

VCC Valley Classical Concerts

In Cooperation with the Smith
College Department of Music, Presents

The Lydian Quartet and Jiayan Sun



Sunday, February 9, 2025, at 3:00 PM,
Sweeney Concert Hall / Sage Hall, Smith
College, Northampton, MA

The Lydian String Quartet and Jiayan Sun

Jiayan Sun, piano
Clara Lyon and Julia Glenn, violins
Mark Berger, viola and Joshua Gordon, cello

PROGRAM

Joseph Haydn (1732 -1809)

String Quartet, op. 33, no. 3, in C major ("The Bird", 1781)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Scherzo: Allegretto
- III. Adagio ma non troppo
- IV. Finale: Rondo - Presto

Claude Debussy (1862 -1918)

String Quartet in G minor (1893)

- I. Animé et très décidé
- II. Assez vif et bien rythmé
- III. Andantino, doucement expressif
- IV. Très modéré

INTERMISSION

César Franck (1822 -1890)

Piano Quintet in F minor (1879)

- I. Molto moderato quasi lento - Allegro
- II. Lento con molto sentimento
- III. Allegro non troppo ma con fuoco

The Lydian Quartet
781-736-3338
info@lydianquartet.com
www.lydianquartet.com

About Today's Concert

John Montanari, Artistic Director

A good chamber music program can make for a condensed history of the genre. And so is today's.

When it comes to the string quartet, one must start with Haydn, who deserves the credit for establishing the importance of the medium as much as he does for the symphony. While his earliest quartets, dating from the late 1750's, are basically divertimenti (pleasant music for simple enjoyment, often as an accompaniment to social events), by the time we get to his six Quartets, Op. 20 (1772), we are offered large-scale four-movement works to delight the connoisseur, filled with sophisticated interplay among the musicians and the musical ideas. The Quartets of Op. 33, appearing nine years later, were the first Haydn composed after his employer, Prince Esterházy, had granted the composer permission to market his music for personal profit. In true entrepreneurial spirit, Haydn declared these works to have composed in a "new and special" manner, the veracity of this declaration being a matter for the connoisseurs to debate.

The nickname for the Op. 33, No. 3 Quartet, "the Bird," derives from the grace notes of the first violin's opening melody of the first movement and/or the cuckoo call of the finale's opening melody. Note the use of "scherzo" ("jest") for the second movement, a generation before Beethoven pioneered the term to describe his vigorous substitutions for the courtly minuets of earlier composers' works. Considering the music Haydn attached to the term, which I will not spoil by describing it, you might find the designation "scherzo" ironic.

Debussy's only String Quartet, in fact, his only work in the classic four-movement form, comes from 1893, 111 years later than today's Haydn.

About Today's Concert (cont.)

While Debussy's Quartet is only slightly longer than Haydn's, its score probably took twice as much ink to print, so full is it of expressive indications (*en français, naturellement!*), dynamic (i.e., loud-soft) markings, accidentals (sharps, flats or naturals placed before notes to alter their pitch), double stops (i.e., two notes at once), and tiny note values blackening each bar. While the musical "impressionism" inevitably associated with Debussy would only appear in full flower one year later in his *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, the fresh harmonies and bold instrumental effects of the Quartet make it one of the most innovative works in the history of the medium.

Belgian-born composer, organist, and teacher César Franck is known for a handful of works, produced in his final two decades, in which the richly chromatic harmonies and new formal designs of the "New German School," exemplified by Liszt and Wagner, were absorbed into standard classical forms. You will hear this in the constantly shifting harmonies of today's Piano Quintet, as well as in its use of "cyclical form," referring, according to my handy *Grove Music Online*, to pieces in which "a later movement reintroduces thematic material of an earlier movement." (The Debussy Quartet uses the same concept more organically, with the themes throughout its four movements bearing unmistakable familial resemblance rather than being literal restatements.)

Composed in 1879, the Quintet was dedicated to the composer and pianist Camille Saint-Saëns (*Carnival of the Animals, Samson et Dalilah*, etc.). Saint-Saëns played the premiere with the Marsick Quartet. He shocked Franck by leaving the score open to its dedication page, behind on the piano stand – an insult, as Franck had personally written a copy of the piano part with a friendly dedication. Saint-Saëns, you see, was "Old School" and hid his reservations about this new school of composition until they boiled over at the performance.

Artist Information

THE LYDIAN QUARTET

From its beginning in 1980, the Lydian String Quartet (Clara Lyon and Julia Glenn, violins; Mark Berger, viola; Joshua Gordon, cello) has been acclaimed by audiences and critics across the USA and abroad for embracing the full range of the string quartet repertory with curiosity, virtuosity, and dedication to the highest artistic ideals of music-making. In its formative years, the quartet studied repertoire with Robert Koff, a founding member of the Juilliard String Quartet who had joined the Brandeis University faculty in 1958. Forging a personality of their own, the Lydians were awarded top prizes in international string quartet competitions, including Evian, Portsmouth and Banff, culminating in 1984 with the Naumburg Award for Chamber Music.

In the years to follow, the quartet continued to build a reputation for their depth of interpretation, performing with "a precision and involvement marking them as among the world's best quartets" (Chicago Sun-Times). Residing at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts since the group's founding, the Lydians continue to offer compelling, insightful, and dramatic performances of the quartet literature. From the acknowledged masterpieces of the classical, romantic, and modern eras to new, remarkable compositions written by today's cutting-edge composers, the quartet approaches music-making with a sense of exploration and personal expression that is timeless.

The Lydian String Quartet has performed extensively throughout the United States at venues such as Jordan Hall in Boston; the Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; Lincoln Center, Miller Theater, and Weill Recital Hall in New York City; the Pacific Rim Festival at the University of California at Santa Cruz; and the Slee Beethoven Series at the University at Buffalo. Abroad, the Quartet has made appearances in France, England, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Armenia, and Taiwan.

THE LYDIAN QUARTET (continued)

The Lydians have created intriguing thematic programming such as “Around the World in a String Quartet,” a multi-year concert series that explores string quartet music from local world musical traditions in and beyond the western European art music setting; and “Vienna and the String Quartet,” a project surveying the heart of the Western classical string quartet repertory by juxtaposing new and old Vienna. In addition to traditional concerts, the quartet offers programming with themes exploring concepts of time, place, the vernacular, and identity, as well as single-composer programs, all-contemporary programs, cross-cultural collaborations, and mixed media programs (video, electronics, live painting projections).

The Lydians have long championed the commissioning, performing, and recording of new works. They enjoy working with young composers at the quartet’s Brandeis home as well as in mini-residencies at universities across the US. Their five-year “American Originals” Project, from 1995-2000, featured music drawn from the rich repertoire of the 20th century American string quartet. During that time they performed and/or recorded over sixty works by American composers from the early twentieth century onward, accompanying concerts with workshops, lectures, and discussions. The Lydians were the first to record many of these works, helping to bring them to the forefront of the American contemporary quartet repertoire.

The Lydians' 29 currently available commercial recordings reflect their diverse and far-reaching repertoire, including works by Beethoven, Brahms, Ives, Ornstein, Persichetti, and Schubert, as well as American contemporary composers they have long known and collaborated with, including Martin Boykan, Eric Chasalow, Peter Child, John Harbison, Lee Hyla, Steven Mackey, Kurt Rohde, Harold Shapero, and Yehudi Wyner.

The members of the Lydian String Quartet are on the faculty of Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts.

JIAYAN SUN, PIANO

Praised by the *New York Times* for his “revelatory” performances, and by the *Toronto Star* for his “technically flawless, poetically inspired and immensely assured playing,” pianist Jiayan Sun has performed with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, the Chinese and RTÉ (Ireland) National Symphony Orchestras, the Fort Worth and Toledo Symphony Orchestras, the Toronto and Aspen Concert Orchestras, and the Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra, and has conducted from the keyboard the Meiningen Court Orchestra.

He has collaborated with prominent conductors, including Sir Mark Elder, Michail Jurowski, Stefan Sanderling, Leon Fleisher, David Hayes, Thomas Crawford, Daejin Kim, Kerry Stratton, and Xincao Li. His performances have been broadcast by the BBC, the RTÉ, China Central Television, and classical music radio stations in North America. He has performed at and participated in the Verbier Festival, the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, the Klavier-Festival Ruhr, the Aspen Music Festival, the Sarasota Music Festival, and PianoTexas. Under the mentorship of Sir Andrés Schiff, he was invited to give a number of solo recitals in Europe as part of Schiff’s “Building Bridges” project.

Sun has been awarded prizes at many of the major international piano competitions, including third prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, second prize at the Dublin International Piano Competition, fourth prize and the audience prize at the Cleveland International Piano Competition, and first prize at the inaugural CCC Toronto International Piano Competition. Playing early keyboard instruments and studying historical performance practice have played a significant role in Sun’s musical activities, with critically acclaimed appearances with the American Classical Orchestra in Alice Tully Hall.

Hailing from Yantai, China, he received bachelor’s, master’s and doctor of musical arts degrees from The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Yoheved Kaplinsky and Stephen Hough. His other mentors include pianists Malcolm Bilson, Richard Goode, and Robert Levin,

JIAYAN SUN, PIANO (continued)

and harpsichordist Lionel Party. His devotion to the art of composition led him to study with the composer Philip Lasser. As the Iva Dee Hiatt Visiting Artist in piano at Smith College, he presented Beethoven's complete piano sonatas in chronological order, in addition to year-long series devoted to the music of Schubert and Chopin.

LYDIAN QUARTET
ARTIST INFORMATION LINKS

Follow the VCC web site links embedded in the QR code to the right to learn more about Clara Lyon and Julia Glenn, violins; Mark Berger, viola; and Joshua Gordon, cello.



A concert poster for the Springfield Symphony Orchestra. The background is a vibrant red with a pattern of stylized leaves and butterflies. In the upper right corner, there is a white logo consisting of a stylized 'S' with a diagonal line through it. The text "Springfield Symphony Orchestra" is written in a white, serif font across the top. Below it, the title "Harmony of Love" is written in a large, white, cursive font. In the center, a woman with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a black jacket, is shown from the waist up, holding a baton in her right hand and gesturing with her left. Overlaid on the image is a black rectangular box containing the text "FEB 15" in large, white, bold letters, and "4:00PM" in smaller, white, bold letters below it. At the bottom of the poster, the text "TICKETS AT SPRINGFIELDSYMPHONY.ORG OR CALL 413-733-2291" is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

From the Valley Classical Concerts President

On behalf of the Board of Valley Classical Concerts, I would like to welcome you to our 2024-25 season. Founded as Music in Deerfield, VCC is now celebrating its 45th year of presenting internationally known classical chamber music ensembles for the enjoyment of music lovers in the Pioneer Valley and beyond.

We hope you are as excited as we are to hear these fabulous artists, from young prizewinners to musicians who have played together for decades. Many of them are returning simply because they appreciate the enthusiasm of our audience, and the marvelous acoustics of Sweeney Concert Hall.

I would like to thank and to gratefully acknowledge our many generous corporate sponsors, individual and Board donors, and Smith College, who have helped make this season possible and who have supported VCC over the years. They are all listed in the playbill.

Enjoy the music, encourage friends and family and younger adults and students to come to the concerts, and please consider donating to Valley Classical Concerts! Without continued financial support from our loyal patrons and lovers of chamber music, Valley Classical Concerts would not exist.

Dr. William Harbison, Board President

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Tenor

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7:30 PM

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(note date change)

Sunday, February 9, 3:00 pm

The Lydian String Quartet
with pianist Jiayan Sun

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