



## BRENTANO STRING QUARTET

**MARK STEINBERG**, violin  
**SERENA CANIN**, violin  
**MISHA AMORY**, viola  
**NINA LEE**, cello

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**  
(1770-1827)

**Quartet No. 10 in E-flat Major, Op. 74**  
**“The Harp”**  
Poco adagio - Allegro  
Adagio ma non troppo  
Presto - Più presto quasi Prestissimo  
Allegretto con Variazioni

**BEETHOVEN**

**Quartet No. 1 in F Major, Op. 18, no. 1**  
Allegro con brio  
Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato  
Scherzo: Allegro molto  
Allegro

**INTERMISSION**

**BEETHOVEN**

**Quartet No. 9 in C Major, Op. 59,**  
**no. 3 “Razumovsky”**  
Andante con moto-Allegro vivace  
Andante con moto quasi Allegretto  
Minuet. Grazioso  
Allegro molto



Photo: J. Frank

**MARK STEINBERG**  
violin

**SERENA CANIN**  
violin

**MISHA AMORY**  
viola

**NINA LEE**  
cello

## BRENTANO STRING QUARTET

With a career spanning over three decades, the Brentano Quartet has appeared throughout the world to popular and critical acclaim. *The New York Times* extols its “luxuriously warm sound [and] yearning lyricism; and the *Times* (London) hails their “wonderful, selfless music-making.” Known for its unique sensibility, probing interpretive style, and original programming, the Quartet has performed across five continents in the world’s most prestigious venues and festivals, thus establishing itself as one of the world’s preeminent ensembles.

Dedicated and highly sought after as educators, the Quartet has served as Artists-in-Residence at the Yale School of Music for the past decade. They also lead the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival and appear regularly at the Taos School of Music. Previously, the Quartet served for fifteen years as Ensemble-in-Residence at Princeton University.

In the 2025-26 concert season, the Quartet will tour throughout North America, including concerts in New York, Boston, Chicago, Vancouver, Detroit, San Francisco, and Denver. They will perform the complete Mozart Quintets with violist Hsin-Yun Huang in Philadelphia. Further afield, they toured Spain in November 2025 and elsewhere in Europe in March 2026.

Formed in 1992, the Brentano Quartet has received numerous accolades, including the prestigious Naumburg and Cleveland Quartet Awards (1995). They have been privileged to collaborate with such artists as sopranos Jessye Norman and Dawn Upshaw; mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato; and pianists Mitsuko Uchida and Jonathan Biss. The Quartet has commissioned works from some of the most important composers of our time, including Bruce Adolphe, Matthew Aucoin, Gabriela Frank, Stephen Hartke, Vijay Iyer, Steven Mackey, Charles Wuorinen, Lei Liang, James MacMillan, and Melinda Wagner.

Notable recordings include Beethoven’s Quartet, Op. 131 (Aeon) which was featured in the 2012 film, *A Late*

*Quartet* starring Philip Seymour Hoffman and Christopher Walken, and a 2017 live album with Joyce DiDonato, *Into the Fire—Live from Wigmore Hall* (Warner). Their most recent release features the K. 428 and K. 465 (“Dissonance”) Quartets of Mozart for the Azica label.

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.

The Brentano String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists.

[www.davidroweartists.com](http://www.davidroweartists.com)

[www.brentanoquartet.com](http://www.brentanoquartet.com)

Beethoven’s sixteen string quartets fall comfortably within the broad trajectory of his creative life: his early, middle (or “heroic”), and late compositional periods. This evening’s all-Beethoven program focuses on the early and middle periods. The Brentano Quartet plays two works from Beethoven’s so-called “heroic decade” from 1802 to 1812. They bookend an early quartet from the Op. 18 set, which represents his first maturity.

## NOTES

### IN BRIEF

**BORN:** December 1770, Bonn, Germany

**DIED:** March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

**FIRST PERFORMED:** Premiered in the fall of 1809 in Vienna, at the home of Prince Franz Josef von Lobkowitz

### MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

**PERFORMANCE:** October 8, 2012, Pacifica Quartet

**DURATION:** 30 minutes

BEETHOVEN: QUARTET  
NO. 10 IN E-FLAT  
MAJOR, OP. 74 “HARP”

The Op. 74 quartet dates from 1809, the year of Napoleon's second military advance on Vienna. That political cloud aside, it was a relatively stable period for Beethoven. He was economically secure. The wrenching battle he would fight for years with his sister-in-law, regarding custody of his nephew Karl, had not commenced. In terms of productivity, 1809 was a remarkably fruitful year for

Beethoven, yielding the Fifth Piano Concerto, Op. 73, three piano sonatas (Opp. 78, 79, and 81a, "Les Adieux"), some *Lieder*, and the string quartet in E-flat.

Two years before, the set of three "Razumovsky" quartets Op. 59 had been widely misunderstood. It appears that in Op. 74, his first post-Razumovsky string quartet, Beethoven made more of an effort to please his audience. To be sure, this E-flat quartet is a substantial work with considerable depth, but it does not mystify, probe, or provoke in the same way as three Op. 59 predecessors, nor in the same way as its immediate successor, the 1810 "Quartetto Serioso," Op. 95. Beethoven scholar Joseph Kerman called this quartet "an open, unproblematic, lucid work of consolidation."

The first movement begins with 24 measures of slow introduction. A precedent for the slow introduction exists in the Quartet Op. 59, no. 3 that we hear after intermission, but the E-flat quartet has none of the cryptic tonal ambiguity of that work. Rather, this introduction sets the tone of the quartet: dignified, elegant, and controlled. Posterity has given this work the subtitle of "Harp." The nickname derives from the pizzicato arpeggio motive that appears in several places in the first movement, including the development section and the coda. In Beethoven's time the motive was deemed to sound like a harp. The analogy may be dubious, but the pizzicato playing is as much fun to watch as to listen to, for it shows how expertly Beethoven distributes his motivic activity among the four players.

The extended slow movement is a cross between nobility and melancholy. A vigorous and mysterious scherzo in C minor follows, hammering at our senses with determination. Its aggressive C major trio section bounces up and down in bumptious scale passages, more like an exercise in counterpoint than a melody. Beethoven introduces the trio twice, to temper the careening pace of the scherzo. He dispels the nervous energy gradually, allowing the pace to relax and the tension to subside, ingeniously ushering in the theme and variations of the

finale. After the explosive drive of the scherzo, one might expect a self-important, blockbuster conclusion, but there is no such dramatic weight in these variations. Instead, we hear a cloud-free theme and unruffled serenity. Beethoven alternates lyrical and vigorous variations, extending the sixth one by two episodes to conclude the quartet.

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#### IN BRIEF

**DEDICATION:** Bohemian aristocrat Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** May 6, 2012, Pacifica Quartet

**DURATION:** 29 minutes

BEETHOVEN: QUARTET  
NO. 1 IN F-MAJOR,  
OP. 18, NO. 1

By the time Beethoven tried his hand at a set of string quartets, he had lived in Vienna for six years and was well established in Viennese musical society. In addition to composing, he led a busy life of performing and private teaching, primarily in the residences of the wealthy nobility who supported him. He was already making a name for himself as a composer and had published more than a dozen works when he turned his attention to the medium of the string quartet in 1798.

It was inevitable that Beethoven would attempt this combination of instruments, so popular in late eighteenth-century Vienna, and important to the works of Beethoven's older contemporaries Mozart and Haydn. Count Anton Georg Apponyi, the dedicatee of Haydn's Op.71 and Op.74 quartets, suggested to Beethoven as early as 1795 that he write some quartets. One attempt evolved into a string trio, another into a quintet, and the Count's suggestion came to naught. Some two years later, another wealthy nobleman, Prince Joseph Franz Maximilian Lobkowitz, had more success. Lobkowitz was the eventual commissioner and dedicatee of the Op. 18 set, which claimed Beethoven's attention for almost two years. Finally, in 1801, Beethoven's first quartets were published.

Though it appears first in Op. 18, the F major quartet was actually the second to be composed. Beethoven's friend, the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, suggested that the F major quartet be placed first because of its technical brilliance

and positive, forthright character. Schuppanzigh predicted, quite correctly, that it would be a more accessible “lead-in” for the other five quartets, which were more experimental (and therefore ran the risk the puzzling or alienating the conservative Viennese audience). How strange today to think of these early works by Beethoven, which sound so melodious to us, as being revolutionary! But to audiences of 1800, many of Beethoven’s ideas and techniques were innovative and downright adventuresome.

The first movement relies heavily on its opening motive, a brief, turning flourish that reappears more than one hundred times during the movement: classic Beethovenian economy of rhythm and melody. Both abrupt and attention-getting, the motive defines the *Allegro*, imprinting itself easily on our aural memory. (Imagine Beethoven being singable!) Of the six Op. 18 quartets, only this one has a slow movement in minor mode; it is the only slow movement of the six that approaches the profundity and maturity of the slow movements in the early piano sonatas. According to Karl Amenda, a contemporary of Beethoven’s who received a personally inscribed fair copy of the score, Beethoven said that he composed the *Adagio affetuoso ed appassionato* with *Romeo and Juliet*’s vault scene in mind. If this story is true, it is an unusual example of Beethoven assigning an independent literary association to a piece of otherwise absolute music. Certainly, the movement is redolent with melodrama and intense feeling.

Beethoven relieves the emotional tension with a brisk and humorous scherzo that features virtuoso passage work for the first violin. His finale, a sonata-rondo with Haydnesque character, has less emotional impact than the other movements, but is certainly well crafted. Ultimately it is the slow movement that leaves the greatest impression in Beethoven’s stunning string quartet debut.

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## IN BRIEF

**FIRST PERFORMED:** Premiered by the Schuppanzigh Quartet, 1806

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** February 5, 2020, Danish String Quartet

**DURATION:** 30 minutes

BEETHOVEN: QUARTET  
NO. 9 IN C MAJOR,  
OP. 59, NO. 3  
"RAZUMOVSKY"

Beethoven returned to the medium of the string quartet in 1804 for the first time in four years. His impetus was a commission from Count Andreas Kirillovich Razumovsky, Russian ambassador to the Austrian court since 1792. Immensely wealthy and cultured, Razumovsky built a splendid residence in Vienna which he filled with a superb library and art collection. Razumovsky was married to a sister-in-law of Prince Karl Lichnowsky, another important patron of Beethoven. A capable violinist, he maintained a household filled with music. From 1808 to 1816, he employed an in-house string orchestra that included many of Vienna's finest players, including the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh.

When the three quartets of Op. 59 were first performed by the Schuppanzigh Quartet in Vienna in 1806, Beethoven's music mystified both performers and audience. The overall reaction to these new works was negative. The third quartet fared somewhat better than the others, probably because of its reflective nature. More than the other two, this C Major work harks back to the revered traditions of quartet writing in the late 18th century. Though unmistakably imprinted with Beethoven's dramatic hand and heroic style, its reference – and its deference – to Haydn and Mozart are readily discernible. Beethoven's contemporaries perceived those qualities as well.

*Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2026*

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