

ONEPPO CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

David Shifrin, *artistic director*

Brentano String Quartet
with
Hsin-Yun Huang, *viola*

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.
Morse Recital Hall in Sprague Memorial Hall

Yale SCHOOL OF MUSIC

José García-León, Dean

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
1756–1791

Viola Quintet in B-flat major, K. 174

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Adagio
- III. Menuetto ma allegretto. Trio
- IV. Allegro

Béla Bartók
1881–1945

String Quartet No. 4

- I. Allegro
- II. Prestissimo, con sordino
- III. Non troppo lento
- IV. Allegretto pizzicato
- V. Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
1756–1791

Viola Quintet in C major, K. 515

- I. Allegro
- II. Menuetto. Allegretto
- III. Andante
- IV. Molto Allegro

As a courtesy to others, please silence all devices. Photography and recording of any kind is strictly prohibited. Please do not leave the hall during musical selections. Thank you.

Artist Profile

Brentano String Quartet

Mark Steinberg, *violin*

Serena Canin, *violin*

Misha Amory, *viola*

Nina Lee, *cello*

Since its inception in 1992, the Brentano String Quartet has appeared throughout the world to popular and critical acclaim. Within a few years of its formation, the quartet garnered the inaugural Cleveland Quartet Award and the Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In recent seasons the quartet has appeared in the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, and Australia.

The Brentano String Quartet has performed many musical works that pre-date the string quartet as a medium, among them the madrigals of Gesualdo, fantasias of Purcell, and secular vocal works of Josquin. The quartet has also worked closely with some of the most important composers of our time, including Elliott Carter, Charles Wuorinen, Chou Wen-chung, Steven Mackey, Bruce Adolphe, and György Kurtág, and has commissioned works from Wuorinen, Adolphe, Mackey, David Horne, and Gabriela Frank. The quartet has been privileged to collaborate with such artists as Jessye Norman, Joyce DiDonato, Richard Goode, Jonathan Biss, and Mitsuko Uchida.

In fall 2014, the quartet became the quartet-in-residence at the Yale School of Music, succeeding the Tokyo String Quartet in that position.

Hsin-Yun Huang, *viola*

Hsin-Yun Huang has forged a career as one of the leading violists of her generation, performing on international concert stages, commissioning and recording new works, and nurturing young musicians. Ms. Huang has appeared as soloist with prominent ensembles worldwide. A passionate proponent of music education, she began a hybrid educational space called VivaViola! with the mission to expand the viola repertoire while preserving musical values and history through dialogues with esteemed musicians of today.

A native of Taiwan and an alumna of Young Concert Artists, Ms. Huang received degrees from The Juilliard School and The Curtis Institute of Music. She has given master classes at the Guildhall School in London, the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, the San Francisco Conservatory, Yong Sie Tow Conservatory in Singapore, and the McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University. She served on the jury of the 2011 Banff International String Quartet Competition, the 2022 Tokyo International Viola Competition and the 2023 Melbourne Chamber Music Competition.

Ms. Huang is currently on the viola faculty at the Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music; she is grateful for her teachers — David Takeno, Peter Norris, Michael Tree, and Samuel Rhodes. She is married to Misha Amory, violist of the Brentano String Quartet. They live in New York City and have two children, Lucas and Leah. She plays on a 1735 Testore Viola.

Program Notes

Viola Quintet in B-flat major, K. 174

MOZART

Misha Amory

Mozart wrote his first Viola Quintet, K. 174, in December 1773, when he was barely seventeen years old. Probably the very earliest works for which he is enduringly remembered date from around this time; his 25th (G minor) and 29th (A major) symphonies were written in 1773–1774, his motet “Exsultate, jubilate” in 1773, and the violin concertos were all composed in 1775. At this time the viola quintet as a form was in its infancy; Mozart may have written this work as a response, or reaction, to a group of viola quintets composed by Michael Haydn, Joseph’s brother and Mozart’s good friend. In a larger sense, classical-period chamber music had barely begun to emerge from its role as light entertainment, and to be treated as a serious expressive medium: Joseph Haydn composed his first great string quartets, Op. 20, between 1772 and 1774, and Mozart’s first quartet masterpiece would not be written until nine years later.

This viola quintet, on the one hand, bears the stamp of a light, genial divertimento; on the other hand one senses a brilliant young composer just starting to test his wings, to investigate his own potential for surprise and innovation. Consider the opening melody: cheerful and pleasant, it has its head bitten off after a few bars by a brusque tutti retort; after this, the first violin more tentatively finds its way to a more natural cadence, but that moment is simultaneously the re-launching of this melody, this time in the first viola. This dovetailing of beginning and end, which

was to become a hallmark of Mozart’s technique, is an effect we can too easily take for granted; in the hands of a duller composer, this moment would be padded out with an extra bar of filler to make the phrases more regular. Other striking moments in this movement include an absolute silence after the second theme, followed by ominous octaves in the lower voices, and a gradual, difficult return to a sunnier climate; and the teasing dialogue between the first violin and the supporting voices at the end of the exposition.

The slow movement is solemn and lovely, and is distinguished by the use of mutes and by a simple idea played in unison – first it is the melody, then it becomes the gentle accompaniment for a more expressive melody in the first violin. Especially noteworthy in this movement is a sudden, anguished outbreak in the second half of the movement, which leads through a series of contorted suspensions before the music finds its way back to the moment of return.

The last two movements seem to have been more effortful in the writing, for we have earlier, rejected versions both for the Trio section of the Minuet, and for the entire Finale. In both cases, the replacement is a more successful and sophisticated composition; in the case of the Trio, the quintet divides up into a bright, strong group which is echoed teasingly by a shadow group. In the Finale, we have an especially interesting glimpse into Mozart’s creative process: the bravura figure that opens the movement in the first draft survives in the final version, but is “demoted” to the role of a later transitional

idea, and a more innocent, tripping melody becomes the first theme. This movement has an unusual number of carefree melodic ideas, and underscores more than the other movements the divertimento-like quality of the work as a whole.

String Quartet No. 4

BARTÓK

Keith Murphy

The six quartets of Hungarian composer Béla Bartók profoundly expanded the sonic and expressive capabilities of the string quartet and are often considered to be the most significant contribution to the quartet repertoire of the twentieth century. A man of many hats, Bartók was equally well known as a concert pianist and as a founder of the discipline of ethnomusicology, and his careful and thorough research into the folk music of Eastern Europe, especially that of Hungary and Romania, proved incredibly fertile to his compositional thought. No less important were the influences of Bach, Beethoven, Strauss and Debussy, and Bartók's music offers a powerful synthesis of rigorous musical logic, counterpoint, and formal design with the melodic and harmonic profile and rhythmic complexity of Eastern European folk music, tendencies that are apparent in the quartet heard this evening.

Bartók composed the fourth quartet in 1928, roughly a year after completing his third quartet, in which he had experimented greatly with form and various timbral effects. The fourth quartet, in terms of its form, is more conservative than its predecessor, but nevertheless

demonstrates great innovation as well. Its five movements are structured in a symmetrical arch that relates the first movement to the finale, and the second to the fourth, leaving the slow movement to stand alone at the quartet's center. In the seventh measure of the opening Allegro, the cello introduces a brief chromatic rising and falling gesture which takes on great significance throughout the quartet, and serves as the final closing gesture of both the first and final movements. The following Prestissimo asks the musicians to mute their instruments, an effect which hauntingly suppresses the energy of the cascading flurry of notes and lends a nightmarish tone to the movement. The central movement opens with a soaring cello solo over a backdrop of chords played alternatively with and without vibrato. The Allegretto pizzicato is played entirely by plucking the strings, and Bartók provides a staggering amount of sonic variety within this limitation by exploring vastly different types and positions of pizzicato, including the "snap" or "Bartók" pizzicato, in which the string is pulled so that it rebounds explosively against the fingerboard. In the final Allegro molto, the unpredictable accents and syncopations bestow upon the music an incredible sense of rhythmic urgency unsurpassed in the repertoire.

Viola Quintet in C major, K. 515

MOZART

Alvin Wong

It is not clear why Mozart chose to write for a string quartet with a second viola, as this was not a common ensemble at that time. One influence may have been the huge success of the Italian composer and

Program Notes, *cont.*

virtuoso cellist Luigi Boccherini, who wrote sixty-six cello quintets. Mozart took every opportunity to perform his own music, and his preferred instrument was the viola, as evidenced by his duo sonatas for violin and viola and the Sinfonia Concertante. This quintet was certainly important to Mozart's embarrassing financial difficulties. Michael Puchberg lent money to him partly on the security for the quintet, despite the sweeping popularity of his opera Figaro the previous year. This quintet and the one in G minor, K. 516, though written as a way of taking a break from work on the masterpiece-to-be Don Giovanni, would become regarded as some of Mozart's greatest chamber music. Operatic elements permeate this quintet, particularly in the second movement, where the violin and viola sing an expressive duet while the others relax into accompaniment. But Mozart did not turn this composition into a transcription of his much-loved arias. The sonata-form first movement has unusual proportions: an extraordinarily long exposition with rich melodic materials, a surprisingly brief middle development section, and a relatively developmental recapitulation. Mozart took advantage of the flexibility of the ensemble to create a variety of textures, showcasing his imagination in timbral combinations and varied dialogues. In the Minuetto, the quintet divides into three distinct parties, with the two upper pairs responding to each other while the cello sings in its own world. The finale is a sonata rondo with a swift tempo, ending with a final declamation in unison.

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More Music Awaits!

Thank you for joining us — we'd love to have you back! If you liked today's concert, here are a few more performances we think you'll enjoy:

FEB 10 **Parker Quartet with Paul Watkins, *cello***

Oneppo Chamber Music Series

7:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall

Tickets Start at \$31, Faculty/Staff start at \$23, Students start at \$14

MAR 1 **Tai Murray, *violin* & Wei-Yi Yang, *piano***

Faculty Artist Series

3:00 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall

Free admission

APR 14 **Vista: Chamber Music**

YSM Ensembles

7:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall

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MAY 5 **Chamber Competition Winners**

Oneppo Chamber Music Series

7:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall

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