



HANCHER AUDITORIUM

**ISIDORE
STRING
QUARTET**

Presented in collaboration with the
University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program

HANCHER UP CLOSE

**Thursday, February 26, 2026
7:30 p.m.**

IOWA

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ISIDORE STRING QUARTET

Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.
Hancher Auditorium, the University of Iowa

ADRIAN STEELE, violin
DEVIN MOORE, viola
PHOENIX AVALON, violin
JOSHUA MCCLENDON, cello

PROGRAM

Choral arrangements, arranged for string quartet by Devin Moore:

Traditional, arr. Devin MOORE	<i>Kyrie (chant)</i>
Johann Sebastian BACH, arr. Devin MOORE	<i>In dulci jubilo</i>
Traditional, arr. Devin MOORE	<i>Gloria (chant)</i>
Johannes BRAHMS arr. Devin MOORE	5 Lieder, op. 41 No. 1: <i>Ich schwing mein Horn ins Jammertal</i>
Traditional, arr. Devin MOORE	<i>Credo (chant)</i> <i>Sanctus (chant)</i>
BACH, arr. Devin MOORE	<i>Agnus Dei (from B Minor Mass, BWV 232)</i>
BRAHMS, arr. Devin MOORE	<i>Geistliches Lied, op. 30</i>
<hr/>	
Gabriella SMITH	<i>Carrot Revolution</i> for String Quartet
BRAHMS	String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat Major, op. 67 Vivace Andante Agitato (Allegretto non troppo) Poco Allegretto con Variazioni

The Isidore String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists
davidroweartists.com

ISIDORE STRING QUARTET



Photo: Edwardus Lee

“A polished sonority and well-balanced, tightly synchronized ensemble with nearly faultless intonation....it is heartening to know that chamber music is in good hands with such gifted young ensembles as the Isidore Quartet.”

—Chicago Classical Review

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 quartet began as an ensemble at the Juilliard School, and has

coached with Joel Krosnick, Joseph Lin, Astrid Schween, Laurie Smukler, Joseph Kalichstein, Roger Tapping, Misha Amory, and numerous others.

In North America, the Isidore Quartet has appeared on major series in Boston, New York, Berkeley, Chicago, Ann Arbor, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Durham, Washington D.C., Houston, San Francisco, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, and has collaborated with several eminent performers including James Ehnes and Jeremy Denk. Their 25/26

season includes performances in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Calgary, Tulsa, Pasadena, Santa Barbara, New York, Washington’s Library of Congress, plus return engagements in Montreal, Berkeley, Houston, La Jolla, Phoenix, Indianapolis, Baltimore, and Spivey Hall in Georgia. First-time collaborations include clarinetist Anthony McGill, cellist Sterling Elliott, and the Miró Quartet.

In Europe they have performed at Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, and in Bonn (Beethoven Haus), Stuttgart, Cologne, and Dresden, among many others. During 25/26 they will make their debuts in Paris (Philharmonie) and London (Wigmore Hall).

Over the past several years, the quartet has developed a strong connection to the works of composer and pianist Billy Childs, performing his Quartets No. 2 and 3 throughout North America and Europe. In February 2026, they will premiere a new Childs quartet written expressly for them.

Both on stage and outside the concert hall, the Isidore Quartet is deeply invested in connecting with youth and elderly populations, and with marginalized communities who otherwise have limited access to high-quality live music performance. They approach music as a “playground” and attempt to break down barriers to encourage collaboration and creativity. 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!

PROGRAM NOTES

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

BORN: March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

DIED: July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

In dulci jubilo

WORK COMPOSED: 1708–1717 in Weimar, Germany

Johann Sebastian Bach's chorale harmonizations are among the most influential contributions to Western music, shaping the foundation of tonal harmony and choral writing. Drawing on well-known Lutheran hymn tunes, Bach created four-part settings that combine elegant voice leading with rich harmonic expression, often used as teaching models for centuries. Though many were

originally written as components of larger cantatas and passions, these chorales have endured as standalone pieces admired for their clarity, structure, and spiritual depth. Their pedagogical impact is profound—generations of composers, theorists, and students have studied them to understand functional harmony, counterpoint, and the expressive potential of simple melodic material.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

BORN: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

DIED: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria-Hungary

5 Lieder, Op. 41 No. 1: *Ich schwing mein Horn ins Jammertal*

WORK COMPOSED: 1861–1862

WORLD PREMIERE: December 8, 1871 in Vienna, Austria

Ich schwing mein Horn ins Jammertal (*I Blow My Horn into the Vale of Tears*), op. 41 No. 1, is the opening piece of his 1862 collection of five part-songs for unaccompanied male chorus. Set in B-flat major and marked *Andante*, the work draws on a melancholic text from the *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* anthology, a collection of German folk poetry. The poem portrays a hunter who, having lost his quarry, bids a sorrowful farewell

to the chase, symbolizing themes of unfulfilled longing and resignation.

Brahms's setting captures the poem's somber mood through a gently undulating melodic line and rich harmonic textures, evoking the imagery of a horn call echoing through a desolate landscape. The piece exemplifies Brahms's affinity for folk-inspired material and his skill in crafting expressive choral works that blend simplicity with emotional depth.

BACH

B Minor Mass, BWV 232: *Agnus Dei*

WORLD PREMIERE: 1738

Bach's Mass in B minor is widely regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces of Western sacred music. Completed near the end of his life, the Mass is not a liturgical work in the traditional sense but rather a monumental compilation of sacred music drawn from various points in Bach's career. It unites a wide range of musical styles—from Renaissance polyphony to operatic drama—into a cohesive and spiritually profound whole, reflecting both Bach's deep faith and his extraordinary compositional craft.

The *Agnus Dei*, one of the Mass's final movements, is a deeply introspective alto aria that offers a quiet, meditative plea for mercy. Set in the unusual key of G minor, the piece features a solo voice accompanied by unison violins

and continuo, creating a uniquely expressive texture that mirrors the timbre of the human voice. Adapted from earlier material, the aria exemplifies Bach's ability to transform and elevate existing music into a work of spiritual depth and emotional clarity.

The Latin text *Agnus Dei* ("Lamb of God") comes from the Christian liturgy and refers to Jesus Christ as the sacrificial offering who takes away the sin of the world. Traditionally sung before Communion, the text has inspired centuries of musical and artistic interpretations. In Bach's hands, this ancient prayer becomes a moment of serene reflection and quiet intensity, preparing the listener for the final invocation of peace.

PROGRAM NOTES

BRAHMS

Geistliches Lied, op. 30

WORK COMPOSED: 1856

WORLD PREMIERE: July 2, 1865 at St. James's Church in Chemnitz, Germany

Composed in 1856, Johannes Brahms's *Geistliches Lied* ("Sacred Song"), Op. 30, is a serene and harmonically rich motet originally scored for four-part choir and organ. Set to a 17th-century text by Paul Flemming, the piece is a musical prayer for inner peace and submission to divine will: "Let nothing ever grieve thee, distress thee, or fret thee." The text's message of calm trust in God's guidance is mirrored in Brahms's elegant counterpoint and luminous harmonic palette.

Written in a double canon at the ninth, *Geistliches Lied* demonstrates Brahms's early mastery of intricate contrapuntal technique, a skill he admired in Renaissance and Baroque composers—especially J.S. Bach. Despite the formal complexity, the music remains gentle and flowing, with a soothing, chorale-like quality. The piece closes with a peaceful *Amen*, leaving the listener with a sense of quiet resolution and spiritual reassurance. As one of Brahms's earliest sacred choral works, *Geistliches Lied* already shows the composer's lifelong balance of intellect and devotion.

Notes by Devin Moore

GABRIELLA SMITH

BORN: December 26, 1991, Berkeley, California

Carrot Revolution

WORK COMPOSED: 2015

Gabriella Smith is a composer whose work has been frequently performed by many of the greatest practitioners of contemporary music. Her music is, in her own words, inspired by play. It is energetically experimental,

often giving the impression that performers are improvising and maybe dancing while doing so. Her mentor John Adams's music is a helpful reference point—like his music, Smith's compositions are both referential and boundary

pushing, offering listeners imaginative interpretations of music and sounds they're familiar with. It is music that is joyfully self-reflective and seems to expand infinitely as it devours its own sense of optimism.

Enter her string quartet, *Carrot Revolution*, an expressively positive work about seeing with fresh eyes. Its title comes from a quote misattributed to Cezanne: "The day will come when a single, freshly observed carrot will start a revolution." The premise is simple—what if one of the oldest genres in the classical repertory were used to look at music from a new perspective? What results is a whirlwind globetrotting and time traveling exercise that requires the performers to use a stunning variety of techniques as they reimagine the string quartet.

The quartet has the sense of chiasmic rhetoric, its percussive hinge squeaks and acme sirens bracketing the piece and signaling a kind of argument like the opening and concluding paragraphs of a political pamphlet. The structure in between on first look might appear haphazard, as if several unrelated things are simply being recounted. When heard, though, the piece assembles into something neat and inevitable. And despite the quartet's feeling of frenetic newness, its roots are firm: it is essentially an overture. Instead of a collection of themes from an associated show, however, it is a collection of musical

memories from Smith herself. It is as tangential as a conversation, but as coherent as one too.

The themes presented in the quartet have an uncanny feeling. Western classical music has had a long tradition from its very beginning of composers quoting other works, but here the quotes don't feel recited. Rather, they evoke the feeling of the original, much like the folk music of Bartók's quartets. This is partly because the themes are compressed and collaged. At any given moment, the quartet feels like it is in an identifiable style, and yet, just as the thought comes, the music shifts and becomes something else entirely - once medieval, now modern, once like an Irish pub, then like a rock club. The string quartet is almost doing impressions, like one section where they play what, to someone's mind, might seem like an evocation of a train from a musical about western life. And so on and so on: one's imagination could wander. It's like a very quick and well-rehearsed variety show. Even The Who makes a brief showing, improbably after what appears to be Georgian folk music. As the piece dissolves into rhythmic oblivion, the listener is left with the feeling of having lived ecstatically through someone else's memories.

Note by Connor Buckley

PROGRAM NOTES

BRAHMS

String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat Major, Op. 67

WORK COMPOSED: 1875

Composed during the summer of 1875, Brahms's String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat Major, op. 67, is a radiant and refined work that stands apart from the emotional weight of his earlier quartets. Often described by Brahms himself as a "pretty little thing," the piece was written as a diversion from the intense labor of completing his First Symphony. Yet behind his modest words lies a quartet of remarkable sophistication, marked by formal clarity, lyrical warmth, and rhythmic vitality. It is Brahms at his most genial—steeped in Classical tradition, but infused with a uniquely Romantic voice.

The first movement (*Vivace*) opens with exuberant energy, its bright, fanfare-like theme setting the tone for an elegant and spirited sonata form. Rhythmic shifts and intricate interplay between the instruments create a sense of lightness and charm, evoking the influence of Haydn. The second movement (*Andante*), in E-flat major, offers a moment of introspective calm. Cast as a theme with five variations, it explores gentle melancholy, graceful lyricism, and rich harmonic color, demonstrating Brahms's mastery of variation technique.

The third movement (*Agitato - Allegretto non troppo*) serves as a scherzo in all but name. Its hushed, tense outer sections contrast with a flowing, waltz-like trio, blending unease and charm in equal measure. The finale (*Poco allegretto con variazioni*) returns to the theme-and-variations form, this time with a brighter, more extroverted character. A simple, pastoral theme is developed with increasing complexity, culminating in a contrapuntal variation that pays homage to Brahms's Baroque influences. The work concludes with clarity, cohesion, and a touch of joyful wit.

Though lacking the dramatic weight of his earlier quartets, op. 67 is emotionally resonant in a subtler way. Beneath its surface grace lies a quiet depth - serenity tinged with longing, humor touched by nostalgia. Through its poise and balance, the quartet invites listeners into a sound world of inward beauty and reflection, where restraint becomes its own form of expressive power.

Note by Devin Moore

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Sunday, March 29 / 2:00 p.m.

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25/26

HANCHER'S 2025-2026 SEASON IS DEDICATED TO

WALLY CHAPPELL



Above: Robert Joffrey (left) with Wally Chappell (right) backstage at the original Hancher Auditorium in 1986.

We recently lost a major member of our Hancher family. Former executive director and forever friend Wally Chappell peacefully passed away in April of 2025 in Iowa City at the age of 83. His incredible wife Karen was by his side. Wally was a leader at Hancher Auditorium and the University of Iowa, a force within the field of the arts, and an unmatched champion for culture in Iowa City. He was full of love for people, passion for experiencing the world (art, food, adventure!), and always advocating for his community.

Our giants cannot be replaced, but they can be remembered with awe, joy, and sadness all at once. We can carry forward the values and inspiration they left behind. Our Hancher family will always build upon the incredible legacy left for us by Wally. He is a hero in our minds and his spirit is forever in our hearts.