

**Friends of Chamber Music present the Quatuor Modigliani in concert
at the Vancouver Playhouse, Tuesday, November 11, 2025, at 7:30 pm**

QUATUOR MODIGLIANI

Amaury Coeytaux – violin
Loïc Rio – violin
Laurent Marfaing – viola
François Kieffer – cello



Founded in 2003, the Quatuor Modigliani is recognised as one of today's most sought-after quartets, regularly performing in leading international concert series and on the world's most prestigious stages.

Starting in the 2025/26 season, the Quatuor Modigliani will be the artist-in-resident at Radio France in Paris. As part of this residency, the quartet will give two string quartet concerts annually, as well as a chamber performance with guest musicians. The residency will culminate in the premiere of a commissioned work by composer Philippe Manoury.

Other season highlights include a North American tour in Autumn 2025, with performances at Carnegie Hall and the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia amongst others. An extensive tour of Asia will follow, featuring concerts in South Korea, China, and Singapore. In Europe, the quartet will perform at major venues including the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, Laeiszhalle in Hamburg, the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

In 2020, the quartet became artistic director of the string quartet festival "Vibre! Quatuors à Bordeaux" as well as the renowned "Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition." The quartet is the founder and artistic director since 2011 of the Saint-Paul-de-Vence Festival. Since fall 2023, they have been mentors at the École Normale de Musique de Paris Alfred Cortot.

The Quatuor Modigliani has been recording for the Mirare label since 2008 and has released 13 award-winning albums. In January 2024, the quartet released an album with string quartets by Grieg and Smetana, received enthusiastically by the international press: "The French Quatuor Modigliani brings these highly emotional works to life with energy, color and glowing passion." (Rondo, January 2024). Starting in 2024, the Quatuor Modigliani has begun dedicating itself to the greatest challenge in the life of a string quartet: recording all 16 string quartets by Beethoven.

Thanks to the generosity and support of private sponsors, the Quatuor Modigliani plays on four outstanding Italian instruments:

Amaury Coeytaux plays a 1715 violin by Stradivari, Loïc Rio plays a 1780 violin by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, Laurent Marfaing plays a 1660 viola by Luigi Mariani, and François Kieffer plays a 1706 cello by Matteo Goffriller.

The Quatuor Modigliani is named after the visual artist and is represented by Arts Management Group, Inc.

Programme

String Quartet in F Major, Opus 77 No. 2 “Lobkowitz”

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Allegro moderato

Menuetto: Presto, ma non troppo

Andante

Finale: Vivace assai

Haydn was instrumental in the development of both the symphony and chamber music genres, and is generally regarded as the father of the string quartet. His new style bridged the gap between Rococo and Classical music.

In 1799, Prince Lobkowitz, Beethoven's patron, commissioned Haydn to compose six string quartets. Written and performed contemporaneously with Beethoven's Opus 18 set, Haydn's works were received less favourably. He chose to avoid further comparison with Beethoven by finishing only two of the intended six quartets in Opus 77. These stand among Haydn's crowning achievements. Not realising this would be his last complete quartet, the composer did not make No. 2 grandiose, but rather a work with the vigour and drive of his youth mixed with a wistful melancholy.

The **Allegro**'s principal theme is a joyless, descending F scale that starts strongly but fades into weak extensions. Various motifs follow until the first violin is accompanied by the second in a new subsidiary melody based on the opening. A lengthy development follows with both themes repeated.

The humorous **Menuetto** opens with a gay, skittish melody in duple meter rhythmic patterns that slip in and out of the underlying tempo, along with a cello part which at times has the sound of timpani. A contrasting almost hymn-like **Trio**, both smooth and sombre, follows. In the transition back to the opening melody, Haydn throws in some “wrong beats”.

The **Andante** opens with a staid and rather strange violin theme while the cello progresses slowly. The second violin, cello, and first violin present in turn three variations on the theme. Several more variations follow, leading to a tremendous climax. This precedes the final variation, which begins and ends quietly.

The **Finale** starts as a fast, dashing folk dance; a subdued second theme follows. The remainder of the movement is built with great rhythmic vitality around the first theme. After the recapitulation, which is based on both themes, the quartet is brought to an exciting finish with a bustling coda.

12 Microludes for String Quartet, Opus 13 (Hommage à Mihály András) (1977)

***György Kurtág
(1926-)***

[Program Note

Györgi Kurtág was born in Lugoj, Romania and moved to Budapest when he was twenty years old to study piano, chamber music, and composition at the Liszt Academy. While there, the young composer met his wife and another young composer, Györgi Ligeti, with whom he established a lifelong friendship. In 1956, the Hungarian Revolution against Soviet control forced Kurtág to leave Budapest and settle in Paris. There, he discovered the atonal language of Schoenberg and the miniature forms of Webern, and heard the adventurous later works of Stravinsky and Bartók (all banned in Hungary by strict Soviet censorship). He studied with composer-teachers including Olivier Messiaen, Darius Milhaud, and Max Deutsch. After some years in Paris, he returned to Budapest to work as a pianist, répétiteur, and professor of chamber music, all while continuing to develop his own compositional voice.

Much of Kurtág's output pays explicit respect to his musical inspirations while also giving a glimpse into his own style, which is influenced as much by his more recent contemporaries of the Darmstadt School as by earlier traditions. His *Twelve Microludes for String Quartet (Hommage a András Mihály)*, his second piece(s) for string quartet, are part of this latter group of works. Composed in 1977, the *12 Microludes* honor the 60th birthday of András Mihály, a Hungarian composer, conductor, and cellist. The set of twelve "microludes" correspond to the twelve degrees of the chromatic scale. Each microlude only lasts up to a few minutes, with some under a minute, and others under thirty seconds. Such extreme brevity (or dense concision) is characteristic of Kurtág and also an unspoken homage to composer Anton Webern whose music had a profound impact on the long-lived composer.

Kurtág won the 2006 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for his ...*concertante*... His long-awaited first opera, *Fin de partie*, based on playwright Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, premiered on November 15, 2018.

Intermission

String Quartet in A Minor, Opus 51 No. 2

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo

Andante moderato

Quasi Minuetto, moderato – Allegro vivace

Finale. Allegro non assai

Brahms regarded the string quartet as an important genre and was careful with his writing, destroying many pieces before doing his "very best to turn out one or two passably decent ones." The two Opus 51 quartets are the result.

Brahms' biographer, Max Kalbeck, noted that the **Allegro**'s opening theme centres on the notes F-A-E, possibly from the composer's personal motto, "Frei, aber einsam" (free, but lonely). A rhythmic and strong motif directs the development. The main theme is a rocking accompaniment in triplet rhythm, with the viola in a gently moving second subject. A seamless transition to the recapitulation smooths the F-A-E motif before the quick coda takes off.

In the **Andante**, a lean sonority entrusts the melody to the first violin, with viola and cello playing smoothly in parallel octaves. The theme emerges after this duplex texture. A short outburst in the dramatic middle section becomes a warmly lyrical yet resigned motif that leads to a gentle conclusion – after a reprise of the opening theme in the surprising key of F major.

The Quasi Minuetto is a nostalgic return to the 18th Century. Instead of a trio, a delicate passage acts as both slow movement and scherzo. Subtly integrating opposing material, it is briefly interrupted by a return to the Minuet's tempo – again in an unusual key – but now based on the original melodic outline.

Modelled on a *Csárdás* (a Hungarian folk dance), the **Finale**'s tension derives from a metrical conflict between theme and accompaniment. The chordal backdrop in firm triple time contrasts with the duple metre main subject. This is resolved towards the end as the theme transmutes into a gentle, albeit syncopated, waltz in the major key. In the end, such whimsy disappears, and the music returns to the minor key and hurtles to an accelerated conclusion.

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Next concerts - both at the Vancouver Playhouse

Quatuor Modigliani

Tuesday, November 11, 2025 – 7:30 pm

Haydn: String Quartet in F Major, Opus 77 No. 2 “Lobkowitz”

Kurtag: String Quartet, Opus 13 “Microludes”

Brahms: String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Opus 51 No. 2

Cuarteto Casals

Sunday, February 1, 2026 – 3:00 pm

Arriaga: String Quartet No 3 in E-flat Major

Fabregas: Quartet “Fiery Earth” (2024) – Canadian premiere

Schubert: String Quartet in G Major, Opus 161 D 887

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