

64th Concert Series 2017-2018



is pleased to present

The Zorá String Quartet

Dechopol Kowintaweewat, violin

Hsuan-Hao Hsu, violin

Pablo Muñoz Salido, viola

Zizai Ning, cello

Saturday, October 21, 2017 8:00 PM

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York



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Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization that brings to Westchester audiences world-renowned ensembles and distinguished younger musicians chosen from among the finest artists in today's diverse world of chamber music. Through our Partnership in Education program in public schools, and free admission to our six-concert season for those 18 years of age and under, we give young people throughout the county enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music, building audiences of the future.

We need additional helping hands to carry out our mission. Do consider joining the volunteers listed above. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can discuss several specific areas in which assistance is needed.

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**as of October 15, 2017*

Program

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 13, “Ist Est Wahr?”

Adagio: Allegro vivace.

Vivace

Adagio non lento.

Intermezzo: Allegretto con moto.

Presto.

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Intermission

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132

Assai sostenuto; Allegro.

Allegro ma non tanto.

Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gotthert,

in der lydischen tonart: Molto adagio; Neue Kraft fühlend: Andante.

Alla marcia, assai vivace.

Allegro appassionato.

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

The Zora Quartet appears by arrangement with Young Concert Artists, 1776 Broadway, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10019. (212) 307-6670. www.yca.org.

Next concert

Saturday, November 18, 2017, 8:00 pm at Ossining High School, Ossining, New York

The Modigliani Quartet

Program: Mozart: String Quartet in D Major, K. 575; Saint-Saëns: Quartet in E minor, Op. 112; Mendelssohn: String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80.

Program notes

String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 13, “Ist Es Wahr”

Felix Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn was a musical prodigy who, as a boy, already had written very mature compositions. He exhibited prodigious musical imagination and craftsmanship, and also showed great musical understanding and judgement. Before his sixteenth birthday he had composed sonatas, songs, cantatas, organ works, and even a symphony. A year later, when he was seventeen, he wrote his famous *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*.

The young composer's grandfather was Moses Mendelssohn, the Jewish philosopher of the Enlightenment who was immortalized in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise*; his own father was a wealthy banker. When the family learned that the boy was a musical genius, it spared nothing to nurture his artistic maturity. Musicales were held on alternate Sunday mornings in the Mendelssohns' Berlin home; important touring performers who were passing through the Prussian capital often attended them. At these musicales, chamber music always was performed, sometimes orchestral music as well. Occasionally, even an opera was presented. The guests frequently performed and almost every time the young Mendelssohn composed a work of his own to be included.

By the time he was eighteen, in 1827, when Mendelssohn wrote this quartet, Beethoven had just died, with his music falling into relative disfavor. However, Mendelssohn admired Beethoven's quartets enormously, finding them to be spiritual, intellectual, and technical treasures. Writing this quartet, Mendelssohn definitely was aware of Beethoven's Quartet, Op. 132, which also is in the key of A minor. (Although this Mendelssohn quartet is often listed as being in A Major, because the first movement is in that key, there is consensus that it actually is in A minor, even though the music moves back and forth between major and minor tonalities very freely.)

In 1810, when Mendelssohn began to publish his music, there was some confusion when he issued two string quartets as Op. 12 and Op. 13 because the second was actually composed earlier than the first. Mendelssohn began Op. 13 in the summer of 1827 and finished it on October 27, in Berlin.

This richly textured quartet in which all four instruments are constantly in play seems to be a young Classicist's excursion into profoundly Romantic territory. It begins and ends with references to a song entitled *Frage* (“*Question*”), which he had written in the spring of that year and labeled Op. 9, No. 1. “Ist est Wahr?” asks the poem by Johann Heinrich Voss (1751-1826), “Is it true that you are still waiting there in the vineyard bower, asking the moon and the stars about me? Is it true? Tell me? My feelings can be understood only by someone who shares them and is faithful to me forever.” The song is said to be reflective of the young composer's beloved at that moment; it provides thematic material for the quartet in both literary and musical senses. The song was printed as a kind of preface to the first edition of the music; Eduard Devrient sang it as a preface to the first public concert performance of the quartet, in Berlin, on February 12, 1832.

One assumes Mendelssohn knew Beethoven's very last work, **String Quartet, Op. 135**, which was published in Berlin in September 1827, in which the composer set what he called “a

difficult question,” asking, in the music, “Must it be?” Regardless, Mendelssohn certainly did learn from Beethoven the technique of how to use a motif; the opening three notes of this work, which go on to inform the whole quartet and integrate the various movements together, show how much he had internalized from his study of Beethoven’s music. The critic Paul Griffiths calls the *Adagio* section with which this movement begins not so much an introduction as a “preparation for the work,” functioning much as a “cover” does for a book. Griffiths carries that analogy through to the similar section at the end of the quartet, which he labels a “back cover,” because the two enclose the music as if the “real quartet” were what happens between these two framing sections. The first movement proper, an impassioned central section, moves at a faster pace, *Allegro vivace*.

Beethoven’s influence is apparent again in the second movement, *Adagio non lento*, most obviously in the way Mendelssohn uses the textures of the fugue. Next comes an *Intermezzo, Allegretto con moto*, in which a charming and relaxed march-like melody with pizzicato accompaniment is set off by a brilliant trio, *Allegro di molto*, in Mendelssohn’s best elfin style, recalling the music of *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In the course of the dramatic and impassioned finale, *Presto*, Mendelssohn introduces new rhetorical devices while also recalling those used earlier: fugal textures for importance, rushing octaves for powerful motion driving into new situations, and recitative for pseudo-speech. The music begins with a dramatic first violin solo (which returns after the development section) that makes one think of the final movement of Beethoven’s Quartet, Op. 132. At the very end, the listener can detect principal materials from the preceding three movements; then the repeated question of the opening *Adagio* is asked again, “Is it true?”

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132

Ludwig van Beethoven

Between 1816 and 1826, Beethoven composed a series of extraordinary masterpieces: his Symphony No. 9 and Missa Solemnis, five piano sonatas, and the five string quartets with opus numbers 127 to 135. Just before these works began to appear, his output had been slim, for the compositions of his middle years had exhausted the possibilities of the classical forms he had inherited from Haydn and Mozart. His final works were to require new subjects, new forms, and new powers of creation.

Beethoven’s last quartets have such great density, combining concentration and tension with such great weight, that they puzzled musicians for generations. The technical and interpretive difficulties they presented were often blamed on the composer’s deafness. Early critics thought that, during his years without hearing, Beethoven had lost touch with musical reality. However, we now believe that his deafness liberated him from a concern for common practicality and freed his imagination for greater invention.

Beethoven composed **Quartet, Op. 132**, in 1825 as part of a group of three dedicated to his faithful supporter Prince Nikolas Galitzin, who organized the first performance of the Missa Solemnis, Op. 123, in St. Petersburg in 1824. Its premiere took place on November 6, 1825, with the Schuppanzigh Quartet performing. By then, Galitzin’s fortunes had begun to fall, so he actually paid for only one quartet. However, the correspondence between Beethoven and Galitzen reveals much about their relationship. It was no ordinary thing in those days for a Russian prince, even one on the decline, to address a commoner as “Dear and Respected Monsieur van Beethoven.”

This work enlarges the quartet structure to five movements. It begins with a freely expanded sonata form, *Allegro*, that opens with a slow introduction, *Assai sostenuto*. Commentators long have noted that the opening angular theme has a strikingly similar shape to the main subject of Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* and to the opening fugue theme of his Op. 131 quartet. One commentator, Erich Schenk, demonstrated that it derives from a thematic configuration used in the Baroque period symbolizing feelings like pain, sorrow, and even preparedness for death.

The second movement, *Allegro ma non tanto*, is a lively scherzo-like movement in moderate tempo with a contrasting middle section that has a rustic character, and is dominated by drone basses.

Beethoven, who had been very ill that spring, headed the chorale theme of the third movement "A Convalescent's Sacred Song of Thanks to the Divinity, in the Lydian Mode" ("Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen tonart"). In this double-variation movement, Beethoven employs modal harmony, which produces an antique and religious atmosphere. When the initial slow and unearthly section, *Molto Adagio*, becomes *Andante*, it gathers more motion and a contrasting almost dance-like rhythm, about which Beethoven commented, "Feeling new strength." Beethoven marked the measures that begin the last *Molto Adagio* section "with the greatest inner emotion."

The first violin connects the contrasting fourth movement, a brief march, *Alla Marcia, assai vivace*, to the rondo finale, *Allegro appassionato*, with a kind of recitative. Barry Cooper, one of Beethoven's more recent biographers, mentions that Beethoven regarded the recitative as a separate movement, and referred to the quartet as having six movements. Beethoven based the fifth movement, described by his biographer Solomon as an "urgent, floating waltz melody...an etherealization and dancing fulfillment of the 'Feeling New Strength' section" on a long, elegant melody he had once considered for his Symphony No. 9. Contrasting episodes and a unique development of great force and intensity reign until a long coda, *Presto*, brings the quartet to a close.

— notes provided by Susan Halpern

About the Artists

The Zorá String Quartet is the recipient of Friends of Music Concerts' eighth Performance Award, having been a winner of Young Concert Artists International Auditions held in New York City in 2015. The group is currently the Quartet in Residence at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, performing numerous concerts at Curtis, and with Curtis on Tour in the United States and Europe.

Last season the Zorá gave its New York and Washington, DC, recital debuts and performed throughout the United States at Chamber Music Wilmington, the Lied Center of Kansas, the Paramount Theatre, Rockefeller University, Harper's Ferry Chamber Music Series, University of Florida Performing Arts, the Schneider Concert Series at New York's New School, and the

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, among others. In June 2016 the Quartet participated in the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Encounters program, which culminated with a performance at Alice Tully Hall. The group had chamber music residencies at the Banff Centre in Canada and the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival in Connecticut. In June 2017 the Quartet was here in Sleepy Hollow High School as a participant in Friends of Music Concerts' Partnership in Education program, during which, in a one-day residency, its members gave performances and master classes.

The name Zorá was chosen by Bulgarian professor Kevork Mardirossian; it means "sunrise" in Bulgarian.

Violinist Deshopol Kowintaweewat, from Bangkok, Thailand, received a Bachelor's Degree of Music from Oberlin Conservatory, and went on to the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. He has appeared as concert master for the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, the Oberlin Chamber Orchestra, and the Indiana University Chamber Orchestra, and appeared in Colorado College Summer Music Festival, New York String Orchestra Seminar, and Aspen Music Festival and School.

The prize-winning **violinist Hsuan-Hao Hsu**, a native of Taipei, Taiwan, is a graduate of Curtis, where he studied with Joseph Silverstein and Pamela Frank. He is an experienced chamber musician, having collaborated with Gary Hoffman, Peter Wiley, and Steven Tenenbom, and has performed with Curtis on Tour with Shmuel Ashkenasi and Roberto Diaz.

Violist Pablo Muñoz Salido, from Melilla, Spain, hold a Bachelor's degree from the Royal Conservatory of Music of Madrid. In 2011, the Albeniz Quartet of which he was a member received the Prize of the most outstanding quartet of the year from the Queen of Spain. He received his Performer's Diploma at Indiana University's Jacob School of Music.

Cellist Zizai Ning was born in Shanghai, China, where she attended the Shanghai middle school, an affiliate of the Shanghai Conservatory. Soon after she won top honors in China's National Cello Competition. In 2007 she received a full scholarship to study cello, as well as viola de gamba and baroque cello, at Oberlin College. She received her Performer's Diploma at Indiana University's Jacob School of Music.



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