



Saturday | April 22 | 8pm
NEC's Jordan Hall

Doric String Quartet

Alex Redington violin

Ying Xue violin

Hélène Clément viola

John Myerscough cello

Benjamin Grosvenor piano

Beethoven

String Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95 “Serioso”
Allegro con brio
Allegretto ma non troppo
Allegro assai vivace ma serioso
Larghetto espressivo - Allegretto agitato

Haydn

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 50, no. 6 “The Frog”
Allegro
Poco adagio
Minuet. Allegretto - Trio
Finale. Allegro con spirito

INTERMISSION

Bridge

Piano Quintet in D minor, H. 49
Adagio - Allegro moderato
Adagio ma non troppo - Allegro con brio -
Adagio ma non troppo
Allegro energico

This evening's program will run approximately 90 minutes, including intermission.

Doric String Quartet and Benjamin Grosvenor appear by arrangement with
Arts Management Group, Inc., New York, NY

An Aaron Richmond Recital

Endowed by Nancy Richmond Winsten and the late Dr. Joseph Winsten

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

String Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95 “Serioso”

Ever since Haydn refined the string quartet as a genre, it has been a vessel for experimentation. Beethoven, in writing his 11th string quartet, “Serioso,” took full advantage of this tradition. Technically written during his middle period, the quartet features much of what characterizes his late period works: the piece interrogates the listener, placing the burden of intelligibility firmly in their hands. In fact, Beethoven, who experimented with his string quartets more than any other composer of the Classical era, felt audiences wouldn’t be ready to hear this quartet. It was “never to be performed in public,” he wrote in one letter in 1816, a telling observation given that Beethoven composed the quartet in 1810. Its challenge to the listener is clear, especially to those used to standard early 19th-century music.

The first movement, marked by Beethoven’s trademark suddenness throughout, is the thesis statement for the entire piece, marking its ambition to drastically compress what is expected in a string quartet. The remarkably short movement shifts between intense unisons and sweetly lyrical passages without much transition. Though in sonata form, the exposition is not repeated, the development section is so short that every change feels abrupt, and the recapitulation is a frantic restatement that is unceremoniously severed before a coda that leaves the listener with the feeling that more should have been written.

Although the first movement feels like a tangled ball of circuitous themes, it is anchored by a simple four-note motif that most of its material springs from: the D-flat / C / D / E grouping that first appears as four staccato notes concluding the first phrase of the piece. These four notes also inform the material of the more consistently lyrical second movement, providing a sense of long form continuity after a shocking start. In relation to the preceding movement, the *Allegretto* feels like a resting place, but the densely textured fugue at the center again demands the listener’s attention. Lyricism returns toward the end of the movement, but just as the music feels it has resolved, a dissonant chord unsettles the piece, pushing it toward a moment of transition.

Despite multiple extended lyrical breaks from intensity, the final two movements are as fervent as the first. Each, but especially the final movement, firmly emphasizes that sudden contrast is the primary subject that Beethoven is exploring. As the third movement transitions from its yo-yo-ing, but comparatively regular, *Scherzo-Trio* form, a winding, darkly alluring *larghetto* begins the finale, only to suddenly spiral into an intense triple meter dance, marked *Allegretto Agitato*. Just as the close of the movement seems clear and predictable, the *Agitato* slows to a halt and, in the most sudden shift of the piece, transitions to an almost comically playful *Allegro* in F major. The 30-second coda, in stark contrast to the rest of the work, shades the entire piece in a veil of irony. The listener must now think back on what they have heard and reconsider the entire quartet from a new perspective.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
String Quartet in D Major, Op. 50, no. 6 “The Frog”

Franz Joseph Haydn was a composer who, in the face of newness, could reinvent his style. Although he was always an adventurous and formidable talent, Haydn's exposure to new compositional methods that the young Mozart exemplified pushed him to new depths of exploration. Haydn was in his mid-50s when he composed his Op. 50 quartets in Prussia, but the collection of pieces, especially his D-major quartet, “The Frog,” are more experimental than much of what he wrote in his 20s.

Haydn's inventiveness is on display from the start. The expectation for a quartet in D major would be for it to start on a D-major chord. Here, Haydn begins with solo violin on an E, setting off a cadence that ends in D major only in the fourth bar. The D in the first violin is held, marking both the end of the first phrase and the beginning of the second. The form of these phrases sets a precedent for the rest of the movement, where several uneven phrases and deceptive resolutions mark transitions.

Haydn imbues the quartet with more freshness by varying which instruments carry the burden of virtuosity. Whereas in many of his early quartets Haydn relegates second violin, viola, and cello to mere accompaniment, here intricate passages are passed between instruments freely. The second and third movements are especially expressive of this. As phrases end in the *Poco Adagio*, the cello will rise with an arpeggio to take command or the viola will come forward to emphasize an inner voice. In the minuet, the melodic content drifts, and the shifting roles of the instruments suggest a casual conversation where time is not important.

The final movement most cogently combines all radical aspects of the quartet. The infrastructure established in the first movement where phrases end and begin suddenly and simultaneously is present here, as is the shifting texture that passes intricate passages between instruments. The movement is what gives the piece its nickname, since the violin *bariolage* passages are reminiscent of a rabbit. (*Bariolage* is a bowing technique involving quick alternation between strings.) Haydn's skill for rendering complexity intelligible is expertly on display here. While the movement is stuffed with complex contrapuntal and formal arrangements, the overwhelming mood here is playfulness. This is punctuated by a surprise ending, arriving not triumphantly to match what has come before, but with a descending arpeggio murmured as a sigh, a brief summary of the wayward journey Haydn has led from the start.

Frank Bridge (1879-1941)
Piano Quintet in D minor, H. 49

Frank Bridge was a composer of impressive breadth and imagination. Over the course of his life, his compositional style transformed drastically, from romanticism in his early and mid career to an intense, expressive form of modernism in his late career. His stylistic evolution is arguably one of the more fascinating trajectories in modern classical music, and his contribution to the genre is still undervalued.

Bridge's early romantic aesthetic is on clear display in the Piano Quintet in D minor. The style is lush, with influences from French composers like Fauré and Franck and from mature Brahms, but from its first utterance, the quintet feels unsettled. The abstract first phrase creeps slowly upward before the piano interjects with a heavily accented low register octave on the note D. It is a shocking introduction, but Bridge soon reveals that this disembodied line has a place as the first part of a dramatic melody in minor. After establishing the tonal center with the piano, the melody takes over the movement. It is a long melody with a long, tension-inducing rise that suddenly releases, quickly falling as it is passed between instruments. Bridge introduces one more melody in major later in the movement, and it is solely these two melodies that drive its development.

The second and third movements are children of the extensive first movement, both as much washed through with melodic material that dictates their form. The second movement introduces a single new melody (incidentally reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin's "Smile") that forms the spine of the form. A central *Allegro* that splits the *Adagio* was once a separate movement that Bridge condensed for brevity, and it imbues the piece with a scintillating rush where it might end up feeling stale. It also introduces new developmental material that the last movement weaves between other reoccurring themes from throughout the piece. This finale is essentially a summary paragraph of what has come before, but the summary is jumbled. Its themes, borrowed from the rest of the piece, feel as if they are competing for dominance. They instead all serve to further the objective of the piece, energetically driving the music to its grand conclusion, as all instruments loudly play a D, the same note that the piano shocked with at the very start.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Firmly established as one of the leading quartets of its generation, the **Doric String Quartet** receives enthusiastic responses from audiences and critics across the globe. With repertoire ranging from Haydn through to Bartók, Adès and Brett Dean, the Quartet's schedule takes them to the leading concert halls around the world including Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berlin Konzerthaus, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Stockholm Concert Hall, the Louvre, Carnegie Hall, and Kioi Hall Tokyo as well as regular performances at Wigmore Hall in London.

Highlights of the 2022/23 season see the Dorics performing at important European venues including Hamburg Laeiszhalle, De Singel, De Bijloke, and Tivoli Vrendenburg as well as making three visits to Wigmore Hall across the season. Collaborations include performances in Belgium and the Netherlands with Cuarteto Quiroga, as well as revisiting their partnership with cellist Pieter Wispelwey. The Quartet undertakes its annual North American tour, which this year features performances in Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco alongside Benjamin Grosvenor. Further afield, the Quartet returns to Japan for a tour including performances in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and Yokohama.

Since 2010 the Doric Quartet has recorded exclusively for Chandos Records. The Quartet's most recent release, the second installment of their Mendelssohn String Quartet cycle, was awarded Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and Chamber Choice in *BBC Music* magazine. 2019 saw the release of the Doric's benchmark recording of the complete Britten String Quartets. Future recording plans include the complete Beethoven String Quartet cycle as well as works by Berg and Webern.

Formed in 1998 the Doric String Quartet won first prize at the 2008 Osaka International Chamber Music Competition and 2nd prize at the Premio Paolo Borciani International String Quartet Competition. In 2015, the Quartet was appointed as Teaching Quartet in Association at the Royal Academy of Music in London and from 2018 the Quartet took over the artistic directorship of the Mendelssohn on Mull Festival in the Scottish Isles.

The Quartet's violist H el ene Cl ement plays a viola by Guissani from 1843, generously on loan from Britten-Pears Arts and previously owned by Frank Bridge and Benjamin Britten.

British pianist **Benjamin Grosvenor** is internationally recognized for his sonorous lyricism and understated brilliance at the keyboard. His virtuosic interpretations are underpinned by a unique balance of technical mastery and intense musicality. Grosvenor has been heralded one of the most important pianists to emerge from the UK in several decades.

His 22/23 season begins with Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 with RSO Wien conducted by Marin Alsop at the BBC Proms. He is 'Artist in Focus' at the Sage Gateshead, and performs three projects across the season with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Other concerto highlights of the 22/23 season include touring with the London Philharmonic and their Chief Conductor Edward Gardner, Orchestra of St Luke's at Carnegie Hall, Auckland Philharmonia, Prague Radio, Bern, San Diego and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras, and Hallé Orchestra.

In 2011 Benjamin signed to Decca Classics, becoming the youngest British musician ever, and the first British pianist in almost 60 years, to sign to the label. Released in 2020, his second concerto album featuring Chopin's piano concerti, recorded with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under the baton of Elim Chan, received both the *Gramophone* Concerto Award and a Diapason d'Or de L'Année. His renewal of the Decca partnership in 2021 coincided with the release of Benjamin's latest album *Liszt*, centered around the composer's Sonata in B minor, which was awarded 'Chocs de l'année' and Prix de Caecilia.

Grosvenor has received *Gramophone's* 'Young Artist of the Year,' a Classical Brit Critics' Award, UK Critics' Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent and a Diapason d'Or Jeune Talent Award. He has been featured in two BBC television documentaries, BBC Breakfast, Front Row, as well as on CNN's 'Human to Hero' series. In 2016, he became the inaugural recipient of the Ronnie and Lawrence Ackman Classical Piano Prize with the New York Philharmonic.

He studied at the Royal Academy of Music where he graduated in 2012 with the 'Queen's Commendation for Excellence' and in 2016 was awarded a RAM Fellowship. Benjamin is an Ambassador of Music Masters, a charity dedicated to making music education accessible to all children regardless of their background, championing diversity and inclusion.

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Béla Fleck, Edgar Meyer & Zakir Hussain

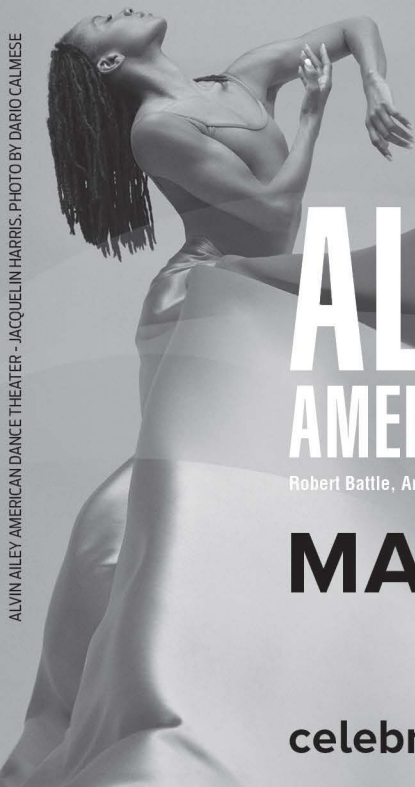

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