

MSM ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

# AMERICAN STRING QUARTET

**Peter Winograd** and **Laurie Carney**, violin

**Matthias Buchholz**, viola

**Wolfram Koessel**, cello

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GORDON K. AND HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL

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## PROGRAM

L. V. BEETHOVEN  
(1770–1827)

String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 18, no. 6  
("La Malinconia")

*Allegro con brio*

*Adagio, ma non troppo*

*Scherzo. Allegro — Trio*

*La Malinconia. Adagio*

*Allegretto quasi Allegro*

CAROLINE SHAW  
(b. 1982)

*Blueprint*

VIVIAN FUNG  
(b. 1975)

*Pizzicato*

## *Intermission*

MAURICE RAVEL  
(1875–1937)

String Quartet in F Major

*Allegro moderato*

*Assez vif, très rythmé*

*Très lent*

*Vif et agité*

# PROGRAM NOTES

## String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, no. 6 ("La Malinconia")

### Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven had been approached about writing string quartets by Count Apponyi in 1795, but no works surfaced as a direct result. When he began composing quartets in 1798 he was well aware that he was entering a hallowed and well-populated arena, represented at its best and therefore most daunting by Mozart and Haydn. He was particularly cognizant of the six quartets Mozart had dedicated to Haydn, as well as Mozart's *Prussian* Quartets and Haydn's own Opus 20, 71, 74, and 76 quartets. Only after he had composed and published piano trios, piano sonatas, cello sonatas, string trios, and violin sonatas did Beethoven feel ready to begin writing quartets in earnest. His sketchbooks show that he composed Quartets Nos. 3, 1, 2, and 5 in that order; there is some indication that No. 6 was composed last, but little information exists as to where No. 4 fits into the scheme.

These Opus 18 Quartets were commissioned by Beethoven's new patron Prince Lobkowitz, a man Beethoven's age and a talented violinist who loved music and drama so intensely that he squandered his income on them; in twenty years he was reduced to bankruptcy. He and Beethoven were very close—often quarreling, but then making up their differences. At the same time, the prince commissioned six quartets from the aging Haydn, who was unable to produce more than two and part of another. Inevitably Beethoven must have felt the heat of competition, and the task, which took him two years to complete, involved much revision. He is famously quoted as saying in 1801 that he has "just now learned how to write quartets properly."

The Quartets were published in 1801 by Mollo, one of three publishers kept busy by Beethoven that year. As a measure of how far Beethoven had come by the time he wrote the Opus 18 Quartets we should remember that his First Symphony, also published in 1801, came into existence alongside the Quartets.

Beethoven labeled the fourth movement of his Quartet, op. 18, no. 6, "La Malinconia," which then became the nickname of the entire Quartet. It is not a freestanding movement, but rather a slow introduction to the finale. This advanced style of ending is possibly the most remarkable feature of the six quartets that make up Opus 18.

Melancholy, however well portrayed in this "movement," is not the overriding impression of the work. To this listener at least, it is one of Beethoven's most fun

and witty quartets. The Scherzo (third movement) is especially merry as a unique display of triple-time ambiguity, resulting in constant syncopation and hemiola.

The first movement, to which Beethoven later added a notorious absurdly fast metronome marking, is in conventional sonata form, and somewhat less expansive than the early Opus 18 first movements. Beethoven's contrapuntal techniques (in part indebted to Haydn and Mozart but also to his recent counterpoint studies with Albrechtsberger) are abundant in the Opus 18 quartets; examples occur in this movement's development section and later in the "Malinconia" movement.

The slow movement is in ternary form of the pattern A-A'-B-A', a pattern typically used by Haydn. The complex harmonic essay, "La Malinconia," which Beethoven directs "must be played with the greatest delicacy," ends on a half cadence to introduce the Allegretto quasi Allegro. This finale is in the style of a "*danza alla tedesca*" or German dance, popular in Viennese ballrooms at the time. The "Malinconia" interrupts twice but cannot quell the gaiety of the dance.

—©Jane Vial Jaffe

## ***Blueprint***

### **Caroline Shaw**

Composer, producer, violinist, and vocalist Caroline Shaw is always "trying to imagine a world of sound that has never been heard before but has always existed." She began learning violin at age two from her violinist mother, who was also a singer. At age ten she began writing pieces in the style of classical compositions, and she formed her own string quartet in high school, all the while singing in church choirs. She earned degrees in violin from Rice and Yale Universities and, without composition training, earned a fellowship to write string quartets in England. After moving to New York, she embraced the contemporary music scene that had evolved away from dissonant serialism. In 2009 she joined the experimental vocal group Roomful of Teeth, for which she began composing her *Partita for Eight Voices*, adding bits over several years. Meanwhile she began studying composition at Princeton, finding teachers who fostered her exploratory, collaborative ideas.

In 2013 Shaw became the youngest ever to win the Pulitzer Prize in Music—for *Partita*. Since then, commissions and opportunities have poured in. She has composed more than one hundred works—ranging from those for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Yo-Yo Ma, and Renée Fleming to works for television and film, such as *Mozart in the Jungle*, in which she also made her acting debut as herself. She

has also contributed music to films and TV series including *Fleishman Is in Trouble*, *Bombshell*, *Yellowjackets*, *Maid*, *Dark*, and Beyoncé’s *Homecoming*.

In addition to Shaw’s albums with Sō Percussion, Nonesuch has released Shaw’s two Grammy-winning albums *Orange* (2019) and *Evergreen* (2022), both of which feature Attacca Quartet. “Two-Step,” the first of Shaw’s songs with Ringdown, her duo with Danni Lee, is available now on the Nonesuch label. Most recently Caroline Shaw was announced as Wigmore Hall’s 2024–25 composer-in-residence.

Shaw explained how the inspiration for *Blueprint* arose out of a commission for the Aizuri Quartet, which gave the premiere on April 8, 2016 at the Barns at Wolf Trap in Vienna, Virginia. Wrote the composer:

The Aizuri Quartet’s name comes from ‘*aizuri-e*,’ a style of Japanese woodblock printing that primarily uses a blue ink. In the 1820s artists in Japan began to import a particular blue pigment known as ‘Prussian blue,’ which was first synthesized by German paint producers in the early eighteenth century and later modified by others as an alternative to indigo. The story of *aizuri-e* is one of innovation, migration, transformation, craft, and beauty. *Blueprint*, composed for the incredible Aizuri Quartet, takes its title from this beautiful blue woodblock printing tradition as well as from that familiar standard architectural representation of a proposed structure: the blueprint.

This piece began its life as a harmonic reduction—a kind of floor plan—of Beethoven’s String Quartet, Op. 18, no. 6. As a violinist and violist, I have played this piece many times, in performance and in joyous late-night reading sessions with musician friends. (One such memorable session included Aizuri’s marvelous cellist, Karen Ouzounian.) Chamber music is ultimately about conversation without words. We talk to each other with our dynamics and articulations, and we try to give voice to the composers whose music has inspired us to gather in the same room and play music. *Blueprint* is also a conversation—with Beethoven, with Haydn (his teacher and the “father” of the string quartet), and with the joys and malinconia of his Op. 18, no. 6.

—Jane Vial Jaffe; Caroline Shaw

## *Pizzicato*

### **Vivian Fung**

Born in Canada of Chinese parents, composer Vivian Fung received her music training in the Western classical tradition, which included composition studies with Violet Archer at the University of Alberta, Narcis Bonet in Paris, and David Diamond and Robert Beaser at the Juilliard School, where she earned her doctorate in 2002. Several years later she became equally fascinated with finding out more about her Asian heritage and began a series of travels to Southwest China, North Vietnam, and Indonesia. She has since created a remarkable body of work based on combining textures and styles learned from these different cultures with her own Western training.

Fung's First Violin Concerto, indebted to her immersion in Balinese gamelan music, won the 2013 Juno Award for Best Composition of the Year. More recently her *Clarinet Quintet: Frenetic Memories* (2017) was inspired by the music of minority groups in Southwest China and her sometimes overwhelming experiences during her travels there in 2012. Fung finds inspiration not only from her travels but from daily encounters and world issues. Her whimsical *Earworms* (2018) draws on "the constant barrage of music and other media in the course of our multitasking lives" and *The Ice Is Talking* (2018) for solo percussion and electronics "uses three ice blocks to illustrate the beauty and fragility of our environment."

Most recently Fung's *Ominous* was premiered by the Grossman Ensemble at the Chicago Center for Contemporary Composition in May 2024, the same month that saw the premiere of her *Lamenting Earth* by tenor Nicholas Phan, pianist Myra Huang, and the Jasper String Quartet at Merkin Hall. Fung is currently at work on her opera in collaboration with librettist Royce Vavrek for Edmonton Opera, based on two scenes dealing with mental health issues and the composer's family history of miraculously escaping the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime.

Devoted to fostering young talent, Fung has mentored composers in programs at the London Symphony Orchestra, American Composers Forum, San Francisco Contemporary Chamber Players, and Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. She has taught at Santa Clara University, where she received an Outstanding Career Influencer Award, and has been a guest educator at organizations such as the Mostly Modern Summer Music Festival and the New York State School Music Association.

*Pizzicato* originated as the third movement of Fung's String Quartet No. 1, which was premiered by the Avalon String Quartet on January 24, 2004, yet she began the piece several years earlier. Says Fung, "*Pizzicato* was read by the American

String Quartet while I was an associate artist at the Atlantic Center for the Arts (ACA) in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, from April 29 to May 17, 2001.” This witty energetic piece has since accrued many performances, not only by string quartets but in its version for string orchestra.

Fung writes, “*Pizzicato* is a short work for string quartet, for the duration of which the players never use their bows. The central sound produced is that of plucked strings as well as a few surprises in the middle and towards the end of the work. Inspired by listening to Asian folk music, the piece is influenced partly by the music of the Chinese plucked instruments *pipa* and *qin* as well as by the energetic rhythms of Indonesian gamelan.”

## **String Quartet in F Major** **Maurice Ravel**

Incredible as it seems, Ravel’s efforts as a student at the Paris Conservatory and his attempts to win the prestigious Prix de Rome met with repeated rejection. His first dismissal from the Conservatory came in 1895 after he failed to win any piano prizes. He was dismissed again in 1900 when prizes in composition and fugue also eluded him. He nevertheless credited his teachers—Fauré in composition and Gédalge in composition—as major influences. He stayed on at the Conservatory as an auditor in Fauré’s class until 1903.

Just as Ravel’s flouting of conservative counterpoint and harmony rules dogged his success at the Conservatory, it kept him from earning the Prix de Rome five times between 1900 and 1905. These utterly painful rejections became known as the first “Affaire Ravel,” which ultimately led to the uncovering of a judging scandal and the replacement of the director of the Conservatory with the more tolerant Fauré. Against this backdrop of academic failure, however, Ravel was winning considerable public and critical support for his already mature-sounding compositions.

Ravel’s only String Quartet, now one of the most beloved pieces in the chamber music repertoire, was the product of his last year of study with Fauré, to whom he dedicated it with affection. The Quartet’s glorious first movement was the submission that failed to win its composer the 1903 Prix. The first performance of the Quartet took place at the Société Nationale de Musique—a prestigious place indeed for a “failure”—on March 5, 1904, by the Heymann Quartet. The critics hotly contested the merits of the work, some considering it too derivative of Debussy and others boldly recognizing Ravel as one of the masters of the future.

Obvious parallels exist between Debussy’s and Ravel’s Quartets—such as the shadowy accompanimental sixteenth-note figures in the first movement and the

pizzicatos in the scherzo—but Ravel's clarity of structure, innovative textures, and thematic transformations within and between movements bespeak his uniqueness. Despite a professional rivalry that became ugly in the press, Debussy is said to have written his younger colleague encouraging him to stand firm with exactly what he had composed.

The warm pastoral theme of Ravel's opening and a vigorous climax provide a wonderful foil for the soaring, haunting second theme played by the violin and viola paralleling one another two octaves apart. The composer drapes his inspired textures and colors over a transparent sonata framework. This form features some harmonic sleight of hand—when the haunting theme returns in the recapitulation, Ravel uses exactly the same notes in the upper three parts, but manages a change to the home key simply by raising the cello line.

Like Debussy, Ravel places his Scherzo second. The younger composer uses contrasting meters between the outer and inner pairs of instruments, culminating in an insistent trill that blossoms into a plaintive melody over busy texture. The central trio slows to a moody, atmospheric meandering before the rhythmic pizzicato of the scherzo resumes.

Ravel's slow movement begins in the declamatory vein of a storyteller, whose muted narrative unfolds with alternating tension and serenity, periodically alluding to first-movement themes. A string of ingenious textures and ideas captivates the ear—delicate trills arising out of a gruff cello recitative, poignant melodies with rocking accompaniment or underlaid with rapid string crossings, and an exquisite peak followed by a nostalgic ebbing.

The vigorous finale with its irregular 5/8 meter and juxtaposition of lyricism and insistent outbursts struck Fauré as “stunted, badly balanced, in fact a failure.” Time, however, has overruled his objections—the movement's unsettled nature, its expressive transformations of first-movement material, and its whirlwind virtuosity are now deemed the perfect conclusion to a masterpiece.

*—Program notes ©Jane Vial Jaffe*



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## American String Quartet

Internationally recognized as one of the world's foremost quartets, the American String Quartet marks its 51th season in 2024–25. Critics and colleagues hold the Quartet in high esteem and many of today's leading artists and composers seek out the Quartet for collaborations. The Quartet is also known for its performances of the complete quartets of Beethoven, Schubert, Schoenberg, Bartók, and Mozart. The Quartet's recordings of the complete Mozart string quartets on a matched set of Stradivarius instruments are widely held to set the standard for this repertoire. To celebrate its 35th anniversary, the Quartet recorded an ambitious CD, *Schubert's Echo*, released by NSS Music. The program invites the listener to appreciate the influence of Schubert on two masterworks of early 20th-century Vienna. In addition to quartets by European masters, the American naturally performs quartets by American composers. Their newest release, *American Romantics* (Apple Music, 2018), is a recording of Robert Sirota's *American Pilgrimage*, Dvořák's "American" quartet, and Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. The American also champions contemporary music. The Quartet has commissioned and premiered works by distinguished American composers Claus Adam, Richard Danielpour, Kenneth Fuchs, Tobias Picker, Robert Sirota, and George Tsontakis. The Quartet has recorded on the Albany, CRI, MusicMasters, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, RCA, and Apple Music labels. The Quartet's discography includes works by Adam, Corigliano, Danielpour, Dvořák, Fuchs, Prokofiev, Schoenberg, Sirota, and Tsontakis. The Quartet's innovative programming and creative approach to education has resulted in notable residencies throughout the country. The Quartet continues as artists in residence at Manhattan School of Music (1984–present) and the Aspen Music Festival (1974–present). The ASQ also teaches in Beijing, China, and travels widely abroad. Formed in 1974 when its original members were students at the Juilliard School, the American String Quartet was launched by winning both the Coleman Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Award in the same year.

## **Peter Winograd, violin**

Peter Winograd joined the American String Quartet, Artists in Residence at Manhattan School of Music, in 1990. He gave his first solo public performance at the age of 11, and at age 17 he was accepted as a scholarship student of Dorothy DeLay at the Juilliard School. Recognized early as an exceptionally promising young artist, Winograd was a top prizewinner in the 1988 Naumburg International Violin Competition. He then made his New York debut to critical acclaim and has since appeared as a guest soloist with numerous orchestras and in recital across the country and abroad, including annual collaborative performances with cellist Andrés Díaz at the Florida Arts Chamber Music Festival. In 2002 Winograd performed the Sibelius Violin Concerto with the Hartford Symphony; his father, Arthur Winograd, was the featured guest conductor. Peter Winograd has been a member of the violin and chamber music faculties of the Manhattan School of Music and the Aspen Music School (where the American is Quartet in Residence) since 1990. Born into a gifted musical family, Winograd began his studies with his parents. His mother was a professional pianist, and his father was the founding cellist of the Juilliard Quartet and a conductor of the Hartford Symphony in Hartford, Connecticut, where Winograd grew up. He holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from Juilliard. His wife, violinist Caterina Szepes, is a regular participant in the Marlboro Festival and a member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. His violin is by Giovanni Maria del Bussetto (Cremona, 1675).

## **Laurie Carney, violin**

A founding member of the American String Quartet, Laurie Carney comes from a prodigious musical family. Her father was a trumpeter and educator, her mother a pianist, and her siblings all violinists. She began her studies at home and at the age of 8 became the youngest violinist to be admitted to the Preparatory Division of the Juilliard School. At 15 she was the youngest to be accepted into Juilliard's College Division. Ms. Carney studied with Dorothy DeLay and received both Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from Juilliard. She has shared the stage with many of the world's leading artists, including Isaac Stern, Yefim Bronfman, Pinchas Zukerman, and Frederica von Stade, and been featured in Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with the Bournemouth Symphony and the Basque (Spain) Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Carney frequently performed duo recitals with Guarneri Quartet violist Michael Tree. She was featured in the New York premiere of Giampaolo Bracali's *Fantasia*. Robert Sirota wrote his Sonata No. 2, *Farewell*, for Ms. Carney in 2013. She recorded it in 2014 along with an earlier

work, *Summertime*, with pianist David Friend on a CD of Sirota's music entitled *Parting the Veil: Works for Violin and Piano* (Albany Records).

Since receiving the Walter W. Naumburg Award in 1974 with the American String Quartet, Ms. Carney has performed across North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Israel, including special projects with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, New York City Ballet, and Mark Morris Dance Group. The quartet has an extensive discography, ranging from the complete Mozart quartets to the many contemporary works written for them. A member of the faculty of Manhattan School of Music since 1984 and of Aspen Music Festival since 1974, she has held teaching positions at the Mannes College of Music, Peabody Conservatory, the University of Nebraska, and the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. Her frequent master classes have taken her to California, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, and New Mexico. Ms. Carney performs the duo repertory with her husband, cellist William Grubb. Her nonprofessional interests include animal rights and environmental concerns. Her violin is by Carlo Tononi (Venice, 1720).

## **Matthias Buchholz, viola**

Matthias Buchholz was born in Hamburg in 1957, where he also began his musical training, and continued his studies at the University of Cincinnati, the Musikhochschule in Detmold, and the Curtis Institute of Music. His major teachers were Bruno Giuranna, Karen Tuttle and Michael Tree. Chamber-music studies with Felix Galimir, Alexander Schneider, and the LaSalle Quartet are sources of inspiration to this day.

He has been violist with the Brahms Quartet in Hamburg (1975–1980) and with the Ridge Quartet in New York (1981–1984) and has toured since 1976 throughout Europe, the U.S. and Canada, South America, and Asia. Since 1991, he has been a member of the Linos Ensemble, recording recording numerous CDs for cpo and Capriccio and touring throughout Europe and Southeast Asia. He was a founding member of the Heine Quartet (2003–2008), which performed the world premiere of the *Adagio for String Quartet (In Memory of Schumann)* by Aribert Reimann at the Schumannfest in Düsseldorf in 2006.

He has been invited to major European music festivals such as Avignon, Berlin, Warsaw, Lyon, Korsholm, Slovenia, Schleswig-Holstein, and Hitzacker, as well as the Marlboro Festival and Washington D.C.'s Summer Music, where he enjoyed working and performing with Salvatore Accardo, Norbert Brainin, Rainer Kussmaul, Benny Goodman, Heinz Holliger, Truls Mørk, Frans Helmerson, Anner

Bylsma, and members of the Guarneri Quartet. As guest violist he has frequently joined the Aurn Quartet, the American String Quartet, the Petersen Quartet, the Fine Arts and the Vermeer Quartet.

Matthias Buchholz was principal viola with the Stuttgart Radio Orchestra from 1986 to 1990, when he was appointed professor of viola at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne. In 2013 he was appointed Professor of Viola at the Haute école de musique (HEM) of Geneva, succeeding Nobuko Imai. He has been invited to hold master classes in many European countries, as well as in the U.S., Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea.

## **Wolfram Koessel, cello**

Since his Carnegie Hall debut in 1994, cellist Wolfram Koessel has performed as a chamber musician, recitalist, and soloist throughout the world. *Strad* magazine praised his “exceptionally attractive cello playing.” As a soloist he has performed concertos throughout the United States as well as with Japan’s Osaka Symphony Orchestra and orchestras in Germany and South America. Cellist of the American String Quartet, Artists in Residence at Manhattan School of Music, he also has appeared often with the New York Metamorphoses Orchestra, which he cofounded in 1994. His collaborations include performances with the legendary tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain, dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, and cellist Yo Yo Ma, among many others. Koessel also appears with a wide range of ensembles, including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Trio+ (a group he formed with violinist Yosuke Kawasaki and pianist Vadim Serebryani), which performs creative and collaborative concerts throughout Japan, the United States, and Canada. Koessel served as music director of the Mark Morris Dance Group from 2004 to 2008 and has toured extensively with the company both nationally and internationally, performing in several performances. In 2018 he travelled with them to Israel performing Bach’s Third Cello Suite in several performances. He resides with his wife, pianist and writer J. Mae Barizo, and his daughter in Manhattan.