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CASTALIAN STRING QUARTET

SINI SIMONEN, violin DANIEL ROBERTS, violin RUTH GIBSON, viola CHRISTOPHER GRAVES, cello

Sunday, February 20, 2022, at 3:00 pm Hancher Auditorium, the University of Iowa

PROGRAM

Quartet in D Minor, K. 421

Allegro moderato

Andante

Menuetto (Allegretto)

Allegretto, ma non troppo (Variations)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

String Quartet in E-flat Major

Adagio ma non troppo Allegretto Romanze

Allegro molto vivace

Fanny Mendelssohn (1805–1847)

INTERMISSION

String Quartet in D Minor, op. 56 ("Voces intimae")

Andante - Allegro molto moderato

Vivace

Adagio di molto

Allegretto (ma pesante)

Allegro

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

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

EVENT PARTNERS

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

"A powerful individuality of sound matched by an instinctive singularity of musical intention"

- The Scotsman

In the decade since its formation, the London-based Castalian Quartet has distinguished itself as one of the most dynamic, sophisticated young string quartets performing today. Named the inaugural Hans Keller String Quartet in Residence at the Oxford University Faculty of Music in 2021, they are also the recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society's 2019 Young Artists Award. The quartet received the prestigious inaugural Merito String Quartet Award and Valentin Erben Prize in 2018, has won a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship Award, and is beginning to gain international acclaim as they take their talents abroad. The Castalian Quartet will have their debut performances in Seattle, San Francisco, New York, Atlanta, Vancouver, and many other cities across North America in the 2021–22 season.

In February 2019, the quartet was joined at Wigmore Hall by guest artists Stephen Hough, Cédric Tiberghien, Michael Collins, Nils Mönkemeyer, Isabel Charisius, and Ursula Smith to perform the chamber music of Brahms and Schumann. *The Guardian* (UK) raved, "To hear this music, so full of poetry, joy and sorrow, realised to such perfection, felt like a miracle." Other pre-Covid highlights included debuts at the Paris Philharmonie and Vienna Konzerthaus; performances of the complete Haydn Op.76 Quartets at Wigmore Hall; and concerts in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Heidelberger Frühling, East Neuk, Zwischentöne Festival in Engelberg, Neuchatel Chamber Music in Switzerland and Banff International Festivals. Further afield they undertook tours of China and Colombia.

Formed in 2011, the Castalian Quartet studied with Oliver Wille (Kuss Quartet) at the Hannover University of Music, Drama and Media, graduating with a master's degree. In addition to the above, awards include Third Prize at the 2016 Banff Quartet Competition and First Prize at the 2015 Lyon Chamber Music Competition. The quartet was selected by Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2016. They have received coaching from Simon Rowland-Jones, David Waterman, and Isabel Charisius. Ruth Gibson makes her debut with the quartet this season.

Their name is derived from the Castalian Spring in the ancient city of Delphi. According to Greek mythology, the nymph Castalia transformed herself into a fountain to evade Apollo's pursuit, thus creating a source of poetic inspiration for all who drink from her waters. Herman Hesse chose Castalia as the name of his futuristic European utopia in *The Glass Bead Game*. The novel's protagonist, a Castalian by the name of Knecht, is mentored in this land of intellectual thought and education by the venerable Music Master.

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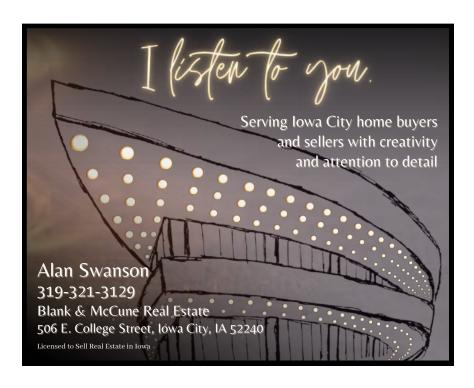
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by Bryan Cline

Quartet in D Minor, K. 421 (1783) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's style came to typify Viennese Classicism in the 1780s. His music was characterized by elegant use of forms, melodic beauty, and rich harmonies and textures. These characteristics are particularly prominent in the six string quartets Mozart dedicated to Hayden written between 1782 and 1784. Mozart composed the six quartets following significant study of Haydn's String Quartets, op. 33. In op. 33, Haydn newly ensured the equality of each voice of the quartet (as opposed to three leading voices with a bassline, for example). This new approach to orchestration correspondingly became a key element of Mozart's "Haydn" quartets.



Detail of an unfinished 1782 portrait of Mozart by his brotherin-law Joseph Lange

Quartet in D Minor, K. 421, is the second of the six quartets and the only written in a minor key. The work

features a typical arrangement of four movements: an Allegro moderato, an Andante, a Menuetto, and an Allegretto.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is written in sonata form. The opening theme group is somewhat dark and ominous while the second theme group is lighter in character. The themes are thoroughly explored in the development prior to the recapitulation and coda which emphasize the D minor key center and the movement's underlying darker tones.

The 6/8 Andante second movement begins in F major (the relative major of D minor), though extensive sections are again in D minor. This movement is stately in character with generally lyrical material that struggles to flow easily. Like the first movement, the Andante features a wide range of dynamics that emphasizes the contrast between several melodic ideas.

The third movement, *Menuetto* (*Allegretto*), opens as a fairly traditional minuet (in terms of structure) with readily identifiable thematic material. A fair amount of chromaticism is present, perhaps enhancing the seriousness of the movement's character. The trio is a striking departure from the opening of the movement and features a more light-hearted theme (first introduced by the principal violin) atop a pizzicato (plucked) accompaniment.

Finally, the piece concludes with an *Allegretto, ma non troppo*. This movement, in 6/8 like the *Andante*, presents a series of variations on the movement's opening theme and perhaps best reflects the intended equality of the quartet's voices. The work concludes with a brief coda that emphasizes D minor despite ending with a Picardy third.

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String Quartet in E-flat Major (1834)

Fanny Mendelssohn (1805–1847)

Fanny Hensel geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy was a highly prolific composer as well as a skilled pianist. Fanny, the sister of Felix Mendelssohn, was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1805 into a highclass family and became among the first women known to compose and publish a string quartet. Her compositions reveal significant influence from Bach and Beethoven and may be described as post-classical. She was well known for being willing to experiment with musical forms. Throughout her life, Mendelssohn struggled with significant conflicts between her perceived place in society and her performing and publishing. Indeed, her father discouraged her from pursing music professionally (while supporting Felix) because he did not feel such a career was suitably "feminine" and appropriate for her social standing.

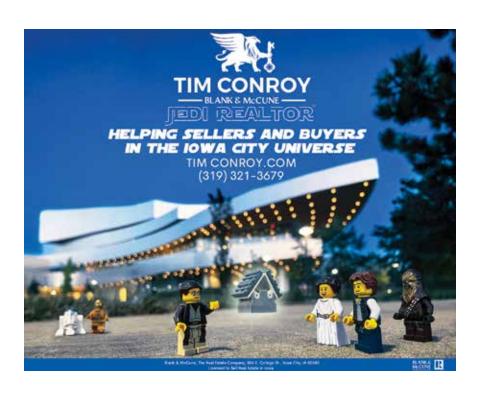


Fanny Mendelssohn, sketched in 1829 by Wilhelm Hensel

Mendelssohn wrote a significant number of *Lieder* throughout her life, though most were composed prior to 1829, including two published under Felix's name in 1826 (three more would be published under Felix's name in 1830). After 1829, she began more thoroughly exploring other forms, including cantatas, concert arias, choral songs, and the string quartet, among others. The first publication of a piece by Mendelssohn under her name occurred in 1832 when a critic shared one of her *Lied* with a journal. She first chose to publish her own works beginning in 1837 (n.b. her first public performance would not be until 1838).

The origins of String Quartet in E-flat Major lie in a piano sonata Mendelssohn began in 1929 but abandoned after completing three movements. She reworked the first two movements of the piano sonata to become the opening two movements of the string quartet and wrote two new movements to complete the work. The work shows the strong influence of Beethoven on Mendelssohn's style and includes themes reminiscent to some of Beethoven's compositions. She requested her brother's feedback, and Felix sharply criticized the work (primarily due to its somewhat loose approach to form). Mendelssohn would never attempt to compose another string quartet. Notably, this quartet is one of the earliest extant string quartets composed by a woman.

The four-movement work opens with a dark *Adagio ma non troppo* primarily in C minor—the relative minor of E-flat major. This movement serves as something of an introduction to the remainder of the piece. Much of the movement's thematic material is passed between the members of the ensemble, providing a range of colorations and displaying the richness of the scoring.





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The second movement, *Allegretto*, is a scherzo in ternary form (A-B-A). The opening of the movement is much more jovial than the *Adagio*, despite extended portions of the movement again centering around C minor. In keeping with the characteristics of a scherzo, this movement features a flurry of activity from each player, particularly in the middle section.

The third movement, *Romanze*, is the longest movement of the piece and perhaps the least defined in terms of form. The movement is highly lyrical with the upper three voices frequently in dialogue while the cello serves a supporting role. The theme from the beginning of the movement returns in a higher register at the movement's close, eliciting a wistful or lamenting feeling.

The work closes with an energetic *Allegro molto vivace* in sonata form. The opening theme is bright and joyous while the secondary theme is somewhat more lyrical. The development is quite rich with each and explores a range of tonal centers. The piece concludes boldly following a section of frenetic unison rhythm and a final flourish from the principal violin.

String Quartet in D Minor, op. 56 ("Voces intimae")(1909) Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Jean Sibelius was a Finnish composer primarily known for orchestral works. Sibelius's work often featured nontraditional approaches to harmony, orchestration, and structure and was centered around nationalism and political struggle as well as despair and isolation. He became known as a leading voice for Finnish music and often drew inspiration from the traditional Finnish-language folk epic, *Kalevala*.

Sibelius composed three string quartets, the last of which, String Quartet in D Minor, op. 56, was written in 1909 between his third and fourth symphonies. This work, composed as the last piece of a four-year publishing contract, was written while Sibelius was enduring severe financial and health issues. String Quartet in D Minor, op. 56, may be somewhat reflective of these issues (and anticipatory of his



A sketch of Sibelius by Albert Engström (1904)

Fourth Symphony)—it is a brooding work with a pervading sense of isolation and despair.

The five-movement piece is arranged in an arch form with the lyrical *Adagio* in the center. Two scherzos surround the *Adagio* with an opening and finale forming the outer movements. The first movement, *Andante – Allegro molto moderato*, opens

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with a brief, longing violin and cello duet prior to the entrance of the remaining musicians. The movement features a variety of running passages and a great deal of unison rhythmic motion. The movement closes with a series of block chords with sonorities somewhat reminiscent of a pipe organ.

The second movement, *Vivace*, is the shortest movement, the first of two scherzos, and follows the first movement immediately (*attacca*). This movement is frenetic—motives from the first movement are transformed to create a flurry of motion and form the basis of the movement's thematic material.

The subtitle for the piece, *Voces intimae* ("intimate voices"), comes from a Latin inscription Sibelius wrote above three chords in the third movement in a friend's score. This movement, *Adagio di molto*, is the heart of the string quartet in both location and material. Here, the principal violin truly takes a leading role—leading the ensemble through a range of yearning melodies constantly seeking resolution. As the movement nears completion, the second theme is played in the lower register of the cello and emphasizes the movement's overarching sense of despair.

The second scherzo, Allegretto (ma pesante), as the style marking suggests, is somewhat more plodding than the second movement. Despite a great deal of running material, the thematic material stands out due to generally being much more marked. This movement, like the first scherzo, incorporates thematic material from the first movement.

The work concludes with an unrelentingly energetic *Allegro*. The movement features a variety of melodic fragments, including a line introduced by the viola early in the movement that is passed around the ensemble, intermixed with unyielding running figuration. Indeed, the momentum of the movement consistently builds until reaching a bold and definitive conclusion.

Bryan Cline studied music and aerospace engineering at Wichita State University. He is currently pursuing his PhD in aerospace engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His dad is Hancher's director of marketing and communications, and he is a longtime attendee of Hancher's chamber music offerings.



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The University of Iowa is located on the homelands of the Ojibwe/Anishinaabe (Chippewa), Báxoje (Iowa), Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Omāēgnomenēwak (Menominee), Myaamiaki (Miami), Nutachi (Missouri), Umonhon (Omaha), Wahzhazhe (Osage), Jiwere (Otoe), Odawaa (Ottawa), Pónka (Ponca), Bodéwadmi/Neshnabé (Potawatomi), Meskwaki/Nemahahaki/Sakiwaki (Sac and Fox), Dakota/Lakota/ Nakoda, Sahnish/Nuxbaaga/Nuweta (Three Affiliated Tribes) and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Nations. The following tribal nations, Umonhon (Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa), Pónka (Ponca Tribe of Nebraska), Meskwaki (Sac and Fox of the Mississippi in Iowa), and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska) Nations continue to thrive in the State of lowa and we continue to acknowledge them. As an academic institution, it is our responsibility to acknowledge the sovereignty and the traditional territories of these tribal nations, and the treaties that were used to remove these tribal nations, and the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution since 1847. Consistent with the University's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, understanding the historical and current experiences of Native peoples will help inform the work we do; collectively as a university to engage in building relationships through academic scholarship, collaborative partnerships, community service, enrollment and retention efforts acknowledging our past, our present and future Native Nations.

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We've weathered the pandemic and will continue to adjust to the changes in university funding because of your steadfast generosity-both financially and in terms of ongoing encouragement. Thank you all!

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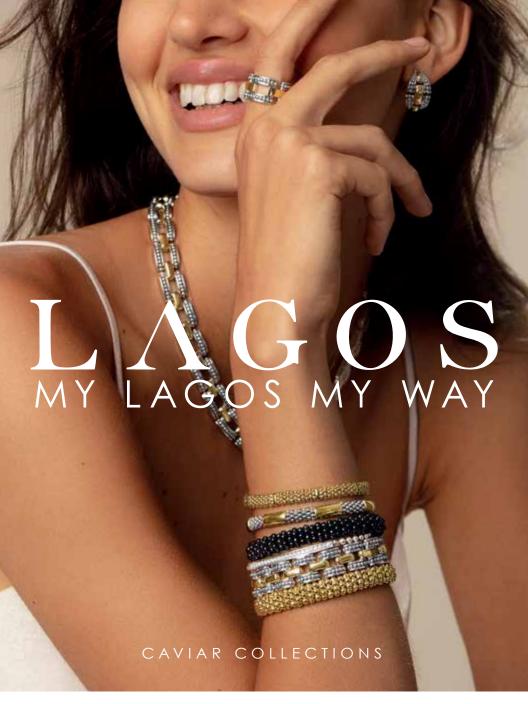
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