



Candlelight Concert Society Presents

QUATUOR VAN KUIJK STRING QUARTET

Nicolas Van Kuijk, violin
Sylvain Favre-Bulle, violin

Emmanuel François, viola
Anthony Kondo, cello

Saturday, March 23, 2024, 7:30 pm
Smith Theatre, Horowitz Visual and Performing Arts Center
Howard Community College

*This performance is co-sponsored by Phil & Linda Press
and Steve & Sue Sternheimer*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Op. 131

- I. Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo
- II. Allegro molto vivace
- III. Allegro moderato — Adagio
- IV. Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile — Più mosso —
Andante moderato e lusinghiero — Adagio — Allegretto —
Adagio, ma non troppo e semplice — Allegretto
- V. Presto
- VI. Adagio quasi un poco andante
- VII. Allegro

INTERMISSION

FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963), arr. JEAN-CHRISTOPHE MASSON

Selected Songs

C	<i>Fancy</i>
<i>Fêtes galantes</i>	<i>Fleurs</i>
<i>Hôtel</i>	<i>Les chemins de l'amour</i>
<i>Violin</i>	

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

String Quartet No. 6 in F minor, Op. 80

- I. Allegro vivace assai
- II. Allegro assai
- III. Adagio
- IV. Finale: Allegro molto

Quatuor Van Kuijk appears by arrangement with Avanti Arts | avantiarts.com,
quatuorvankuijk.com

Flowers in memory of David Peter Chadwick

PROGRAM NOTES

QUARTET NO. 14 IN C-SHARP MINOR, OP. 131 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



After completing his Ninth Symphony and the Missa Solemnis, **Ludwig van Beethoven** withdrew into the more intimate realm of chamber music, concentrating almost exclusively on the string quartet in the last two years of his life. Beethoven's music for strings is, of course,

dominated by the string quartets—and the quartets themselves are considered by many listeners to be dominated by the five late quartets. Of these, the Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Op. 131, is the penultimate in order of composition, composed in 1825-6 and published in 1827. At this point there were no commissions for the remaining string quartets, so biographer Alexander Thayer was probably correct when he wrote of Op. 131: “[...] we must regard it [...] as having originated solely as the result of inner compulsion, the unconquerable need to create.” Of the five late quartets, this is the one Beethoven considered his best.

The quartet is in seven parts, opening uncharacteristically with a slow movement, an approach Beethoven had not employed since composing the Moonlight Sonata (also in C-sharp) 25 years earlier. The quartet's minor key prompted critic Joseph Kerman to comment: “[...] in no other areas are the dark passions of the minor mode explored so deeply and variously.”

This quartet has been described as the most closely integrated of all Beethoven's large compositions. The first-movement fugue sets forth the basic material which will be worked out later on. The interior movements include an Allegro of almost 200 bars, a substantial set of variations, and a *scherzo*, linked by shorter transitional sections. The final movement returns to the home key and establishes an unmistakable thematic connection with the first movement. Beethoven's decision to integrate and unify the work in this manner was a happy afterthought. The thematic material he had originally planned for the Op.

131 finale later appears in the third movement of Op. 135, Beethoven's last quartet.

Op. 131 was dedicated to Field Marshal Joseph von Stutterheim in gratitude for accepting Beethoven's nephew Karl into his regiment. It is possible that the quartet was performed privately soon after publication, but it did not receive its first public performance until 1835, eight years after Beethoven's death.

Note by James Cannon

SELECTED SONGS

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)



Born in Paris in 1899, **Francis Poulenc** was mostly a self-taught composer. That said, his work and talent helped him make a name for himself in the musical world as part of Les Six, a group of promising French composers. Humor and wit are defining features

in many of his compositions, as well as rich, 20th-century harmonies.

Poulenc's songs, of which exist more than 100, are admired most for their lyricism and clever composition. The first two in this program, *C* and *Fêtes galantes*, are sometimes called Poulenc's war songs, due to their content and publication in the height of World War II. The title “*C*” refers to *Les Ponts de Cé* (The Bridges of Cé), a site of many decisive and bloody battles across history. But where *C* is nostalgic and haunting, *Fêtes galantes* is wild and hysteric, conveying the scene of destruction and chaos with the instruction to perform the melody “incredibly fast.”

Next in this set is *Hôtel*, the ultimate song of laziness and contentment. The “calm and lazy” marking on the score, coupled with the song's original text, paints a smoky hotel in Paris, where the occupant sees no reason to do anything beyond smoking in their room. This mature image contrasts the set's sweet and simple next entry, *Fancy*. As Poulenc's only song in English, *Fancy* adapts a text from Shakespeare and only exists because Benjamin Britten (whom Poulenc greatly admired) and Poulenc were asked to contribute to the same collection of children's songs.

The set ends where it began, with two songs Poulenc wrote during World War II. Of *Fleurs*, Poulenc said: “I believe that there is in this song a melancholy so irremediable that the listener will assign to it, after the first bars, its role of coda. It must be sung humbly, its lyricism coming within.” *Les chemins de l’amour* (Paths of Love) carries a similar sense of melancholy, but also a gentle, uplifting waltz. Originally written as incidental music for a play, *Les chemins de l’amour* was premiered by Yvonne Printemps, one of Paris’s famous night club singers.

Note by Mira Fu-En Huang

QUARTET NO. 6 IN F MINOR, OP. 80

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)



Felix Mendelssohn’s String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80 dates from his last year, 1847. He attempted to compose an additional quartet but died before writing the final two movements, so the Op. 80 quartet is his last completed work.

As the scion of a well-to-do Berlin family, Mendelssohn could easily have lived a life of leisure, but chose to lead a busy musical life instead. He organized and conducted premiere performances of Schubert and Schumann symphonies, as well as symphonies of his own. He arranged public performances of the long-neglected Bach choral works and promoted the careers of Jenny Lind and other performing artists of the period. On his frequent trips to England, he revived the tradition of guest conducting, which had been initiated by Haydn more than 40 years earlier.

In May 1847, Mendelssohn learned of the sudden death of his beloved sister Fanny at the age of 41. Inconsolable, he canceled his remaining conducting engagements and left with his family for Switzerland. The only substantial work he produced there was the String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80. It expresses a wide span of emotions, ranging from melancholy to rage, each of its four movements casting a slightly different light on the depth of the composer’s grief at the loss of his sister.

The first movement, *Allegro vivace assai*, begins with an agitated main theme which asserts itself again and again. Its turbulent passages and jagged melodic lines produce an intensity that is sustained throughout the movement. In his previous string quartet, written in 1838, Mendelssohn followed his first movement with the light and delicate tracery of a *scherzo*, a musical form in which he excelled. The *Allegro* movement of this quartet, relentlessly serious and sardonic in tone, offers no such respite.

The third movement, the most personal part of the quartet, is an elegiac *Adagio* expressing the feelings of anguish, despair, and resignation that accompany profound grief. In the final movement, *Finale: Allegro molto*, Mendelssohn returns to the angry and aggressive style of the opening movement, offering no hint of solace or acceptance of death.

Note by James Cannon

Please...

- In the event of an emergency, note at least two exits, especially your nearest exit, which might be behind you. Walk, do not run, and calmly evacuate the concert hall.
- Turn off cell phones, pagers, and watch alarms.
- Do not use cameras or electronic recording devices during Candlelight Concert productions.
- Unwrap cough drops or mints before the concert begins.

TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

QUATUOR VAN KUIJK STRING QUARTET



“Style, energy, and a sense of risk. These four young Frenchmen [make] the music smile.”

The Guardian

Quatuor Van Kuijk is an established international presence and has been invited to perform at the Wigmore Hall, London; Philharmonie de Paris, Auditorium du Louvre, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Salle Gaveau, Paris; Tonhalle, Zurich; Wiener Konzerthaus and Musikverein, Vienna; Het Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ Amsterdam; Berliner Philharmonie and Konzerthaus; Kölner Philharmonie; Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg; Gulbenkian, Lisbon; Tivoli Concert Series, Denmark; Konserthuset Stockholm; and at festivals including the BBC Proms, Edinburgh International, Cheltenham, Heidelberg, Lockenhaus, Davos, Verbier, Aix-en-Provence, Montpellier/Radio France, Evian, Auvers-sur-Oise, Stavanger and Trondheim (Norway), Concentus Moraviae (Czech Republic), Haydn/Esterházy (Hungary), and Eilat (Israel).

2022 marked the ensemble's 10-year anniversary, which they celebrated with a number of prestigious international debuts including the Library of Congress, DC; Sydney Opera House; Melbourne Recital Centre; and UKARIA, Adelaide. The 2023-2024 season will see them return to North America, for a tour that will include their Carnegie Hall debut, as well as to Asia (China, Japan, Taiwan), where highlights will include

concerts at Shanghai's Symphony Hall and Tokyo's Hamarikyū Asahi Hall. Collaborators include guitarist Sean Shibe, mezzo soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, harpist Parker Ramsay, clarinetist Annelien Van Wauwe, Quatuor Danel, and composers Baptiste Trotignon and Benjamin Attahir.

Recording exclusively for Alpha Classics, the ensemble's debut recording, *Mozart*, was released to outstanding critical acclaim. Following celebrated discs of Debussy and Ravel, and Schubert, they continued their ongoing exploration of Mozart with two further releases in 2020. The complete cycle of Mendelssohn's quartets was released across 2022 and 2023, and will be followed by *Impressions Parisiennes*—a CD of French melody transcriptions alongside new works by Baptiste Trotignon.

Quatuor Van Kuijk's international accolades boast First, Best Beethoven, and Best Haydn Prizes at the 2015 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet competition; First Prize, and an Audience Award at the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition; as well as becoming laureates of the Aix-en-Provence Festival Academy. They were BBC New Generation Artists from 2015-17, and ECHO Rising Stars for the 2017-18 season. The ensemble was resident at ProQuartet, Paris, where they studied with members of the Alban Berg, Artemis, and Hagen quartets. Originally students of the Ysaye Quartet, they went on to work with Günter Pichler at the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía in Madrid, supported generously by the International Institute of Chamber Music, Madrid. The Quartet is supported by Pirastro and SPEDIDAM and is grateful to Mécénat Musical Société Générale for their sponsorship.

The Quatuor Van Kuijk gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organization:

