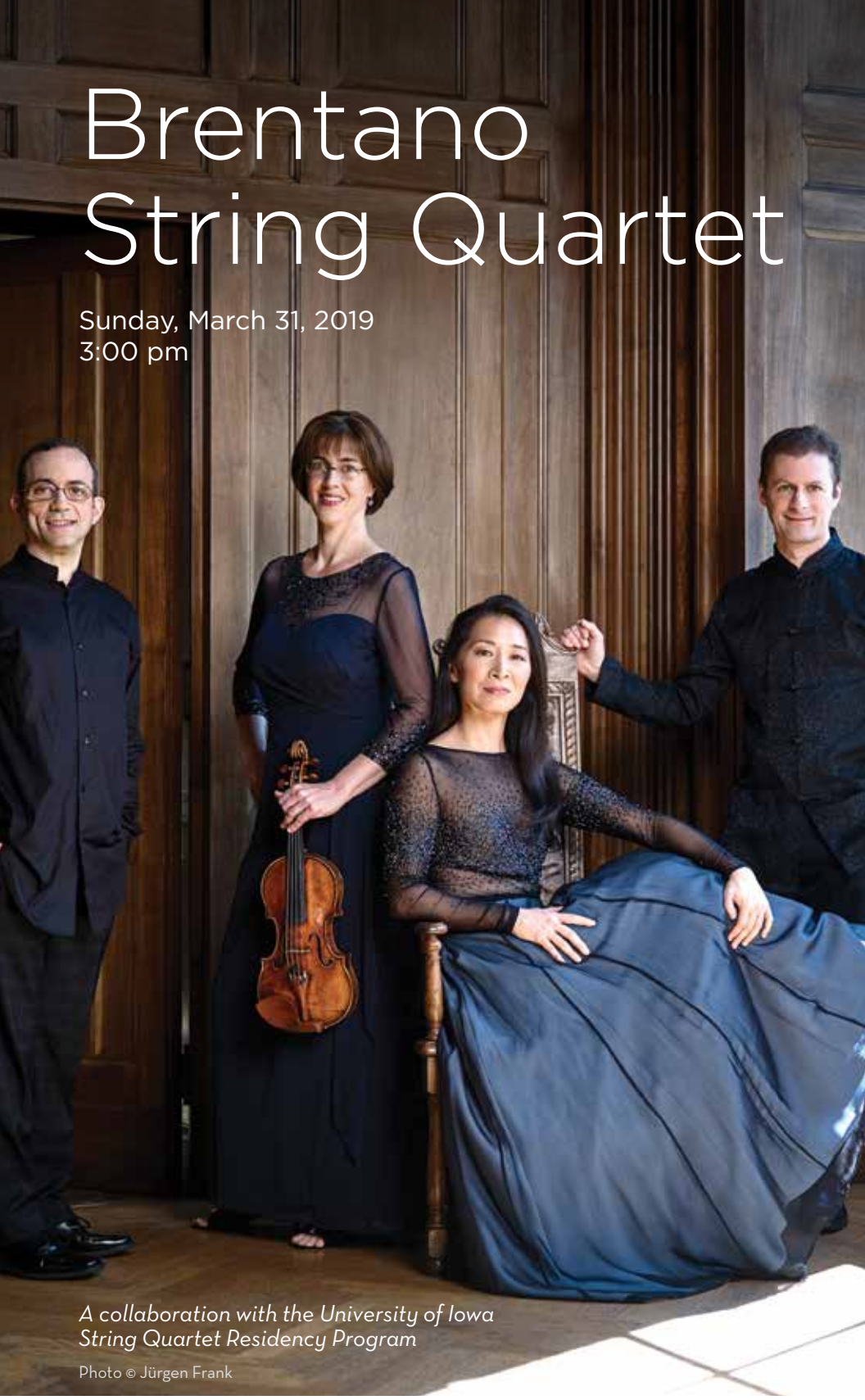
Brentano String Quartet

Sunday, March 31, 2019
3:00 pm



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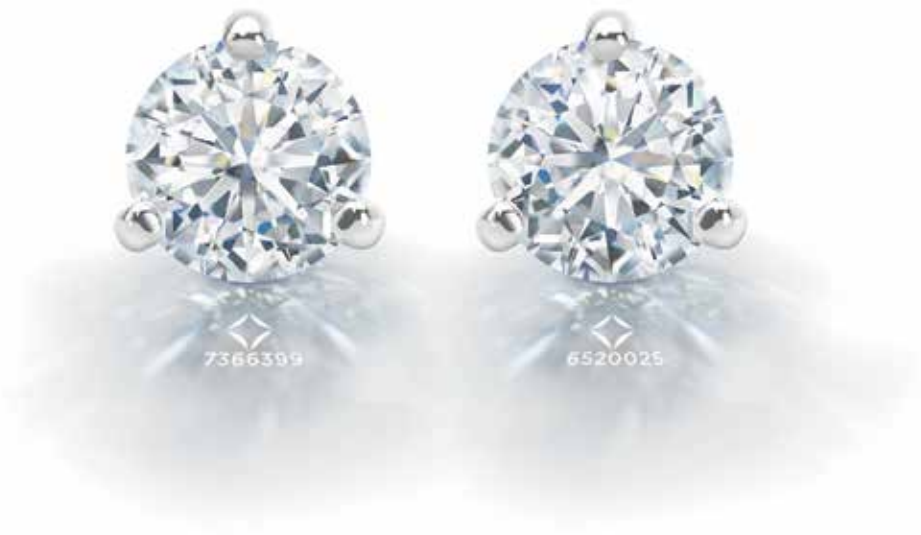

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BRENTANO STRING QUARTET

MARK STEINBERG *Violin*
SERENA CANIN *Violin*
MISHA AMORY *Viola*
NINA LEE *Cello*

Sunday, March 31, 2019, at 3:00 pm
Hancher Auditorium, The University of Iowa

A collaboration with the
University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program

Quartet in C Major, Op. 20, No. 2 ("Sun") — Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

I. Moderato
II. Capriccio: Adagio
III. Menuetto: Allegretto
IV. Fuga a quattro Soggetti: Allegro

String Quartet No. 2 — Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

I. Moderato
II. Allegro molto capriccioso
III. Lento

INTERMISSION

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 44, No. 3 — Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

I. Allegro vivace
II. Scherzo: Assai leggiero vivace
III. Adagio non troppo
IV. Molto allegro con fuoco

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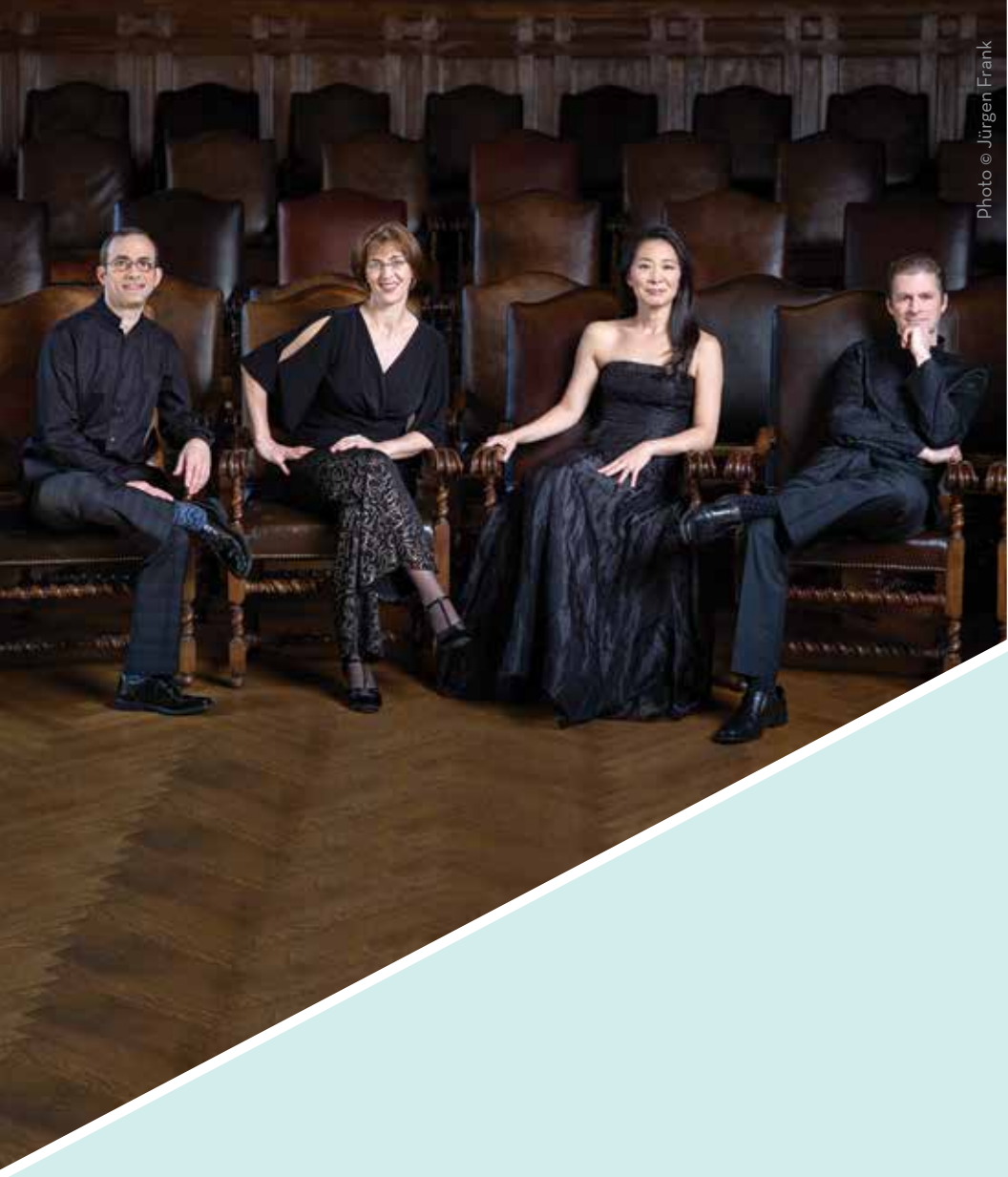

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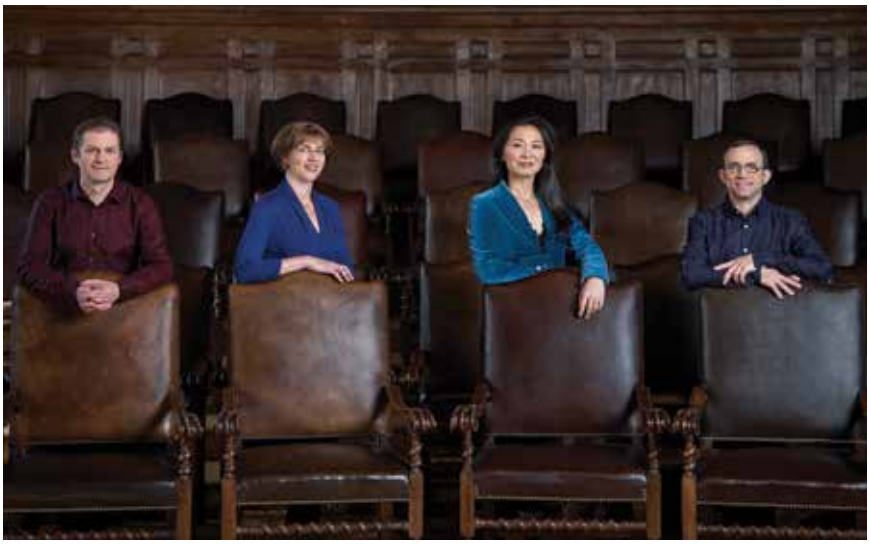

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BRENTANO STRING QUARTET

Since its inception in 1992, the Brentano String Quartet has appeared throughout the world to popular and critical acclaim. "Passionate, uninhibited and spellbinding," raves the *London Independent*; the *New York Times* extols its "luxuriously warm sound [and] yearning lyricism."

Since 2014, the Brentano String Quartet has served as Artists in Residence at Yale University. The Quartet also currently serves as the collaborative ensemble for the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. Formerly, they were Artists in Residence at Princeton University for many years.

The Quartet has performed in the world's most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall in New York, the Library of Congress in Washington, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Konzerthaus in Vienna, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and the Sydney Opera House. The Quartet had its first European tour in 1997, and was honored in the U.K. with the Royal Philharmonic Award for Most Outstanding Debut.

In addition to their interest in performing very old music, the Quartet frequently collaborates with contemporary composers. Recent commissions include a piano quintet by Vijay Iyer; a work by Eric Moe with Christine Brandes, soprano; and a viola quintet by Felipe Lara, performed with violist Hsin-Yun Huang. In 2012, the Quartet provided the central music, Beethoven's opus 131, for the critically acclaimed independent film *A Late Quartet*.

The Quartet has worked closely with other important composers of our time, among them Elliott Carter, Charles Wuorinen, Chou Wen-chung, Bruce Adolphe, and György Kurtág. The Quartet has also been privileged to collaborate with such artists as sopranos Jessye Norman, Dawn Upshaw, and Joyce DiDonato, and pianists Richard Goode, Jonathan Biss, and Mitsuko Uchida.

The Quartet is named for Antonie Brentano, whom many scholars consider to be Beethoven's "Immortal Beloved," the intended recipient of his famous love confession.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Quartet in C Major, Op. 20, No. 2 (“Sun”)

Joseph Haydn
Born in Rohrau, Austria, March 31, 1732
Died in Vienna, Austria, May 31, 1809

Notes by Arthur Canter
Originally published in Hancher’s playbill for the Parker Quartet’s performance on November 17, 2009.

The six opus 20 quartets, called the “Sun Quartets” because of the symbol of the rising sun in an old edition, were finished in 1772. This was a time when Haydn apparently got rankled by criticisms that his earlier music was too full of the “charm and gracefulness of rococo music.” It was also the time of the Sturm und Drang (storm and stress) movement in Germany in which there was an interest for the expression of emotion and passion in music. Haydn responded with this group of innovative quartets that he dedicated to Prince Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz. The opus 20 quartets are considered to herald a turning point in the development of the string quartet. Now all four instruments contributed to the weight of the work. The cello, in particular, was given more melodic importance instead of just following a bass line. There was to be an intensification and deepening of expression expected of the performers, judging from the explicit markings on the score made by the composer.

The first movement opens in an unprecedented scoring with the cello playing a melodic solo above the bass of the viola. The violins, in turn, develop the melodies as the music shifts dramatically from soft to loud while mixing with the cantabile passages of the cello and a complex accompaniment by the viola.

The Capriccio provides an operatic sequence, opening with a tragic-heroic sounding introduction to an extended dramatic recitative. This is followed by a long, beautiful adagio melody in the style of a baroque aria with ornamentation ending the movement. Without pause we are led into the third movement. Here we have a minuet that would have been difficult to dance to in those times. It lacks formal structure and is syncopated and broken up unexpectedly. Its trio section features a subdued cello solo.

The fourth movement is a fugue in four voices, All four instruments take turns in soft, low voices but in fast tempo as the fugue develops in a sonata style. A forcefully loud coda ends the Quartet.

PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet No. 2

Béla Bartók
Born in Nagyszentmiklós in the Kingdom of Hungary, Austria-Hungary
(since 1920 Sânnicolau Mare, Romania) on March 25, 1881
Died in New York City, September 26, 1945

Notes by Arthur Canter
Originally published in Hancher's playbill for the Ying Quartet's performance on March 7, 1997.

"More than any other sort of music in the western tradition, the string quartet has enjoyed the stability yet also the capacity for constant renewal of a living species" (Paul Griffiths).

The southern Hungarian town in which Bartók was born is now part of Romania. When the composer was 12, the family moved to Pozsony, Bratislava, a town having a lively, German, musical culture. It was there that Bartók began his first reliable and regular musical education, although he had already started composing three years earlier. He entered the Budapest Academy of Music in 1899. At the academy, Bartók became involved in Hungarian nationalistic movements and began composing with the aim of creating specifically Hungarian music. In 1903, he produced his first major work, *Kossuth*, a symphonic poem using folk melodies to describe the Hungarian revolt led by Lajos Kossuth. Not long after the success of this orchestral poem, Bartók became aware of the authentic indigenous Magyar music and changed his creative efforts altogether. His interest in folk music was encouraged by Zoltán Kodály and led to his collecting Slovak and Romanian music as well. However, Hungarian audiences showed little enthusiasm for any of his subsequent compositions that failed to make use of the style of national dance music that was popular in the early 1900s. The rejection of his new music by performers and audiences did not deter the composer from the path he chose to follow in his musical efforts both in composition and in ethnomusicology.

In all six of his quartets, Bartók makes use of techniques to intensify and alter the tone color of the stringed instruments. These include: double and triple stopping (i.e., placing fingers on two or more strings to alter how much of the strings will vibrate), mutes on all four instruments, the use of the back of the bow for percussive effects, and a wide range of pizzicato. The music is often discordant and has unconventional scales and rhythms derived from the folk music of the Balkans and North Africa as well as Hungary.

The Quartet No. 2 is the most important work that Bartók completed in the period between *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) and *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1919). He struggled with its composition for two years. This was the time of World War I, and the turmoil and deprivation brought about by the war interfered greatly with composition and study. He began work on the Quartet in 1915, when he and his first wife, Marta, were living in relative seclusion in a village outside of Budapest, and finished it just before the end of the war in October 1917. The Quartet was first performed by the Waldbauer–Kerpely Quartet in Budapest on March 3, 1918, two months before the premiere of his opera *Bluebeard's Castle*. It may be thought of as a turning point in the artist's development, for it was with this quartet that Bartók's Romantic-folk period came to an end. In a sense, it looks backward while at the same time points the way to future developments. In the Quartet, the composer has synthesized

elements of earlier folk music with melodic and harmonic elements used by contemporary post-Mahlerian European composers. The influence of Stravinsky and Debussy is particularly noted but the musical language is Bartók's own.

The Quartet No. 2, Op. 17, is in three movements characterized by Kodály as "1. A quiet life. 2. Joy. 3. Sorrow." The structural basis is symmetrical in that it has a slow–fast–slow cyclic order. The opening movement, marked Moderato, is gentle in its tone. The leading theme, introduced by the first violin over the sound of the other instruments, moves upward in sweeping steps. A number of motifs derived from the opening one are introduced in passionate tones. It has been suggested that the composer's *Ady Songs* (Op. 16), in which the line "bowed with weeping" occurs, may be heard in this theme. However, it would be a mistake to read things into the music. As Kodály wrote in one of his reviews of the work, "This is not 'program music,' it does not require a written explanation, it speaks for itself. Whatever it has to say, it says clearly, with music. But it says something." The tempos change frequently as the various themes are broken up and new ones introduced by the viola, cello, or violin. Plucked cello chords are heard as the music builds to a climax and then fades away.

The middle movement, Allegro molto capriccioso, may be capricious in form and rhythm but it is almost demoniac in its intensity as are some of Beethoven's scherzos. The music is full of contrasting elements from the wildly percussive Arab-like folk dances to the more sedate and placid ones, although the latter are few. The main theme is woven through the movement in a rondo structure, each time with a different melodic aspect and form. The last presentation of the principal motif is in a burst of blazing speed, finally ending with four loud distinctive notes.

The last movement, marked Lento, is in sharp contrast to the mad rush of the preceding movement. The four instruments play with mutes. The music is somber in mood as well as slow in tempo. After its drawn-out introduction, the first violin plays a lament based on the opening theme of the first movement. This is followed by three melodies all derived from fragments of the first movement. Three of the four melodies are repeated briefly, and the music ends with two pizzicato notes in the viola and cello, like two painful sighs. It is not difficult to see why Kodály, in his review, referred to the third movement as "Sorrow."

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 44, No. 3

Felix Mendelssohn
Born in Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809
Died in Leipzig, Germany, November 4, 1847

Notes by Misha Amory, violist in the Brentano String Quartet

Among the musical genius of his generation, Felix Mendelssohn is regarded as the traditionalist, a conservative who trod the paths of his predecessors. Compared to the work of Berlioz, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, and most dramatically Wagner, Mendelssohn's seems to have been touched only subtly by the Romantic movement. He is able to attain beauty and profundity with a completely original voice while dwelling happily within forms and boundaries favored by Haydn and Mozart half a century earlier, whereas his contemporaries sought new structures and mediums to house their ideas, in

accord with the changing sensibility of the time: gigantic operatic trajectories, leitmotif, pianistic miniatures, rhapsodic forms, extra-musical programs. The Romanticism in Mendelssohn is to be found rather in his musical characters: he was a master of pathos, and his work is also full of heroic gesture. In this respect, he claims ties to Beethoven, rather than the earlier masters; indeed he shows Beethoven's affective influence more than any other composer of his generation.

The three opus 44 quartets date from 1838, when the composer was newly married; in fact, he was already at work on them during his honeymoon the year before. The third of these quartets recalls, in some ways, his celebrated and youthful Octet, sharing not only its key of E-flat major, but its overarching mood of triumph and exuberance. There are important differences too. The quartet is more considered, more "composerly" than the octet, and one senses Mendelssohn reveling in the challenge of writing big music for the smaller, four-voice force, marshalling the sonic and contrapuntal potential of that force imaginatively, and capitalizing on its greater intimacy in quiet moments.

The first movement is substantial, among the longest opening movements in his chamber music output. Its opening gesture, which is distinguished by four rapid sixteenth notes, dominates throughout: when these sixteenths are not part of this melody, they are nearly always present in contrapuntal interplay or as a background hum. Energetic and rarely pausing for breath, the movement as a whole is unabashedly joyful, a life-affirmation.

The second movement, a Scherzo, is a minor-key world inhabited by fleet and shadowy textures. Mendelssohn was celebrated for his scherzo writing, most notably his elfin Scherzo from his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* music; but the remarkable thing is that no two of his Scherzos are alike. In this quartet, the scherzo is light on its feet but does not have the quicksilver quality found in the Octet, for example; it is a tightly reasoned work of counterpoint, conspiratorial rather than effortlessly airborne. The movement closes with a whispered unison passage, another signature gesture.

The slow third movement has the quality of an intimate love confession. It is set in the dark key of A-flat major, but the main idea has a strong minor coloring to it, which deepens the passionate sensibility of the opening. The movement's other distinguishing feature is the appearance of a flowing sixteenth-note idea rather early on, which persists throughout and blurs the straightforward A-B-A structure; as a result we feel less settled, less sure of our whereabouts as this flow carries us through many changing landscapes, sometimes hopeful, sometimes anguished, sometimes consoling.

The Finale is brilliant, percolating, and irrepressible. Here the mood reverts largely to that of the opening movement, if anything even more festive and fun-loving. In contrast with the slow movement, the Finale is crystal-clear structurally: it is a celebration of unambiguous form, of knowing where one stands at all times. Rapid and virtuosic gestures abound, punctuated only occasionally by calmer moments. Especially notable is the closing passage of the movement. Here, material that was used earlier to close a section simply and quietly becomes a victorious and affirmative song, decorated by bravura filigree in the first violin, spiraling upward to a fortissimo that concludes the work.

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University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program and Hancher

Hancher has been proud to collaborate with the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program since the second season of the series. Coordinated by violist and UI School of Music faculty member Elizabeth Oakes, the program brings three to four nationally recognized string quartets to campus each year for extended residencies and performances. Hancher presents one of the participating quartets as part of our season.

The following is a list of the performances that have sprung from this collaboration.

2013/2014
JUPITER STRING QUARTET
Nelson Lee, *Violin*
Meg Freivogel, *Violin*
Liz Freivogel, *Viola*
Daniel McDonough, *Cello*

Friday, February 28, 2014, at 7:30 pm
Riverside Recital Hall

PROGRAM*
Quartets by Beethoven, Hindemith, and Schubert.

2014/2015
PACIFICA QUARTET
Simin Ganatra, *Violin*
Sibbi Bernhardsson, *Violin*
Masumi Per Rostad, *Viola*
Brandon Vamos, *Cello*

Friday, March 6, 2015, at 7:30 pm
Riverside Recital Hall

PROGRAM*
Quartets by Beethoven and Mendelssohn and Shulamit Ran's *Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory* (co-commissioned by Hancher).

2015/2016
BRENTANO STRING QUARTET
Mark Steinberg, *Violin*
Serena Canin, *Violin*
Misha Amory, *Viola*
Nina Lee, *Cello*

Saturday, October 17, 2015, at 7:30 pm
Riverside Recital Hall

PROGRAM*
Selections from Bach's *The Art of The Fugue* and quartets by Brahms and Britten.

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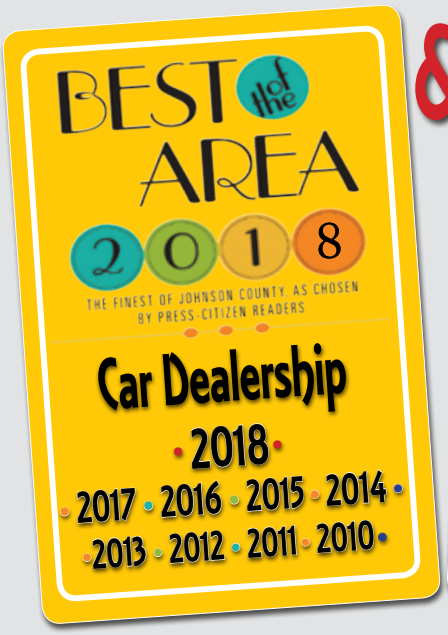

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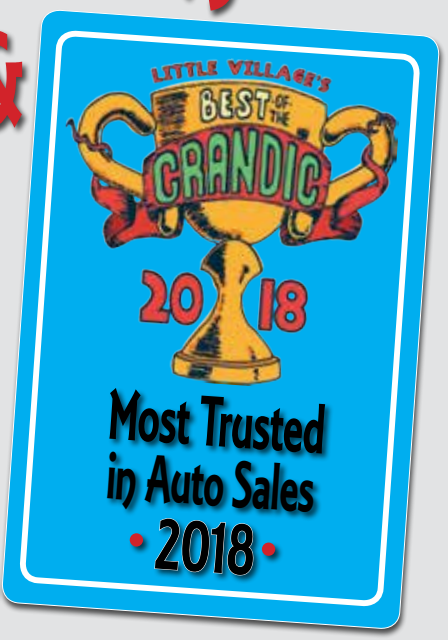

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YING QUARTET
Robin Scott, *Violin*
Janet Ying, *Violin*
Phillip Ying, *Viola*
David Ling, *Cello*

Billy Childs, *Piano*

Saturday, February 11, 2017, at 7:30 pm
Hancher Auditorium

PROGRAM
Quartets by Beethoven and Dvořák
and Billy Childs's *The River, the Bird, and the Storm*.

2017/2018
ELIAS STRING QUARTET
Sara Bitlloch, *Violin*
Donald Grant, *Violin*
Simone van der Giessen, *Viola*
Marie Bitlloch, *Cello*

Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 7:30 pm
Hancher Auditorium

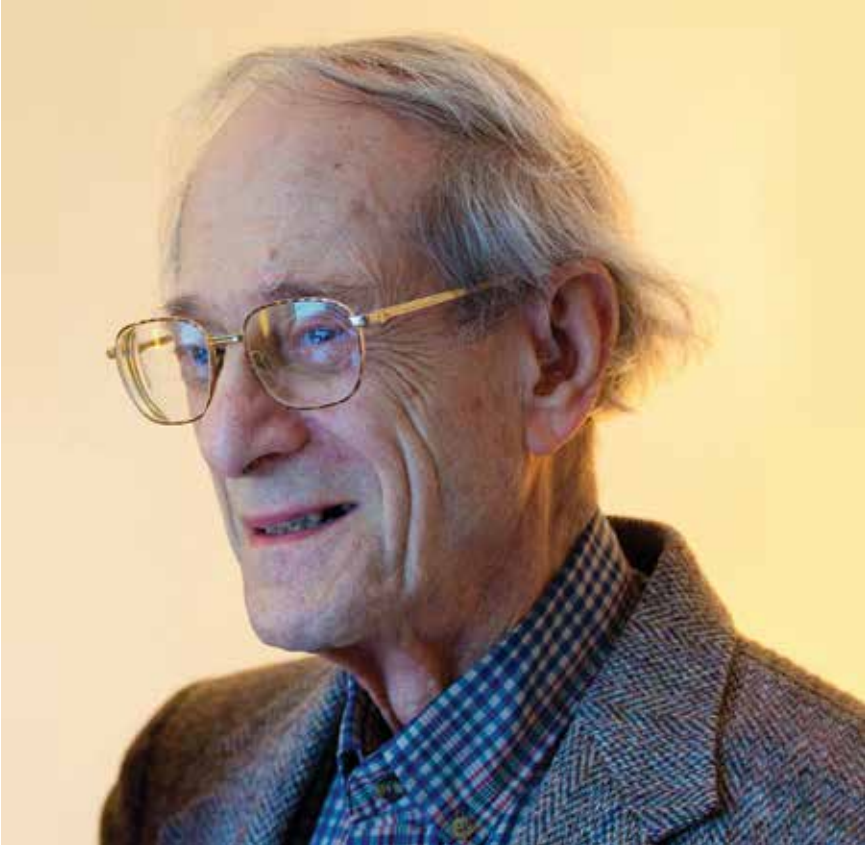
PROGRAM*
Quartets by Schubert, Janáček, and Beethoven.

2018/2019
BRENTANO STRING QUARTET
Serena Canin, *Violin*
Mark Steinberg, *Violin*
Misha Amory, *Viola*
Nina Lee, *Cello*

Sunday, March 31, 2019, at 3:00 pm
Hancher Auditorium

PROGRAM
Quartets by Haydn, Bartók, and Mendelssohn.

**Arthur Canter (1921–2018) provided notes for the program.*



Remembering Arthur Canter – Man of Note and Writer of Notes

By Judy Hurtig

When Arthur Canter passed away on October 25, 2018, the greater Iowa City musical world lost a dear friend, generous advocate, occasional participant, and an astute writer. He had an amazing ability to bring together insights about music with biographical information about the composer in an accessible way that enriched the enjoyment of his readers. For twenty-five years, I had the honor and pleasure to serve as Art's editor.

When I became Hancher's marketing director in 1987, I also took on the job of editing its playbill. Program notes had not been routinely included in the playbill; when they were, they were supplied by the musicians' management companies and were boring, dense, and a challenge to read, and as far as I could tell, few people did. I decided that Hancher should have locally written notes, and I found two or three people who were willing to write. But it was clear from the start that Art wrote the best notes. He had an ability to weave together a great deal of information about the composer and his composition with his own responses to the music and to express it all in an accessible style that helped readers enter into the music they were about to hear. Soon he became the primary note writer for Hancher. The response from our concertgoers was immediate and positive. Following his death, many people—often unknown to his wife, Miriam—wrote to her about how much his notes over the years had added to their enjoyment of the music. But it was the reactions from the musicians that touched my heart and that filled Art with pride. I cannot begin to count the times that musicians would announce from the stage that they really had very little to add to the "excellent notes in your programs." When pianist Ignat Solzhenitsyn presented a program of Preludes and Fugues by Bach and Shostakovich in 1996, he was so impressed with Art's notes that he asked if he could make them available to the other presenters on his tour, including The Kennedy Center. In another instance a manager asked if he could do the same with two other sets of Art's notes.

Art brought his knowledge and love of classical music to his writing, but he also called upon his skills as a researcher. When he approached a work for the first time, he would listen to multiple recordings of the piece and then do extensive reading about the composer and the critical reception to the work. He would sometimes evaluate the composer's biography and music through the lens of his own work in psychology. I would often pass Art in the halls of the School of Music as he was going to the music library to listen to one more interpretation or check a few more references. Art must have been one of the library's most frequent users. It is no accident that the Rare Book Room in the library of the new School of Music is named for Art and Miriam. The notes always arrived on my desk before the deadline, and they were almost always letter perfect (Miriam was a terrific editor). I rarely made a single change and when I did, I always checked with Art beforehand, knowing that he would find the change and would let me know in no uncertain terms that I was probably wrong.

Art always made me look good. I would pass the programs that we received from the managements directly to Art. Before beginning his research, he would check the accuracy of the program itself. He found every single mistake. It was not uncommon for me to get a call from him announcing that there was a problem with an opus number or the movement markings in the program we received. Our conversation would go like this. "Judy, the program identifies the piece to be played as Op. 14, No. 5 but the tempo for the first movement is indicated as Allegro when on the score it is Andante. Please check on this." Or, "Judy, there is no No. 5 in Opus 14." I would call the manager and ask for clarification. After a couple of days I would hear back that in fact, Art was correct and thank you so much for catching the error. I and Hancher Auditorium built a reputation for thoroughness but also for the care we took of the music, the musician/s and the concert itself. But it was really all Art's doing.

My most harrowing memory of editing the playbill was for a concert by flutist James Galway who was known to be a "bit difficult." His program arrived; I gave it to Art who a few days later called me to say that the program was a total mess. There were mistakes in identifying each piece and in many of the movement markings. I called his manager who was in touch with Galway's assistant. There were significant problems, but they were not easily solvable and we had many phone calls back and forth. Finally, Art and I were satisfied that we had gotten the program into much better shape than we had received it, but we were not totally confident that it was perfect. The night of the concert arrived and as I was about to sit down for the first half, a stagehand approached to tell me that Mr. Galway would like to see me at intermission. I nearly fainted with fear. I don't think I heard a note of the first half of the concert as I was filled with dread. I rushed backstage at intermission to find Mr. Galway who smiled, took my hand and thanked me profusely for taking such care with his program and for providing such excellent program notes. I nearly fainted again—this time from relief, pride, and gratitude to Art.

Art also wrote notes for the Maia Quartet in the School of Music and for MusicIC, the summer chamber music festival that I founded with violinist Tricia Park. Tricia's new quartet, the Solera Quartet, recently played their Carnegie Hall debut, and the program contained a set of Art's notes. Miriam proudly told me that Art never made it to Carnegie Hall, "but his notes did!"

Some in tonight's audience may remember that in 2007 we collected and published all of Art's notes up to that date and presented the volume to him before a chamber music concert. Hancher's secretary, Tim Meier, played a major role in preparing the notes for that publication. Soon after Art's death, Tim sent me a 26-page document he had prepared which lists every piece of music for which Art had written a note, organized by composer, composition name, artist, and date (the document is available at https://tinyurl.com/ACanterCatalogue). I was astonished by the breadth of the repertoire in terms of date and musical style. Beth Oakes of the School of Music and the Maia

Quartet has sent me notes that Art wrote for them. I also have the notes from the first five years of MusicIC. This is such an important body of work that it ought to have some wider distribution; Art's work needs to be more widely known and appreciated. To that end, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society will be a recipient of the notes for use in their playbills, and I am hoping that there may be other outlets for the notes.

Art Canter had high standards and he could be tough when his expectations were not met. His knowledge and understanding of music were deep and broad. He was very open-minded as he approached contemporary music. He listened and judged and enjoyed a lot of it. Some of my happiest memories of Art were of standing near him and listening at post-concert parties as he talked with musicians. He brought so much knowledge and love to his own listening and musicians invariably responded to that and the discussions were fascinating.

I worked closely with Art for many years. He and Miriam became dear friends. As he aged, Art, never a hefty guy, became thinner and frailer, but to the end he was a rock, supportive, knowledgeable, confident, and reliable. I trusted Art Canter and he never let me down.

Judy Hurtig was Hancher Auditorium's marketing director from 1987 to 2001. In 2002, she became the organization's artistic director, a position she held until her retirement in 2009. A devoted lover of classical music, Judy and her husband, Richard, continue to support Hancher's chamber music programming—including tonight's performance.

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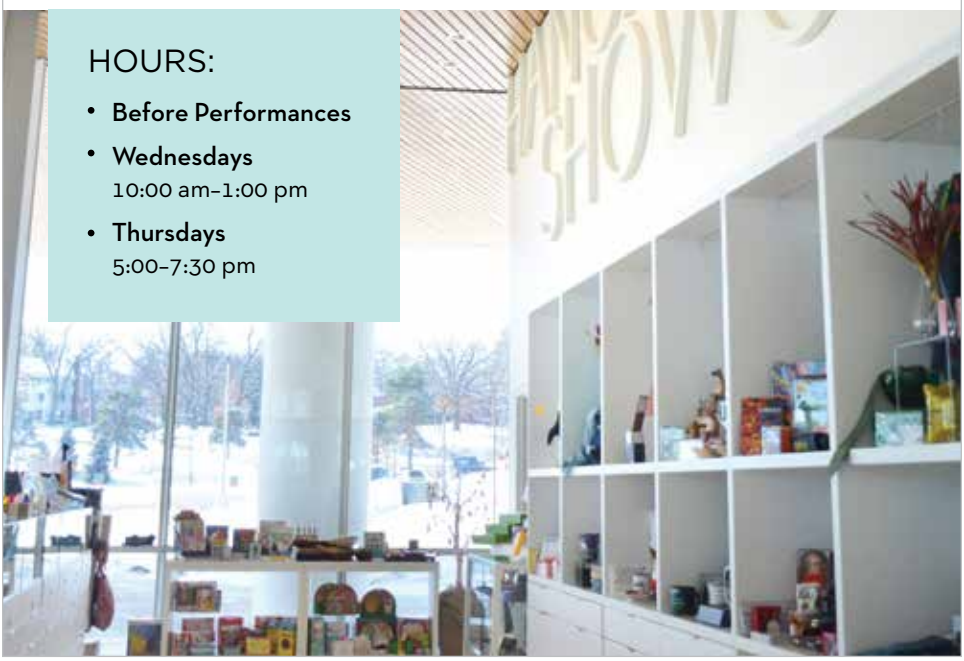

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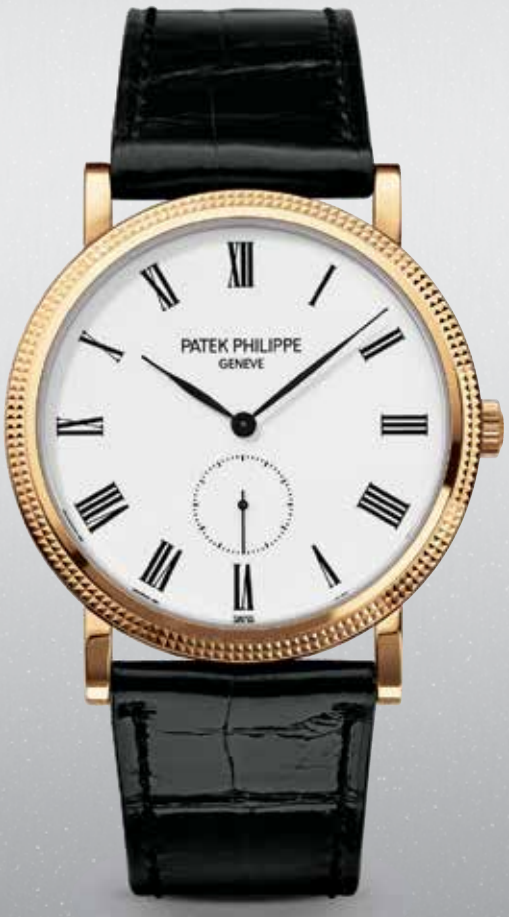

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