz* (“Slow movement”), a single movement for string quartet completed in June 1905, predates these post-tonal explorations. Webern likely composed the piece as an assignment from Schoenberg; though he intended to write a multi-movement work, he abandoned the project after one movement. It was unpublished in his lifetime and nearly forgotten until a number of manuscripts, including *Langsamer Satz*, were discovered in an attic in a town just outside Vienna.

The movement is dedicated to Webern’s future wife Wilhelmine. While it lacks a clear program, it was possibly inspired by their spring hikes among the rivers and mountains of Austria. Webern’s diary reads, “We wandered ... The forest symphony resounded. ... A walk in the moonlight on flowery meadows—Then the night—‘what the night gave to me, will long make me tremble.’—Two souls had wed.” Throughout the score, the players are given the instructions “warm,” “invigorating,” and “bright,” and the mood they cast upon Webern’s lush, yearning melodies is one of falling in love on a sunny afternoon.

Following the presentation of the main theme by the first violin, the second violin and viola play a tender duet in counterpoint. A melody replete with lilting triplets, at first a tentative whisper of affection, crescendos into a full-throated roar, then recedes in muted caution. After a return of the main theme and a cello-violita duet, the music swells to a rapturous climax. The work ends in quiet bliss as a violin melody soars overhead.

## String Quartet No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 117

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

The decade-long rule of Communist Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev brought with it a wave of de-Stalinization known as the “Thaw.” Though Khrushchev promised an end to Stalin’s iron-fisted rule, artists continued to feel the icy sting of Soviet repression. In 1960, after years of quiet refusal, Shostakovich finally joined the Communist Party. Whether he joined willingly or under duress is unclear (his son suggested he was blackmailed), but the decision affected him deeply. A close friend alleged that he even threatened to commit suicide.

Shostakovich finished the first version of his Ninth Quartet a year later. Dissatisfied, he burnt it on the stove. A second attempt yielded only 250 bars of music. Finally, in 1964 he completed a satisfactory version and dedicated it to his young wife Irina, an editor whom he had married two years earlier.

All five movements of the quartet are played without pause. The Seventh and Eighth Quartets have the same layout, the only such occasion in any genre in Shostakovich’s output. Despite its *tranquillo* marking, the first movement is far from peaceful. Cello and viola hold a steady note, but the first violin veers off key while the second teeters between major and minor. This slinking oscillation pervades the movement with disquiet. A plucked, sarcastic second theme offers little respite. Following high, raspy repetitions of a third theme from the violin, a sustained viola note leads directly into the *Adagio*.

Soviet composer Alfred Schnittke spoke of a “philosophical lyricism” in Shostakovich’s later works. Such lyricism manifests in the lament which opens the second movement. The first violin departs from this chorale with a chromatic, nearly atonal melody, a reflection of Shostakovich’s growing fascination with twelve-tone serialism despite Party disapproval. As the other instruments drop out, the first violin intones a staccato motif that leads into the third movement.

Most of Shostakovich’s quartets contain a prominent muted passage; here the strings are muted for much of the third movement, a sardonic scherzo. The rhythms of this madcap gallop hint at Rossini’s *William Tell* overture (years later, he quoted the theme in his Fifteenth Symphony). Viola and cello play in unison, creating a powerful droning effect. A tune played high in the first violin evokes a lone whistler among a raucous crowd.

The obsessive oscillation of the first movement and the chorale textures of the second reappear in the brief and somber fourth. Harsh, aggressive *pizzicato* notes migrate from the scherzo. As the lower instruments play clashing drones, the first violin intones a soaring atonal line. In the final bars the first violin plummets, taking up the oscillating motif once more.

By far the longest section of the quartet, the finale recaps the preceding movements. In its first of five sections, melodies from the first movement angrily return. An unsettling bacchanalian dance follows; here viola and cello play an incessant short-short-long rhythm in unison. After a return of the angry opening material, the music builds to a frenzy then grinds to a halt. The cello presents a spiky soliloquy over hushed tremolos, yet this moment of reflection is interrupted by the scherzo's staccato polka tune. The movement concludes with a violent triple-*forte* climax and a last repeat of the high-flying melody which closed the first movement.

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## Viano Quartet

Praised for their “virtuosity, visceral expression, and rare unity of intention” (*Boston Globe*), the Viano Quartet has quickly soared to international acclaim as one of the most dynamic and in-demand string quartets of their generation. Winners of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2025, the ensemble has captivated audiences worldwide ever since they were awarded First Prize at the 13th Banff International String Quartet Competition, with appearances at renowned venues such as New York’s Lincoln Center, Berlin’s Konzerthaus, Toronto’s Koerner Hall, Hong Kong’s City Hall, and London’s Wigmore Hall. The Viano Quartet are Bowers Program Artists at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center from 2024-2027.

Highlights of the Viano Quartet’s 2025/26 season include debut performances at London’s Southbank Centre, the Frick Collection in New York, Dublin’s National Concert Hall, Coast Live Music, Friends of Chamber Music Kansas City, Apex Concerts, the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, the Fortas Series at the Kennedy Center, Premiere Performances HK, and a mainstage full recital debut at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, in addition to today’s Celebrity Series of Boston debut. The quartet also makes return appearances at Stanford Live, Forte Chamber Music, the Beaches Fine Arts Series, the Buffalo Chamber Music Society’s Slee Series (for the second half of their Beethoven cycle), Chamber Music Albuquerque, and the Sanibel Music Festival. The quartet looks forward to visiting residencies this season at Stanford University through the St. Lawrence Legacy Series, the University of Victoria, Music in the Morning in Vancouver, and the Auditorium Chamber Music Series at the University of Idaho. This season also features exciting collaborations with mandolinist Avi Avital, pianist Sir Stephen Hough, pianist Gilbert Kalish, clarinetist Anthony McGill, guitarist Miloš Karadaglić, and singer-songwriter Vienna Teng.

Equally committed to both beloved masterworks and contemporary repertoire, the Viano Quartet actively collaborates with today's leading composers, including Sir Stephen Hough, Kevin Lau, Chris Rogerson, and Caroline Shaw. They are set to premiere a newly written string quartet by Indian American composer Reena Esmail in Summer 2026.

The quartet's recent discography highlights the ensemble's range across both traditional and modern repertoire. Their first full-length album, *Voyager*, was newly released in summer 2025 with Apple Music/Platoon Records. Inspired by humankind's enduring spirit of exploration that connects music and people across vast boundaries, the album features Beethoven's Op. 130 alongside Alistair Coleman's *Moonshot*. Their debut EP, *Portraits*, was released in 2023 as one of the first albums to be launched on the Curtis Studio label, featuring works by Schubert, Florence Price, Tchaikovsky, and Ginastera.

Passionate about sharing their love for chamber music with the next generation of musicians, the quartet has worked with some of the most talented young artists at the world's leading universities and music institutions, including Northwestern University, Music@Menlo Chamber Music Institute, the Colburn Academy, and Duke University. They have also collaborated with many of the world's finest artists, including Emanuel Ax, Inon Barnatan, Fleur Barron, Mahan Esfahani, Marc-André Hamelin, James Ehnes, Bridget Kibbey, Paul Neubauer, David Shifrin, and Pinchas Zukerman.

The Viano Quartet was formed in Los Angeles at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in 2015. Each member of the quartet is grateful for the unwavering support from their mentors at the Curtis Institute and Colburn Conservatory, including members of the Dover, Guarneri, and Tokyo string quartets.

"Viano" is a portmanteau that symbolizes how the four individual instruments of a string quartet—each beginning with the letter "v"—work harmoniously as one, like a piano, creating a unified instrument called the "Viano."

### **From the Celebrity Series of Boston archives...**

The Celebrity Series of Boston presents the Viano Quartet for the first time today.