



# Isidore String Quartet

FEBRUARY 23, 2025 | 2 PM & 7:30 PM  
VANDERHOEF STUDIO THEATRE | UC DAVIS

THIS SEASON IS PRESENTED BY  
THE NANCY AND HANK FISHER FAMILY FUND

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Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

[diversity.ucdavis.edu](https://diversity.ucdavis.edu)



## ***A Trip Around the World***

In the Mondavi Center's backstage hallway, just outside the Williams Green Room, there is a map of the world. It's filled with pins, placed there to recognize and honor the home countries of our visiting artists. Every continent except Antarctica has been tagged. Only a few countries and territories do not have a pin.



It's a treat to watch visiting artists and other guests exploring the map. I love to see their excitement when a new pin is placed, or when they realize others from their home country have graced our stages. The map, which started as a simple idea (almost a joke, really), now tells the story of how the arts are a tie that binds all humanity.

As I look ahead at our season, I'm excited and proud of the global reach of our lineup and the promise of some new pins in the map. From January through May, we will present artists from the United States, Brazil, South Korea, England, Guinea, India, Ireland, Japan, France, Australia, and Ukraine.

Some of our most interesting international visitors will focus on the fascinating intersection between western classical arts traditions and the artist's own culture. Heloísa Fernandes will focus on jazz and its Brazilian heritage. Bereishit Dance Company will present modern dance informed by traditional Korean Culture. And the gravity-defying acrobats of Cirque Kalabanté will explore the rhythms of Guinean daily life (just to name a few).

I encourage you to explore this season's many international offerings, and to consider trying something entirely new to you. You'll be glad you did.



The world awaits,  
**Jeremy Ganter**  
*Executive Director*

# Isidore String Quartet

**Adrian Steele**, violin (first on Childs and Beethoven)

**Phoenix Avalon**, violin (first on Mozart)

**Devin Moore**, viola

**Joshua McClendon**, cello

## PROGRAM

**String Quartet in C Major, K. 465 ("Dissonance")**

*Adagio-Allegro*

*Andante cantabile*

*Menuetto (Allegretto)*

*Molto allegro*

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

(1756-1791)

**String Quartet No. 3, *Unrequited***

**Billy Childs**

(b. 1957)

---INTERMISSION---

**String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127**

*Maestoto-Allegro*

*Adagio, ma non troppo e molto contabile*

*Scherzo. Vivace - Presto*

*Finale: allegro con moto*

**Ludwig Van Beethoven**

(1770-1827)

**\*PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE\***

The Isidore String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists  
[www.davidroweartists.com](http://www.davidroweartists.com)

# Program Notes

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## String Quartet in C Major, K. 465 ("Dissonance") (1785)

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART  
Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756; died in  
Vienna, December 5, 1791

"The quartets are, indeed, the fruit of a long and laborious endeavor," Mozart admits to Haydn in a letter dated September 1, 1785, in which he encloses six new quartets. And the many crossings-out, careful corrections and fragments of quartet movements from this period of Mozart's life bear this out. Nowhere else did he labor so painstakingly over his music. "Please, then, receive them kindly and be to them as a father, a guide, a friend," Mozart (a generation younger than Haydn) continues. "I entreat you to be indulgent to those faults that may have escaped a father's partial eye, and, in spite of them, to continue your generous friendship towards one who so highly appreciates it."

The magnificent and disturbing C Major Quartet is the crowning point of Mozart's six "Haydn" quartets. The work is true evidence of Mozart's triumph in emulating Haydn in his Op. 33 collection of quartets from 1782, and achieving a balance of structure, musical style and emotion. Mozart began work on the six quartets not long after moving from Salzburg to Vienna. It was then that he began to hear music by Bach and Handel on a regular basis at weekly gatherings in the Vienna home of Baron van Swieten. The power of contrapuntal writing began to have a deep and increasing effect on Mozart's own part-writing at the time. The effect is at its most acute in the unsettling dissonances of the opening 22 measures of the C Major Quartet. They give the work a nickname "Dissonance" and arise from a synthesis of free counterpoint and chromatic, "highly spiced" harmonies, to use a term that was often thrown at the mature Mozart. The dissonances are calculated to shock - so much so that people at first accused Mozart of releasing the printed music without having carefully proofed the parts! Even half a century later, Belgian music theorist François-Joseph Fétis proposed a "fix" to Mozart's strident harmonies by moving the first violin entry one beat earlier. Many applauded the idea; few went along with it. Today were the opening to be played with this crass insensitivity to Mozart's boldness, it's certain that the stone statue of the *Don Giovanni* Commendatore would appear on stage to sort things out. The suspense and tension created by the dissonance is released in the ensuing *Allegro*. The profound, aching *Andante cantabile* is one of the most sublime movements Mozart

wrote. Throughout the chromatic minuet and serene finale, the musical invention and disciplined working-out of short motifs are exemplary.

— Program notes copyright © 2024 Keith Horner. Comments welcomed: [khnotes@sympatico.ca](mailto:khnotes@sympatico.ca)

## String Quartet No. 3, *Unrequited* (2015)

BILLY CHILDS  
Born in Los Angeles, March 8, 1957

*Unrequited*, String Quartet No. 3, was conceived as a commentary on the story of Intimate Letters: String Quartet No. 2, by Leos Janáček. The first thing - the only thing, really - that popped into my mind was the tragedy of unrequited love (hence the name, *Unrequited*). When I first heard Janáček's Intimate Letters performed live, the emotion of the piece jumped out at me: the wild shifts of tempo, the beautiful and plaintive melodies, the stark dynamic contrasts. I wanted to illustrate my perspective on this strange relationship between Janáček and Kamila Stösslová, by telling the story of a man who goes through different phases of emotion, before finally coming to terms with the fact that his love for her is one-sided - it will never be returned the way he would like. I sought to compose *Unrequited* so that it moves, like the five stages of grief, through a variety of emotions - from romantic, pure love, through paranoid, obsessive, neurotic possessiveness, arriving finally at despondent acceptance.

This piece was commissioned by Madelyn, Jerald, and Lee Jackrel and is dedicated to and premiered by the Lyris Quartet.

—Note by Billy Childs

# String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127 (1825)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

**Born in Bonn, Germany, baptized December 17, 1770;  
died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827**

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was a decade into what critics call his late period when he composed his String Quartet No. 12 in E-flat Major, Op. 127 (1825). It had been 15 years since he wrote his Quartet No. 11, a work he deemed so radical that he didn't want it performed. Money from a commission convinced him to revisit the genre, setting off a late-life sequence of quartets even more iconoclastic. This quartet is perhaps the most lyrical of the set and, coming off the composition of his great celebration of joy in the 9th Symphony, the most exuberant.

The beginning *maestoso* chorale appears simple, but it is incredibly ambitious, offering the listener the most basic form of four-part writing that every student learns, as if to say, this quartet will contain everything. It is also an affirmation, as is what follows. Beethoven, though often considered the Classical to Romantic bridge, wanted to reclaim his classically inclined aesthetic in this period. An oversimplified tenet for the Romantics is that content dictates form. For Beethoven, form was a primary driver in the creation of his best writing. Commentary often focuses on the radicalism of the late quartets, and of course they are radical, but the paradox is that their originality emerges from Beethoven's impulse toward conservatism, a retreat from certain contemporary trends to expand and loosen formal constraints. In this quartet, the retreat is toward Bach, Handel, and the baroque, with an emphasis on contrapuntal writing and heightened clarity of form.

The quartet promptly gets on with the business of restless counterpoint. In the context of the *maestoso*, each new theme sounds as if it has been gathered from a disassembled chorale and scattered across the Haydn-esque sonata *allegro* form. Typical of Beethoven's late quartets, shifts are abrupt and transitions are unceremonious, creating moments of comprehensive disintegration and unease in preparation for resolution.

The second movement is a theme and variations, a form Beethoven was somewhat obsessed with in his late period. The six variations, unlike some of Beethoven's related works from this period, do not reach for higher and higher levels of virtuosity, but simply and steadily unearth the inherent depth of one of the most beautiful melodies the composer ever wrote.

The buzzing scherzo contains the most intricate contrapuntal writing of the piece. It is a masterclass in anticipation and deception – just when a phrase feels that it is settling in, it will stop abruptly, or a unison shout will compel it to a new section.

The final movement does not reconvene themes from the previous movements as is often the case, but introduces two fresh themes, a flowing melody whose shape is reminiscent of the first theme of the piece, and a joyous march that propels with its decisive articulation and wide open harmonic accompaniment. The great pleasure of this movement is its ending, a contrasting coda in a shifted key and meter announced suddenly by a violin trill, the same technique that brought the quartet out of the *maestoso* at the start. It is Beethoven's classicism shining through: clarity and unity, from beginning to end.

—Note by Connor Buckley

# Isidore String Quartet

**Adrian Steele and Phoenix Avalon, violins**  
**Devin Moore, viola**  
**Joshua McClendon, cello**

“A polished sonority and well-balanced, tightly synchronized ensemble with nearly faultless intonation....it is heartening to know that chamber music is in good hands with such gifted young ensembles as the Isidore Quartet”

—*Chicago Classical Review*

Winners of a 2023 Avery Fisher Career Grant, and the 14th Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2022, the New York City-based Isidore String Quartet was formed in 2019 with a vision to revisit, rediscover, and reinvigorate the repertory. The quartet is heavily influenced by the Juilliard String Quartet and the idea of “approaching the established as if it were brand new, and the new as if it were firmly established.”

The quartet began as an ensemble at the Juilliard School, and has coached with Joel Krosnick, Joseph Lin, Astrid Schween, Laurie Smukler, Joseph Kalichstein, Roger Tapping, Misha Amory and numerous others. They are currently completing their final year as Peak Fellowship Ensemble-in-Residence at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

In North America, the Isidore Quartet has appeared on major series in Boston, New York, Berkeley, Chicago, Ann Arbor,

Pittsburgh, Seattle, Durham, Washington DC, Houston, Toronto, and Montreal, and has collaborated with several eminent performers including James Ehnes, Jeremy Denk, Shai Wosner, and Jon Nakamatsu. Their 24/25 season includes performances in Salt Lake City, Buffalo, Kansas City, Portland (OR), Louisville, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Memphis, Vancouver, San Francisco and many other cities across the US and Canada. In Europe they will appear at Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, and in Bonn (Beethoven Haus), Stuttgart, Cologne, and Dresden, among many others.

Over the past several years, the quartet has developed a strong connection to the works of composer and pianist Billy Childs. His String Quartet No. 2, *Awakenings* was among the repertoire that delivered the Isidore their Banff victory, and this season they will play Childs’ Quartet No. 3, *Unrequited*. In the 2025-26 season, they will premiere a new Childs quartet written expressly for them.

Both on stage and outside the concert hall, the Isidore Quartet is deeply invested in connecting with youth and elderly populations, and with marginalized communities who otherwise have limited access to high-quality live music performance. They approach music as a “playground” and attempt to break down barriers to encourage collaboration and creativity. The name Isidore recognizes the ensemble’s musical connection to the Juilliard Quartet: one of that group’s early members was legendary violinist Isidore Cohen. Additionally, it acknowledges a shared affection for a certain libation - legend has it a Greek monk named Isidore concocted the first genuine vodka recipe for the Grand Duchy of Moscow!



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