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Seventy-fifth Season 2025–26

The Westchester Chamber Music Society



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The Westchester Chamber Music Society (WCMS)
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Sunday, December 7, 2025
Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester
Rye, New York

The Westchester Chamber Music Society
presents

IVALAS QUARTET

Reuben Kebede, *violin*

Tiani Butts, *violin*

Marcus Stevenson, *viola*

Pedro Sánchez, *cello*



Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 76, No. 4 "Sunrise"

Allegro con spirito

Adagio

Menuetto: Allegro

Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

Five Fantasiestücke for String Quartet, Op. 5

Prelude

Serenade

Humoresque

Minuet and Trio

Dance

Intermission

Joji Yuasa (1929-2024)

Projection II (1996)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10 (L. 91)

Animé et très décidé

Assez vif et bien rythmé

Andantino, doucement expressif

Très modéré

*A wine & cheese reception with the musicians will follow the performance.
We thank Aries Fine Wines & Spirits for their generous donation of wine.*

About this Performance

The Ivalas Quartet has been on a mission, since its inception in 2017, to enrich the classical music world by spotlighting past and present BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) composers alongside the standard repertory. Among the many composers whose works they have championed are Eleanor Alberga, Gabriela Lena Frank, Osvaldo Golijov, Jessie Montgomery, Angélica Negrón, Iván Enrique Rodríguez, Carlos Simon, Alvin Singleton, and George Walker. They premiered Derrick Skye's *Deliverance* through a commission from Caramoor in 2024.

The Ivalas Quartet served as the Graduate Resident String Quartet at Juilliard from 2022 to 2024, where they studied with the Juilliard String Quartet. They were previously in residence at the University of Colorado-Boulder under the mentorship of the Takács Quartet.

Reuben Kebede, *violin*, recently completed an Artist Diploma at Juilliard in the Graduate Resident String Quartet program. He also received an Artist Diploma in string quartet performance from CU Boulder under the tutelage of Edward Dusing, Harumi Rhodes, and the members of the Takács Quartet. Previously, he studied with Danielle Belen at the University of Michigan, where he served as concertmaster of both university orchestras, and with Sarah Plum at Drake University.

Tiani Butts, *violin*, strives to use the arts to encourage and inspire young students from all backgrounds. She has performed in numerous concert venues throughout the U.S. as well as internationally in Germany, Austria, Iceland, and Italy. Tiani has been a solo fellow at the Aspen Music Festival, the Wintergreen Summer Music Academy, and the Philadelphia International Music Festival, as well as a quartet fellow at the Colorado Music Festival, Music in the Vineyards, and the Madeline Island, Walla Walla, and Great Lakes chamber music festivals. Tiani is dedicated to teaching and engaging with the community through the arts. She holds a bachelor's degree from the Robert McDuffie Center for Strings, a dual master's degree in violin performance and chamber music from the University of Michigan, and an artist diploma from Juilliard.

Marcus Stevenson, *viola*, is an alumnus of Juilliard's Music Advancement Program and the Manhattan School of Music Precollege. Marcus has performed with renowned artists, including Margaret Batjer, Jaime Laredo, Philip Setzer, and Sharon Robinson and has given masterclasses and done coaching for numerous programs. Marcus holds a bachelor's degree in viola performance and eurhythmics pedagogy from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with Jeffrey Irvine. He also holds a master's degree in viola performance from Juilliard, where he studied with Heidi Castleman.

Pedro Sánchez, *cello*, is originally from Caracas, Venezuela. His energetic style of playing was significantly shaped by his training with El Sistema and the Emil Friedman Conservatory in Caracas. In the United States, Pedro completed his high school education at Interlochen Arts Academy, followed by a bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music. He furthered his studies with a master's degree from the University of Michigan and earned artist diplomas from both CU Boulder and Juilliard. During his time at the University of Michigan, he served as faculty for the University's Artist Citizen Program, which provides free music education to a diverse community of children in Ann Arbor.



Program Notes by Joshua Berrett, Ph.D.

Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809) *Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 76, No. 4 ("Sunrise")*

Haydn's *String Quartet, Op. 76, No. 4* is part of a group of six composed between 1796 and 1797 and dedicated to Count Erdödy. They are among Haydn's final and most eloquent statements in the genre. In 1799, he completed only two more string quartets that make up his Op. 77. In this case, he was fulfilling a commission from Prince Franz Joseph Lobkowitz, the same patron for whom the young Ludwig van Beethoven wrote his first six string quartets, which comprise his Opus 18. As for Haydn, his career as the preeminent composer of string quartets of his generation was essentially over in that all we have after his Op. 77 is an aborted work from around 1803 that survives as only a fragment.

There is an important back story to much of this. It was during the 1790s that Haydn came to find himself operating in competing worlds—the ancien régime represented by the Esterhazy family, his longstanding patrons, and the exciting possibilities of working as an independent composer-entrepreneur, solidifying his reputation in countries like England, not to mention accepting commissions. When Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy died, in 1790, his successor son, Paul Anton, disbanded the palace orchestra and sent Haydn on his way with a modest pension. Taking up permanent residence in Vienna, Haydn was soon visited by Johann Peter Salomon, an enterprising and persuasive impresario from London. Two extended visits

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to England, in 1791-92 and 1794-95, resulted. It is thanks to these visits that we have the rich legacy of the twelve Salomon symphonies—Haydn's final twelve, including many of his most popular with such subtitles as "Surprise," "Military," "Clock," and "London." And not to be overlooked is his spectacular *Trumpet Concerto in E-flat*.

The year 1794 brought yet another change. Prince Paul Anton died, only to be succeeded by his son Nikolaus, who decided to revive the orchestra at Eisenstadt and reinstall Haydn as Kapellmeister. At the same time, Nikolaus had certain requirements. Church music was to be the focus. As a result, Haydn wrote six masses for chorus and orchestra during those final years.

Haydn's *Op. 76, No. 4* opens with a classic example of tone painting. In a pair of matched phrases, the ascending line of the first violin suggests the image of a sunrise. With the touch of the consummate master, Haydn extracts from these opening phrases motifs that drive much of the action of this sonata-form movement. The result is a tightly structured monothematic composition akin to what is found in many of Haydn's late symphonies. At the same time, there are wonderful progressive touches in Haydn's approach to key relationships as he passes through a series of minor keys.

The *Adagio* movement, centered in E-flat major, tells an evolving story. Material is seamlessly developed and lines are embellished with sextuplet figures, as we are ever so gradually nudged toward a quiet ending. What follows is a joyous minuet now back in the home key, where Haydn shows how much fun can be had playing with the half-step upbeat (A to B-flat), with which the movement begins. The trio brings predictable contrast, using some folklike drones in the viola and cello.

Turning to the *Finale*, we have another monothematic movement in sonata form. Haydn passes through such keys as B-flat minor and D-flat major to suggest a proto-romantic quality. Most delightful is the rather lengthy coda, which has the effect of a final chase scene moving faster and faster.

Samuel Taylor-Coleridge (1875-1912)

Five Fantasiestücke for String Quartet, Op. 5

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in London to an English mother and a father from Sierra Leone, a member of the upwardly mobile Creole community who was studying medicine in the British capital. The precocious Samuel was educated at the Royal College of Music under Charles Villiers Stanford, winning acclaim by age twenty from preeminent composers of the day, including Sir Edward Elgar.

Prolific and highly versatile, Coleridge-Taylor composed for the stage as well as in such genres as choral music, art song, and chamber music. One can find in his music a blend of a Eurocentric

Romantic tradition and elements of African and African-American melody. A shining example is his *Hiawatha Trilogy*—comprising *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* (1898), *The Death of Minnehaha* (1899), and *Hiawatha's Departure* (1900)—based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem. It created a sensation in both Britain and the United States, securing his reputation as one of the leading choral composers of the time.

Five Fantasiestücke, Op. 5, composed for string quartet in 1895, reveals a debt to Robert Schumann's short character pieces, each of them differentiated by a certain poetic coherence and emotional range. Hints of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* can be heard as well.

The opening E-minor *Prelude* is agitated and searching, its restless energy framed by a calmer, songful second theme. The contrast sets the emotional tone for the suite's alternation between tension and lyric release. *Serenade*, in G major and 5/4 time, has been singled out for its "floating lightness" and episodes of "quiet rapture."

Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* immediately come to mind with the *Humoresque* movement. The charming and buoyant outer A-minor sections contrast vividly with a calmer A-major midsection. With his G-major *Minuet and Trio*, Coleridge-Taylor evokes a lost world of elegance, gracing the proceedings with trills. The *Trio*, in the parallel key of G minor, offers some welcome contrast. The work concludes with *Dance*. This is music in the folk idiom as expressed by the opening drone. Rhythmic drive and exuberance characterize the movement, which also recalls some of the material of the opening *Prelude*, thereby imparting a cyclic unity to the whole.

Joji Yuasa (1929-2024) *Projection II* (1996)

Born in Fukushima, Japan, Joji Yuasa originally pursued medical studies and did not begin to immerse himself in music until his early 20s. He was a largely self-taught composer, who in 1952 found himself drawn to the young cross-disciplinary artist collective Jikken Kōbō, with its focus on experimentation and work in multimedia. He was also one of the pioneers of electronic music in Japan. Of particular significance was his landmark 1964 *Projection Esenplastik*, created at the NHK studios, in which he eschewed the typical Western approach to creating fixed media work, sequentially putting together a series of electronically generated or manipulated sounds. In the case of his electronic works, Yuasa has been described as someone working like a sculptor from white noise, which contains all frequencies, extracting elements to carefully craft a continuous sonic arc.

Much of Yuasa's life was devoted to teaching, both in his native Japan and internationally. Beginning in 1981, he served as a guest

professor at the Tokyo College of Music and since 1991, as a professor at Nihon University. From 1981 to 1994, he was a music researcher and professor at the University of California, San Diego, and in 1988 he served on the faculty for the Darmstadt Summer Course for Contemporary Music in Germany. Yuasa also participated in the concert tour for the Contemporary Music Network sponsored by the British Arts Council, the Composers Workshop in Amsterdam, and the 1984 Asia Pacific Festival in New Zealand. In addition, for some fifty years, he was deeply involved in the International Society for Contemporary Music, becoming an honorary member in 2010.

Projection II was commissioned by the New Arts String Quartet and premiered by the group in Tokyo in November 1996. The work is a nine-minute soundscape evoking a futuristic world, free-floating and uncertain. Expanding upon string techniques developed by composers like Ravel, Bartok, and Penderecki—particularly his *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*—Yuasa makes extensive use of harmonics, a variety of glissandos, not to mention bowing near the bridge (*sul ponticello*) and near the fingerboard (*sul tastò*). Interspersed are passages of “ordinary” playing as well. This all contributes to a pervading sense of an evolving form, marked by a climax of polyrhythmic complexity around the midpoint, followed by a relaxation of tension.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10 (L. 91)

Like his compatriot Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy wrote only one string quartet; in fact, the two works are very often paired on CDs. Debussy’s 1893 quartet comes from what is arguably the most productive decade of his life. It was a time when he was deeply immersed in symbolist literature—the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé inspiring his exquisite tone poem *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* and the play of Maurice Maeterlinck serving as the source for his only completed opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Then there is his *Suite Bergamasque* for solo piano—including the beloved *Clair de lune*—not to mention his nocturnes.

Earlier traditions exerted an important influence on this quartet as well. There was a revival of interest in Medieval and Renaissance church music, including Gregorian Chant and church modes. Manifestations of this interest were the Caecilian movement and *École Niedermeyer de Paris*, as well as the 1889 publication of *Paleographie Musicale* by the Benedictine monks of Solemnes. Composers like Gabriel Fauré are among the more prominent French composers to have been profoundly influenced by these developments. For his part, Debussy makes extensive use of the Phrygian mode in his quartet. This is a church mode that in its basic form consists entirely of the white keys from E to the octave above.

Distinctive about it are the half steps between E and F, and B and C.

Last, but by no means least, the cyclic nature of Debussy's work is quite revolutionary in that virtually all the material in the composition derives from the assertive opening two measures. This principle of cyclical structure is something Debussy learned from César Franck, specifically his 1890 string quartet, and very likely his iconic *A Major Violin Sonata* of 1886 as well—a wedding gift for Eugene Ysaye. And it was the Ysaye String Quartet that premiered the Debussy quartet in November 1893 and to whom the work is dedicated.

In developing this motto, Debussy creates what is at times an unsettling balance, not completely abandoning a tradition going back to Haydn, one founded on contrast and development and driven by tonal tension and release. Yet even though his quartet is nominally in G minor, it is more precisely in a G-centered Phrygian mode much of the time or else similarly centered around other pitches.

The sonata-form first movement is launched by the strongly rhythmic opening two measures. There is a contrasting, more lyrical second theme—actually a variant in longer notes of the opening material; played in parallel ninths by the first violin and viola, embodying an unusual sonority that is never heard again. The balance of the movement brings a mosaic of further transformations of the opening, enriched by shifting harmonies and textures.

In the second movement, we start out with a lively 6/8 romp as the viola introduces the motto theme. There is also a proliferation of pizzicato, including polyrhythms of duplets against triplets, not to mention swirling sextuplets in the two violins atop off-beat pizzicato in viola and cello. Languorous interpolations on the first violin's G string add more spice to the proceedings. But there is more to follow, as the movement reaches its climax with an extended passage in 15/8 time intensified by a series of trills. A very brief recall of the sextuplets rounds things out.

The slow movement has a haunting beauty, played in part by muted strings in the remote keys of D-flat and an ambiguous C-sharp minor coupled with fragments of a whole-tone scale; we are taken on a magical mystery tour. Notable too are touches of imitative counterpoint and some highly expressive passages with the first violin and viola duetting in octaves.

The finale opens with a preamble, a meditation on the multiple metamorphoses of the germinal motto. Once we plunge into the mainstream of the finale, further transformations ensue.

In addition, imitative counterpoint is juxtaposed with hints of the work's opening motto as well as recalls of earlier material. With the turn to G major, the sense of mounting excitement is palpable. And with a final flourish, we land on a resounding G-major chord.

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Coming Up



The remainder of the 2025-2026 season

Ying Quartet

March 15, 2026

Program includes Haydn, Childs, and Beethoven

The Amerigo Trio with Lisa Eunsoo Kim

May 17, 2026

Program includes Beethoven, Dvořák, and Golijov



