

**Friends of Chamber Music present the Takács Quartet in concert
at the Vancouver Playhouse, Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 7:30 pm**

Edward Dusinberre – violin

Harumi Rhodes – violin

Richard O'Neill – viola

András Fejér – cello



In recognition of its fiftieth anniversary, the world-renowned **Takács Quartet** was recent-

ly the subject of an in-depth profile by the *New York Times* and featured on the cover of *Strad* magazine. The Takács released two anniversary season albums in 2025 for Hyperion Records to glowing reviews. ‘Flow’ by Ngwenyama, composed for the ensemble, was followed by an album of piano quintets by Dvořák and Florence Price with Marc André Hamelin. In August 2025 for Musica Viva in Australia, the ensemble played a new work ‘Sonnet of an Emigrant’ for quartet and narrator composed by Cathy Milliken with texts by Bertolt Brecht.

Edward Dusinberre and Harumi Rhodes (violins), Richard O'Neill (viola) and András Fejér (cello) are excited about upcoming projects including performances throughout the USA of Mozart viola quintets with Jordan Bak and a new string quartet, NEXUS, written for them by Clarice Assad, co-commissioned by leading concert organizations throughout North America. The group’s North American engagements include concerts in New York’s Carnegie Hall, Vancouver, Philadelphia, Boston, Princeton, Ann Arbor, Washington DC, Duke University, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Cleveland, Phoenix and Portland. After the completion of this 51st season of concerts, cellist András Fejér, the last remaining original member of the quartet, will retire from the group.

The Takács Quartet enjoys a busy international touring schedule. As Associate Artists at London’s Wigmore Hall, the group will present four concerts featuring works by Haydn, Assad, De-

bussy, Beethoven and two Mozart viola quintets with Timothy Ridout that will also be recorded for Hyperion. Other European appearances include the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Konzerthaus Berlin, Florence, Bologna, and Rome.

The members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Fellows and have been Artists in Residence at the University of Colorado, Boulder since 1986. During the summer months the Takács join the faculty at the Music Academy of the West, running an intensive quartet seminar. This season the ensemble begins a new relationship as Visiting Artists at the University of Maryland.

The Takács Quartet has recorded for Hyperion since 2005 and all their other recordings for the company are available to stream at <https://www.hyperion-streaming.co.uk> In 2021 the Takács won a Presto Music Recording of the Year Award for their recordings of string quartets by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, and a Gramophone Award with pianist Garrick Ohlsson for recording the piano quintets by Beach and Elgar. Their other releases for Hyperion feature works by Haydn, Schubert, Janáček, Smetana, Debussy and Britten, as well as piano quintets by César Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-André Hamelin), and viola quintets by Brahms and Dvořák (with Lawrence Power). For their CDs on the Decca/London label, the Quartet won three Gramophone Awards, a Grammy Award, three Japanese Record Academy Awards, Disc of the Year at the inaugural BBC Music Magazine Awards, and Ensemble Album of the Year at the Classical Brits. Full details of all recordings can be found in the “Recordings” section of the Quartet's website.

The Takács Quartet is known for its innovative programming. In July 2024 the ensemble gave the premiere of *Kachkaniraqmi* by Gabriela Lena Frank, a concerto for solo quartet and string orchestra. Since 2021-2022 the ensemble has partnered regularly with bandoneon virtuoso Julien Labro in a program featuring new works by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner, commissioned by Music Accord. In 2007, the Takács Quartet first performed a program inspired by Philip Roth's novel *Everyman* with Philip Seymour Hoffman at Carnegie Hall. The quartet performed their *Everyman* program again in 2014 with Meryl Streep at Princeton, and in 2015 again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. They have also toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, and have played regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikas.

In 2014, the Takács Quartet became the first string quartet to be awarded the Wigmore Hall Medal. In 2012, Gramophone announced that the Takács was the first string quartet to be inducted into its Hall of Fame. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.

The Takács Quartet was formed in 1975 at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest by Gabor Takács-Nagy, Károly Schranz, Gabor Ormai, and András Fejér, while all four were students. The group received international attention in 1977, winning First Prize and the Critics' Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The Quartet also won the Gold Medal at the 1978 Portsmouth and Bordeaux Competitions and First Prizes at the Budapest International String Quartet Competition in 1978 and the Bratislava Competition in 1981. The Quartet made its North American debut tour in 1982, including its first concert for Friends of Chamber Music in Vancouver. Members of the Takács Quartet are the appreciative beneficiaries of an instrument loan by the Drake Foundation. The quartet members are grateful to be Thomas-tik-Infeld Artists.

The Takács Quartet appear by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists, Inc.

PROGRAMME

String Quartet No. 2 in G Major, Opus 18 No. 2

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Allegro
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro
Allegro molto, quasi presto

In 1795, Count Apponyi asked Beethoven to write a string quartet. Beethoven declined the request, judging himself not yet ready for this exacting form of composition. It was not until 1798 that he began his six string quartets Opus 18, which he dedicated to Prince Karl Lobkowitz. These quartets are filled with the charm of a century which was passing and reflect the influence of Haydn and Mozart. However, they also break new ground, demonstrating new ideas and representing a considerable advance in quartet writing. Scholars now believe that these quartets were not written in the order in which they were published, but that Quartet No. 3 was actually the first in order of composition.

The second quartet in this series begins with an **Allegro**. The graceful principal theme has three important elements: the eight-note group of its first bar, the dotted figure of the third bar, and the little tune that makes up the last four bars. The transitional passage of three long strokes, followed by a group of rocking notes is also to be noted, as the second subject is partly derived from it. Toward the end of the exposition, the second violin introduces a carefree melody that the first violin appropriates and scatters in a stream of triplets. The development turns first to the thematic material of the transition and then presents the first subject's dotted figure in all four parts in turn. In the recapitulation there is considerable alteration and adjustment of the original music, especially in the late section.

The theme of the second movement is stated by the first violin. This noble melody is ornamented by delicate arabesques. It should be noted that Beethoven, breaking with tradition, divides the **Adagio** into two parts in order to insert a passage of pure virtuosity, and full of high spirits. The slow theme returns on the cello, but is interrupted after six bars, while the first violin resumes its airy improvisation until the close.

The gay and witty **Scherzo** follows, with a Trio in C Major, whose second half is an animated dialogue between the two violins and the cello, while the viola, by insisting on a figure in binary rhythm, seems to want to moderate their impulse. An arpeggio on the first violin brings this impetuous dialogue to a sparkling end, after which a *da capo* leads back to the theme of the Scherzo.

The first subject of the final movement, played by the cello, has the character of a Viennese popular song, a genre of which Beethoven was fond. There is a short transitional passage derived from it, and an equally brief second subject, whose essence is contained in its first four bars. The development opens with an abrupt statement of the first subject, and then continues with a discussion of two separate motifs belonging to it, until the theme reappears with entries in canon. In the recapitulation there are numerous changes in detail, though the general plan of the exposition is adhered to more consistently. The four instruments conclude the movement in a mood of simple and unaffected gaiety.

This quartet was first played for Friends by the Hungarian Quartet in 1954, and was last played for Friends before this concert by the Mandelring Quartet in 2014. This is its ninth performance in our 78 seasons.

String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat Major, Opus 74 “Harp” Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Poco Adagio – Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Presto – Più presto quasi prestissimo
Allegretto con variazioni

Opus 74 was composed in 1809 at the end of Beethoven's Middle Period and he dedicated it to his patron, Prince Lobkowitz. The style points towards the intimate personal expression of Beethoven's late quartets. The pizzicato effects in the opening movement have caused the work to be known as “The Harp”.

The work opens with an expressive **Poco Adagio**, with the pizzicato immediately evident. This leads to an **Allegro** where a complex first subject provides the material. The pizzicato motif reprises before the second subject appears, returning again in the long, impressive coda.

The romantic and intensely beautiful **Adagio**, written as a slow rondo, foreshadows the great slow movements of Beethoven's Late Period. Its expressive, exquisitely ornamented melodies

provide a perfect balance between sentiment and restraint. The main theme, stated by the first violin, forms the basis for three variations.

The masterly **Presto** – the climax of the work – is an intensely vital scherzo, full of hammering figures and breathless scale passages; such power is rarely heard in chamber music. As Karl Ulrich wrote: “Its concentration and rhythmic drive are unmatched, even in Beethoven.” A hushed restatement of the opening leads to the finale without pause. The **Allegretto** is a graceful theme and six variations in the tonic key, with the variations alternating between strong and active and gentle and lyrical. The final coda accelerates to a brilliant conclusion.

The ”Harp” quartet was first played for Friends in 1955 by the Vegh Quartet and again most recently in 2019 by the Emerson String Quartet. This concert marks its 17th performance for Friends.

INTERMISSION

String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Opus 131 **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770 – 1827)

Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo
Allegro molto vivace
Allegro moderato (recitative)
Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile
Presto
Adagio quasi un poco andante
Allegro

To this day, many consider this masterpiece, a closely integrated work of the deepest subtlety and beauty, to be the greatest string quartet ever written. It was Beethoven’s favourite. He dedicated it to Baron Joseph von Stutterheim, Field Marshall, in gratitude for accepting Beethoven’s nephew, Karl, into his regiment. Begun in late 1825, it was presented to his publisher on July 12, 1826, but the initial public performance did not take place until 1835, long after Beethoven’s death.

Lasting forty minutes, the quartet is made up of seven movements that are played without pause, thus creating a well-integrated whole. For the first time in Beethoven’s music there is a thematic connection between the first and the last movements which binds the work together. Words cannot give expression to the sublimity of its conception. The wonderful tenseness of the structure of the quartet achieved by the use of skillfully interwoven motives is one of the miracles of Beethoven’s genius. Its subtle and complex character makes analysis of this quartet difficult.

The slow opening **Adagio** is a fugue, followed by four episodes and a coda, all of which are based on a melancholy melody originally stated by the first violin. This movement has been

described as “the most melancholy sentiment in music”. Contemplative and serene, it ends with a rising C sharp, echoed by an ascending D octave leap that opens the second movement.

The **Allegro molto vivace** in D Major, is brief and cheerful. Expressions of joy, and spirits of good feelings prevail. The two soft isolated chords at the end of the movement set the tempo for the two loud answering chords that start the third movement. The **Allegro moderato**, only eleven bars long, serves as an introduction to the Andante that follows without pause.

The **Andante** is an expansive theme and variations that constitutes the central core of the work. It takes the form of a syncopated theme of great tenderness and beauty, set in the key of A Major, which is played by the two violins. This is followed by a series of six variations shaped and refashioned to reveal all of the theme’s expressive potential. The two notes at the end of the movement determine the speed of the following Presto.

The playful **Presto**, in E Major, takes the place of the usual scherzo. It bursts forth suddenly with the first four notes played forte on the cello – a false start of the type favoured by Beethoven. After a bar’s rest, the theme is continued by all four instruments playing with great delicacy with alternating outbursts of forte. The sudden changes in dynamics and breaks in rhythmic continuity require split-second reaction times to achieve a smooth flow and are treacherously difficult for the players. Legato passages interrupt statements of the main theme. Beethoven directs that the final return of the opening tune is to be played “ponticello” (bowed near the bridge).

The short **Adagio** of 28 measures, based on a mournful meditative melody played by the viola, provides a transition to the rhythmic excitement of the Finale. The final **Allegro** begins abruptly with a dynamic motive scored in octaves which are used as structural elements throughout the movement. Later, a beautiful new theme appears, consisting of downward scale passages. Other themes that bear a close affinity to the opening fugue theme, fragments of which appear in the course of the movement, provide a sense of unity to the quartet. After a moment of calm, six vehement bars bring this masterpiece to an end.

Friends first heard this magnificent quartet in 1954 played by the Hungarian Quartet and before hearing it for the 16th time in this concert it was performed most recently in our concert series by the Tokyo Quartet in 2011.

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Next concerts - both at the Vancouver Playhouse, 600 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, BC

Mandelring Quartett (Germany)

Sunday, March 15, 2026 – 3:00 pm

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: String Quartet in D Major, Op. 44 No. 1

Viktor Ullmann: String Quartet Nr. 3

Ludwig van Beethoven: String Quartet No. 7 in F Major, Op. 59 No. 1 “Razumovsky”

Trio Bohémo (Czechia)

Tuesday, March 24, 2026 – 7:30 pm

Antonín Rejcha: Piano Trio in E flat Major, Op. 101 No. 1

Paul Schoenfield: Café Music (arr. for piano trio)

Bedřich Smetana: Piano Trio in G Minor, Op. 15

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