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# THE MIRÓ QUARTET



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# THE MIRÓ QUARTET



Tuesday, April 18, 2023 • 7:30 p.m.  
Doc Rando Recital Hall  
*Lee & Thomas Beam Music Center*

The Miró Quartet appears by special arrangement with MKI Artists: 70 S Winooski Ave. #318, Burlington, VT 05401.  
The Quartet's recordings are on Bridge Records, Oxingale Records, Longhorn Music, and Miró Quartet Media Labels.





## From the Dean of the College of Fine Arts

Dear Performing Arts Center patron,

I am delighted to welcome you to the UNLV Chamber Music Society. We are proud to present a wide range of exceptional performances, richly contributing to the culture of this region. Las Vegas is, without a doubt, one of the most important arts and entertainment centers in the world. How exciting it is to be part of such a dynamic community!

The College of Fine Arts at UNLV, one of the largest in the country, educates students in the visual and performing arts, in architecture and in a program called entertainment engineering and design (EED). The college supports the scholarship, teaching, research and creative activities of its stellar faculty, and is proud to participate in many regional, national and international partnerships. The Performing Arts Center, housed in the College of Fine Arts, is one of the region's most significant and vital cultural resources. PAC has been remarkably successful in delivering the highest quality arts experiences to its audiences, and additionally, has a thriving and celebrated educational program.

If this is your first experience here, please come back often. If you are a subscriber or frequent guest thank you so much for sharing in our joy of the arts. Please stay in touch!

We are thrilled that you are part of our growing UNLV Chamber Music family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy J. Uscher".

Nancy J. Uscher  
Dean, UNLV College of Fine Arts

# TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

String Quartet in C major, K. 465, "Dissonance" .....	W.A. Mozart
I. <i>Adagio-Allegro</i>	(1756 – 1791)
II. <i>Andante cantabile</i>	
III. <i>Menuetto. Allegro</i>	
IV. <i>Allegro Molto</i>	

Home.....	Kevin Puts
	(b. 1972)

~Intermission~

String Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 51, No. 1 .....	Johannes Brahms
I. <i>Allegro</i>	(1833– 1897)
II. <i>Romanze: Poco adagio</i>	
III. <i>Allegro molto moderato e comodo</i>	
IV. <i>Allegro</i>	

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### Quartet in C major, K. 465, "Dissonance" W.A. Mozart

Mozart had been profoundly impressed by Haydn's set of six quartets (Opus 33) published in 1781. Inspired by these works, he returned to writing string quartets after a lapse of ten years. The six "Haydn" quartets were composed by Mozart between 1782 and 1785. As musicologist Alfred Einstein says, "Mozart did not allow himself to be overcome. This time he learned as a master from a master; he did not imitate, he yielded nothing of his own personality." He followed Haydn's lead in conceiving the string quartet as a four-part discourse, shared by all the instruments. Their respect and admiration being mutual, Haydn was, in turn, influenced in his own subsequent quartets by these quartets (which Mozart dedicated to him).

The C major Quartet was the last of the series to be composed and was finished January 14, 1785. Its appellation, "Dissonance," refers to the introductory adagio's opening passage. As is usually the case, the composer had nothing to do with the appellation. You won't, however, be treated to ear-crushing dissonance of the

sort that would make modernist American composer Charles Ives stand up and cheer. The "dissonance" occurs in the opening passage—a progression of chords over a pedal point by the cello. While it is a rather chromatic passage, it's guided by the 18th century's rules about harmony.

So while the piece may have reportedly caused a tantrum or two by a disgruntled aristocrat (with "sissy ears," as Ives would say), causing Mozart to tear up the parts, and also caused scores to be returned to the publisher, by performers, with corrections indicated, none other than the dedicatee (and no mean musical experimenter himself) Haydn remarked, "Well, if Mozart wrote it, he must have meant it." The opening passage achieves a deliberate sense of ambiguity. Mozart is keeping us in the fog, rather than clearly establishing the key of C major. With the *Allegro* that follows this introduction, the fog has lifted and we are in the sunny key of C major. The second movement, *Andante cantabile*, is considered to be the heart of the work—a lovely, lush, lyrical (forgive the alliteration) work. The third movement *Menuetto* is interesting in that central to it is a rather agitated section that places it way

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## PROGRAM NOTES, *continued from page 5*

out of the realm of a courtly or even country dance. The finale is a good natured romp using clipped themes and pauses (like Haydn would).

—by Joseph Way

### *Home*

Kevin Puts

The refugee crisis in Europe, documented in recent media by horrific stories and photos of displaced families, led me to compose *Home*.

The work begins in what is essentially C Major, or with a tonal center of “C,” which I intended as a sonic representation of “home.” After the idyllic atmosphere of the work’s first several minutes, the tonal center is abandoned in search of new and unfamiliar harmonic terrain. As is my way, I worked through the piece in a linear fashion, never certain what lay around each corner. My only hopes were that I would find my way back to the musical idea heard at the opening and that the musical idea would present itself in a way that suggested this material (or one’s perception of it) had been altered in some way by the journey the work represents.

I am grateful to Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival and to all co-commissioners for their support of this work. *Home* is the third work of mine written for the Miró Quartet, and it is dedicated with admiration and affection to its members.

—note by Kevin Puts

### **String Quartet in C minor, Op. 51, No. 1**

Johannes Brahms

Brahms’ career as a composer took flight after Robert Schumann famously introduced the young pianist to the public—and publishers—in 1853 as one of the musical “elect” who would “give ideal expression of his times.” Brahms’ composing style reflects his love of the great Classical tradition, and he quickly became known as the musical heir of Beethoven. This proved to be a burden for the cautious, self-critical Brahms. He

had difficulty composing his first symphony and string quartets, the two forms in which Beethoven’s achievements were supreme. Pressed by critics and publishers to compose a symphony, he asked for “more time,” and he wrote despairingly to a friend, “You have no idea what it is like to hear [Beethoven’s] footsteps constantly behind me.”

For fourteen years Brahms struggled to create a string quartet that met his exacting standards. By his own count he destroyed 20 different versions in the process. In 1873 (at age 40) he was finally satisfied and published his two Op. 51 string quartets. A third and final string quartet was published three years later as Op. 67. The long delay was beneficial. Brahms was at the height of his creative powers in the 1870s and fully capable of composing powerful, large-scale works. Each of his quartets displays a superb blend of rich melodic texture, rhythmic and harmonic freedom, and well-crafted technique.

The forceful first movement of Op. 51, no. 1 quickly presents its dominant musical idea—a rising dotted-rhythm figure in the violins over an agitated accompaniment in the lower instruments. This driving seven-bar passage shapes the character of the entire first movement. The contrasting second theme is gentle but dark, and it provides little relief from the movement’s restless intensity.

In the second movement the rising dotted-rhythm motif is transformed into a slow accompaniment beneath the first violin’s calm, lyrical melody. Here Brahms marks the score “expressive” and “sweet.” The music darkens somewhat in its middle section with a halting, unstable rhythm that conveys a sense of anxiety. The movement returns to its opening calm and closes with orchestral sonorities.

Following the second movement’s lyrical beauty, the *Allegretto* brings back the restless quality of the first movement, although without its fierce concentration. Contrasting melody lines are joined together uneasily in the first violin and viola when the movement opens. The movement’s harmonic ambiguity, steady rhythmic pulse in the cello,



## PROGRAM NOTES, *continued from page 8*

and prominent descending lines impart a melancholy mood. The middle section is a naive little dance tune in the first violin over a sustained *unison bariolage*—the same note played alternately on two different strings—in the second violin.

The passionate finale returns to the driving energy of the first movement, and its themes are modified versions of the first movement's rising dotted-rhythm figure. Brahms creates a dramatic musical

texture with intricate part-writing and many quick exchanges between the players. The movement's intensity rarely flags, and it accelerates to an exciting conclusion.

—Program note by Robert Strong © 2013

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## ABOUT TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

The Miró Quartet is one of America's most celebrated and dedicated string quartets, having been labeled by *The New Yorker* as "furiously committed" and noted by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* for its "exceptional tonal focus and interpretive intensity." For over twenty-five years the Quartet has performed throughout the world on the most prestigious concert stages, earning accolades from critics and audiences alike. Based in Austin, Texas, and thriving in the area's storied music scene, Miró takes pride in finding new ways to communicate with audiences of all backgrounds while cultivating the longstanding tradition of chamber music.

In their 2021-22 season, Miró premiered a new work entitled *Microfictions* written for them by Pulitzer Prize-winning

composer Caroline Shaw. The work was commissioned for the quartet by an impressive consortium of presenting organizations including Carnegie Hall, Shriver Hall, the La Jolla Music Society, Premiere Performances (Hong Kong), and Chamber Music Houston. This season, Miró is also partnering with renowned soprano Karen Slack in a new program exploring the works of Florence Price and Margaret Bonds.

Miró Quartet took its name and its inspiration from the Spanish artist Joan Miró, whose Surrealist works—with subject matter drawn from the realm of memory, dreams, and imaginative fantasy—are some of the most groundbreaking, influential, and admired of the 20th century. Visit [miroquartet.com](http://miroquartet.com) for more information.

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