

Isidore String Quartet

Wednesday, July 17 | 8 PM | The Breakers

This concert is made possible through the generous support of **Ms. Virginia Gambale and Dr. Austin Feeney.**

Adrian Steele, violin
Phoenix Avalon, violin
Devin Moore, viola
Joshua McClendon, cello

HAYDN	String Quartet in C Major, Op. 20, No. 2, *Sun* I. Moderato II. Capriccio. Adagio - Cantabile III. Menuetto. Allegretto - Trio IV. Fuga a 4 soggetti. Allegro (Approximate duration 23 minutes)
BILLY CHILDS	String Quartet No. 2, *Awakening* I. Intro/About II. Wake-up Call III. The White Room IV. Song of Healing (Approximate duration 21 minutes)
	INTERMISSION
MENDELSSOHN	String Quartet No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 44, No. 3 I. Allegro vivace II. Scherzo. Assai leggiero vivace III. Adagio non troppo IV. Molto allegro con fuoco (Approximate duration 34 minutes)

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809): STRING QUARTET IN C MAJOR, OP. 20, NO. 2, *SUN*

Haydn's Quartet in C Major, Op. 20, No. 2, reveals itself as a musical palimpsest, where remnants of the Baroque era emerge amid the elegance of the classical period. The composer, engaging in a playful dialogue with the fading past, weaves a tapestry of respectful homage and gentle teasing throughout the composition.

From the outset, Haydn challenges conventional expectations by employing a trio sonata texture, a nod to the Baroque tradition, but with a twist. Instruments interchange roles, as if engaged in a whimsical game of dress-up, showcasing Haydn's inventive spirit. The charming melody introduces recurring motifs, such as the triple hit on the top note, ingeniously binding the movements together. Virtuosity abounds as Haydn explores kaleidoscopic rearrangements of musical voices and individual textures. Each movement unfolds with delightful surprises, from the lively dialogue between instruments to unexpected pauses and shifts in momentum. Endings, both halves of the first movement and beyond, playfully evade resolution, reminiscent of a jovial buffoon reluctant to conclude.

The Capriccio slow movement embarks on a fantastical journey, exploring themes of prophecy and divine love. Dichotomies abound between the imposing cathedral and the vulnerable doubter within, evoking a sense of contemplation and transcendence. A duet between violins echoes Mozartian eloquence, hinting at future musical landscapes.

In the third movement, Haydn introduces a musette, a dance infused with bagpipe-like drones, juxtaposed with chromatic lines that tease expectation. The minuet and trio sections oscillate between airy freedom and unsettling introspection, mirroring the journey of creative transformation rooted in the past.

Throughout the quartet are references to Baroque forms and motifs, playfully reimagined within a classical framework. Haydn's masterful counterpoint, adorned with decorative flourishes, pays homage to the past while embracing innovation and experimentation.

BILLY CHILDS (B. 1957): STRING QUARTET NO. 2, *AWAKENING*

Los Angeles native Billy Childs began publicly performing on the piano at the age of six and would eventually receive a bachelor's degree in composition from the University of Southern California College of the Performance Arts. As a performer and composer, Childs was in demand early on, collaborating with pillars of the jazz industry, signing with Windham Hill Records in 1988, and receiving commissions from prestigious soloists and ensembles (LA Phil, DSO, Kronos Quartet, Ying Quartet). A formative education, extensive experience, and an unwavering self-conception allowed the five-time GRAMMY Award-winning Billy Childs to develop a unique voice as a pianist and composer in both the classical and jazz spheres.

Commissioned by the Ying Quartet and completed in 2012, String Quartet No. 2, *Awakening* depicts the emotional, physical, and spiritual journey in dealing with the serious illness of a loved one; it is inspired by Childs' real-life experience with his wife. After she was diagnosed with a pulmonary embolism and taken into emergency care, Childs, a state over, was notified of the situation and immediately rushed to be with her.

This three-movement work outlines the complex emotional journey, providing insight into the vulnerability of the composer.

The first movement, titled "Wake Up Call", opens with a tremolo/trill in the second violin and viola, set against snap pizzicato in the cello, and a twelve-tone opening pronouncement in the first violin, expressing his initial shock at learning of his wife's hospitalization. This cacophony of an anxiety-ridden sound-world is juxtaposed with a reflective middle section overcome

with heartbreakingly lyrical cascades of melody that accumulate throughout the quartet, evoking a sense of uncontrollable anguish, fear, and lamentation. This brief look inside the composer's psyche is swiftly dissipated as the opening material engulfs the music once again. "Wake Up Call" gives us a glimpse into both the external and internal experience of Childs in this time of unknown.

"The White Room", the second movement, conveys the powerlessness and urgency he experienced waiting at her bedside through the use of a plaintive melody set against heartrending bi-tonal harmonies. Utilizing various extended techniques (false harmonics, glissandos, Bartok pizzicatos), Childs manifests the feeling of being in the sterile, unwelcoming hospital room devoid of comfort with its blindingly white walls and eerily repetitive machinery noises. The mechanical landscape eventually avalanches into two cadenzas in the viola and first violin that seem to spew rage, anger, and torment. The doubled sixteenth note figure that pervades the movement, resembling a heartbeat, rises and falls as the emotional arch takes shape, eventually settling into a state of numbness and fatigue.

The final movement, "Song of Healing", is an ode to recovery and rediscovery, with the viola's introductory melody expressing the slow process of healing and a new respect for the transient and delicate nature of life. The centerpiece of this movement is a conversation that occurs between the first violin and cello, signifying the real-life conversation between Childs and his wife as the two began to compartmentalize and understand the impact that this event had on their relationship. The love, trust, and unencumbered expression of emotion can be viscerally felt as this duo rejoins the quartet as the movement comes to a close. A sense of healing, or at least a willingness to heal, is felt as the final chord - a hopeful A Major - dissolves into silence.

Childs, through a unique, yet familiar compositional style evocative of 21st-century multigenric perspective, acknowledges and expresses the familiarity of fear, anguish, and resolution regarding the fleeting nature of life, yielding a work that speaks directly to the human experience.

— Devin Moore

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847): STRING QUARTET NO. 5 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 44, NO. 3

Felix Mendelssohn, often regarded as a traditionalist among the musical geniuses of his time, embraced a style rooted in classical forms and boundaries. While contemporaries like Berlioz, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, and Wagner explored new structures and mediums aligned with the evolving Romantic movement, Mendelssohn's compositions bear a subtler touch of Romanticism. He achieved beauty and profundity with an original voice that harkened back to the traditions favored by Haydn and Mozart.

In Mendelssohn's music, Romanticism is manifested through his mastery of pathos and heroic gesture, akin to the emotional depth found in Beethoven's works. The three Opus 44 quartets, composed in 1838, reflect Mendelssohn's celebratory mood during his newlywed years, particularly the third quartet which shares similarities with his youthful octet. While both compositions resonate with triumph and exuberance in E-flat Major, the quartet showcases Mendelssohn's growth as a composer, exploring the challenges of crafting substantial music for a smaller ensemble.

The opening movement, one of Mendelssohn's lengthiest in chamber music, is characterized by a dominant motif of rapid sixteenth notes, exuding unbridled joy and vitality. In contrast, the Scherzo movement inhabits a minor-key realm with shadowy textures, demonstrating Mendelssohn's versatility in crafting tightly woven counterpoint. The slow third movement unfolds like an intimate confession of love, oscillating between hope, anguish, and solace, enriched by flowing sixteenth-note passages that blur the

conventional A-B-A structure.

The finale, vibrant and irrepressible, returns to the festive atmosphere of the opening movement - rapid virtuosic gestures interplay with moments of calm, culminating in a triumphant conclusion where earlier motifs transform into a victorious and affirmative song. Through intricate filigree and spirited melodies, Mendelssohn concludes the quartet with a flourish, celebrating the joy of musical expression within defined forms.

ISIDORE STRING QUARTET

Winners of a 2023 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the 14th Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2022, the New York City-based **Isidore String Quartet** was formed in 2019 with a vision to revisit, rediscover, and reinvigorate the repertory. The quartet is heavily influenced by the Juilliard String Quartet and the idea of "approaching the established as if it were brand new, and the new as if it were firmly established."

The members of the quartet are violinists Adrian Steele and Phoenix Avalon, violist Devin Moore, and cellist Joshua McClendon. The four began as an ensemble at the Juilliard School, and following a break during the global pandemic reconvened at the Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival in the summer of 2021 under the tutelage of Joel Krosnick. In addition to Mr. Krosnick, the ISQ has coached with Joseph Lin, Astrid Schween, Laurie Smukler, Joseph Kalichstein, Roger Tapping, Misha Amory, Timothy Eddy, Donald Weilerstein, Atar Arad, Robert McDonald, Christoph Richter, Miriam Fried, and Paul Biss.

Their Banff triumph brings extensive tours of North America and Europe, a two-year appointment as the Peak Fellowship Ensemble-in-Residence at Southern Methodist University in Dallas beginning in 2023-24, plus a two-week residency at Banff Centre including a professionally produced recording, along with extensive ongoing coaching, career guidance, and mentorship.

The Isidore String Quartet has appeared on major series in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Durham, Washington (JFK Center), San Antonio, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, and has collaborated with a number of eminent performers including James Ehnes, Jeremy Denk, Shai Wosner, and Jon Nakamatsu. Their 2023-24 season will feature appearances in Berkeley (Cal Performances), Boston (Celebrity Series), Washington, DC (Phillips Collection), New York (92nd St. Y), Chicago, Baltimore, Ann Arbor, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, Tucson, Phoenix, Santa Fe, La Jolla, Aspen, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and at Dartmouth College, and Spivey Hall in Georgia, among many others. European highlights include Edinburgh, Lucerne, Brussels, Amsterdam, Hanover, Frankfurt, and Hamburg's ElbPhilharmonie.

Outside the concert hall the quartet has worked with PROJECT: MUSIC HEALS US providing encouragement, education, and healing to marginalized communities - including elderly, disabled, rehabilitating incarcerated and homeless populations - who otherwise have limited access to high-quality live music performance. They have also been resident ensemble for the Contemporary Alexander School/Alexander Alliance International. In conjunction with those well-versed in the world of Alexander Technique, as well as other performers, the ISQ explores the vast landscape of body awareness, mental preparation, and performance practice.

The name Isidore recognizes the ensemble's musical connection to the Juilliard Quartet: one of that group's early members was legendary violinist Isidore Cohen. Additionally, it acknowledges a shared affection for a certain libation - legend has it a Greek monk named Isidore concocted the first genuine vodka recipe for the Grand Duchy of Moscow!

Isidore String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Roe Artists as the Artist's manager.