



2024/2025

77th SEASON

**Friends of Chamber Music present the Notos Quartet in concert
at the Vancouver Playhouse, Sunday, March 2, 2025 – 3:00 pm**

NOTOS QUARTET

Sindri Lederer, violin
Andrea Burger, viola
Benjamin Lai, cello
Antonia Köster, piano



Audiences and critics alike have lauded the Notos Quartet for its “virtuosic brilliance and technical perfection,” as well as its “sense of balance and interplay,” which make every detail of the composition audible, allowing them to “reach the listener's heart with its intimately played notes.”

Since its inception in 2007, the quartet’s four musicians have garnered six first and many special prizes at international competitions in Holland, Italy, England, and China, establishing themselves on a global stage. The piano quartet performs in renowned European concert halls such as the Philharmonie Cologne, the Berlin Philharmonie, the Konzerthaus Berlin, the Konzerthaus Vienna, Wigmore Hall in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Tonhalle in Zurich, the BOZAR in Brussels, the Teatro la Fenice in Venice, as well as at major festivals in Rheingau, Schwetzingen, Würzburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Lockenhaus, Usedom, and Montpellier for Radio France. Their performances also take them to distant destinations including Australia, the USA, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

In 2022, the Notos Quartet was honored with the Jeunesses Musicales' prestigious Würth Prize. In addition to interpreting the well-known masterpieces, the quartet regularly commissions and premieres new piano quartets. New works dedicated to the Notos Quartet by composers such as Beat Furrer, Bernhard Gander, Garth Knox and Bryce Dessner underscore the ensemble’s commitment to contemporary music. The musicians’ equal dedication to lost and forgotten works of the piano quartet genre and their commitment to presenting these to a wider audience is reflected in their CD recordings.

The Notos Quartet are represented in North America by California Artists Management.

Programme

Quartet for Piano and Strings in E flat major, K493

Wolfgang A Mozart (1756-1791)

Allegro
Larghetto
Allegretto

The piano quartet in E flat major, the second of Mozart’s two piano quartets, was completed in June 1786, eight months after the G minor quartet. The composition followed immediately after Mozart’s opera “Le

nozze di Figaro". Originally, the Viennese publisher Hoffmeister commissioned Mozart to write a series of three piano quartets to cater to the demands of the Viennese soirees or house concerts. However, the G minor quartet proved to be too difficult for the "cocksure amateurs of the Viennese salons" and therefore Mozart had to turn to the publisher Artaria for publication of the E Flat major quartet.

Mozart's piano quartets were innovative because all four instrumental parts are treated as equals and integral parts of a balanced score, rather than relegating the string players to an accompanying role as was the general rule previously. In the E flat quartet, the keyboard part is particularly demanding, especially in the first movement which has a festive, cheerful mood. The **Larghetto** in A flat has a poetic and dreamy ambiance, with intertwined instrumental writing of great beauty. The final **Allegretto** takes the form of a Rondo with spirited dialogues between the piano and strings.

Quartet for Piano and Strings in D Minor

William Walton (1902-1983)

Allegro moderato
Allegro scherzando
Andante tranquillo
Allegro molto

Sir William Walton, the son of two musicians, was reputedly singing Handel anthems before he could speak. At age 11, he was sent to the choir school at Christ Church, Oxford, and at 16, was admitted to Christ Church College to study music further. Here, sometime during 1918, Walton began work on this quartet for piano and strings. While at Oxford, Walton met the Sitwell family and set some of Edith Sitwell's poems to music in his acclaimed composition, *Façade*. The revised version of his piano quartet was chosen for a Carnegie Trust Publication Award, and the work was premiered in Liverpool in 1924.

The opening movement is written in sonata form. The main theme is a modal tune influenced by the English pastoral tradition. The viola is entrusted with the complementary subject, a quiet, arching, leisurely melody. In the development section the principal theme passes through some agitated transformations before being restated in its original form at the beginning of the recapitulation.

The **Scherzo** is built from three thematic ideas: a sharply rhythmic strain opposing the strings and piano, a fugato for the strings based on the main theme of the opening movement, and a grand tune of Elgarian breadth announced by the unison strings above full chords in the piano. These elements are developed and then returned in order in the movement's second half.

The outer sections of the **Andante** are given over to a soft, muted theme, subtly harmonized, while the movement's spacious central episode develops from a sweet, naive tune first sounded in the viola and includes reminiscences of the first movement's main theme.

The finale is a sonata rondo, with a stamping dance melody as its returning theme and intervening episodes encompassing an expressive cello melody and an imitative passage based on a muscular subject for the strings.

Intermission

Quartet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 47

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Sostenuto assai - Allegro ma non troppo
Scherzo, Molto vivace
Andante cantabile

Finale: Vivace

Schumann wrote this piano quartet in 1842 for Count Matvei Wilehorsky, an amateur cellist. A lush romantic work, it is an intimate expression of the composer's thoughts and feelings. Begun at the end of October, it was finished in a couple of weeks, bringing to a close an amazing burst of chamber music composition which included the three string quartets of Op. 41. The piano quartet was first played in Leipzig on December 8, 1844, with the composer's wife, Clara Schumann, at the piano.

The principal theme of the first movement appears in three guises: soulful and melancholy in the slow eleven-bar introduction, rhythmically incisive as played by the piano in the *Allegro ma non troppo*, and bright and songful as given out by the cello. Next, a more forceful subsidiary theme is introduced as a canon between piano and strings. Schumann presents a surprise in the coda in which the cello introduces a completely new theme.

The **Scherzo**, in G minor, is happy and high-spirited, although slightly reticent. Followed by two trios instead of the usual one, the movement derives a great deal of charm from a recurrent staccato phrase which Schumann used to link the trios.

The **Andante** is the emotional high point of the quartet. Here, the cello sings an impassioned principal melody which is initiated by the violin. The *Andante* is famous for the direction to the cellist to tune the C string down to B flat, thus extending the bottom end of the cello's range, enabling Schumann to produce a beautiful harmonic progression underpinned by the cello base line. This is then sustained during the coda as the other players whisper anticipations of the *Finale*.

An exuberant *joie de vivre* fills the **Finale** as theme upon theme pours forth in wonderful abundance. Moving with great energy and *élan*, the themes are interspersed with sections of contrapuntal intricacy that fit in perfectly, never impeding the musical flow.

Next Concerts: Both at The Vancouver Playhouse

Pavel Haas Quartet

Sunday, March 16, 2025, 3:00 pm

Martinů: String Quartet No. 3

Korngold: String Quartet No. 2, Opus 26

Dvořák: String Quartet No. 11 in C Major, Opus 61

Pacifica Quartet

Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 7:30 pm

Barber: String Quartet in B Minor, Opus 11 (including the famous "Adagio")

Bartok: String Quartet No. 4 in C Major, Sz. 91

Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 2 in A Major, Opus 68