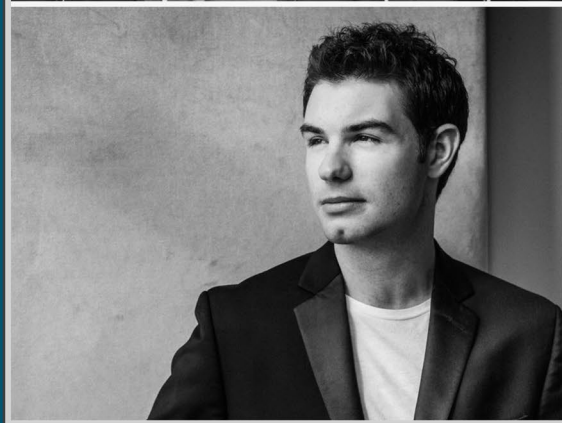


AMELIA ISLAND
CHAMBER MUSIC
FESTIVAL

Presents



The New York Philharmonic String Quartet
& Pianist Drew Petersen

Premiere, February 14, 2021
Virtual Concert

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The Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival is nationally recognized as one of the foremost music events of its kind. The Festival is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.





PROGRAM

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC STRING QUARTET

Frank Huang, violin
 Sheryl Staples, violin
 Cynthia Phelps, viola
 Carter Brey, cello

Drew Petersen, piano

String Quartet No. 2 in A minor

Adagio-Allegro vivace

Adagio non lento

Intermezzo: Allegretto con moto

Presto-Adagio non lento

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

(1809 - 1847)

Piano Quintet in E flat major, Op. 44

Allegro brillante

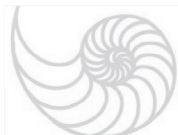
In modo d'una marcia: Un poco largamente

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Allegro, ma non troppo

ROBERT SCHUMANN

(1810 - 1856)



New York Philharmonic String Quartet

The group was formed in January 2017, during the Philharmonic's 175th anniversary season; the New York Philharmonic String Quartet made its debut as the solo ensemble in John Adams's *Absolute Jest* in New York in March 2017.

Frank Huang has performed at the Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia's Steans Institute, Seattle Chamber Music Festival, and Caramoor. He frequently participates in Musicians from Marlboro's tours, and was selected by The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to be a member of the prestigious Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). Before joining the Houston Symphony as concertmaster in 2010, Frank Huang held the position of first violinist of the Grammy Award-winning Ying Quartet.

Sheryl Staples has performed chamber music for U.S. Ambassadors in London, Paris, Berlin, Beijing, and Hong Kong. She toured Mexico, Brazil, and Chile in 2013, and she has appeared at summer festivals including La Jolla Music Society's SummerFest, Boston Chamber Music Society, Salt Bay Chamberfest, and the chamber

music festivals of Santa Fe, Mainly Mozart, Seattle, Aspen, Sarasota, Martha's Vineyard, Strings Music Festival, and Brightstar. She appears on three Stereophile CDs with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival.

Cynthia Phelps performs with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Jupiter Chamber Players, and the Santa Fe, La Jolla, Seattle, Chamber Music Northwest, and Bridgehampton festivals. She has appeared with the Guarneri, Tokyo, Orion, American, Brentano, and Prague Quartets, and the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. She is also a founding member of the chamber group Les Amies, a flute-harp-violin group with Philharmonic Principal Harp Nancy Allen and flutist Carol Wincenc.

Carter Brey has made regular appearances with the Tokyo and Emerson string quartets as well as The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and at festivals such as Spoleto (both in the United States and Italy), and the Santa Fe and La Jolla Chamber Music festivals. He and pianist Christopher O'Riley recorded *Le Grand Tango: Music of Latin America*, a disc of compositions from South America and Mexico released on Helicon Records.

Drew Petersen

Acclaimed young American pianist Drew Petersen is a sought-after soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician in the United States, Europe and Asia. He's been praised for his commanding and poetic performances of repertoire ranging from Bach to Zaimont, and is the recipient of the 2018 Avery Fisher Career Grant, 2017 American Pianists Award, and the Christel DeHaan Fellow of the American Pianists Association, as well as a residency at the University of Indianapolis.

Drew Petersen's firm belief in the importance of music in contemporary society led

to collaborations with Young Audiences NY that presents performances in New York City's public schools. His appearance in Andrew Solomon's New York Times bestselling book, *Far From the Tree*, sparked a nation-wide conversation on raising extraordinary and different children who test the willpower and capabilities of their families and society. Petersen continually advocates for the necessity of classical music and other arts in society, and was named a 2006 Davidson Fellow for his portfolio entitled *Keeping Classical Music Alive*.

PROGRAM NOTES

Felix Mendelssohn

String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 13

*Felix Mendelssohn is “A romantic who felt at ease within the mould of classicism.”**~ Pablo Casals, cellist*

“Is it true that you always wait for me there in the leafy path by the grape arbor and ask the moonlight and the little stars about me? Is it true? What I feel can only be understood by someone who feels it with me, and who will stay forever true to me.”

The tender love song “Frage” (Question) was written months before he began the Quartet in A Minor, Op. 13 and it provides a central theme for the quartet. In writing to a friend Mendelssohn said: “The song that I sent with the quartet is its theme. You will hear it-with its own notes-in the first and last movements you will hear its emotions expressed. If it doesn’t please you at first, which might happen, then play it again, and if you still find something ‘minuetish,’ think of your stiff and formal friend Felix with his tie and valet. I think I express the song well, and it all sounds like music to me.”

Earlier in 1827 on March 26th 56 year old Ludwig van Beethoven died in Vienna. Also in 1827, Beethoven’s final five string quartets were published. Response to these final quartets was harsh. Violinist Louis Spohr described them as “indecipherable, uncorrected horror.” However, the young composer Mendelssohn found great inspiration in them and paid homage to Beethoven. Mendelssohn’s Quartet in A minor, a passionate and poignant work, asks: “Ist es wahr?” (“Is it true?”). Beethoven’s final movement in A minor



of his Opus 132 asks: “Muss es sein?” (Must it be?)

Although we do not have specifics concerning to whom this young love for Mendelssohn was directed, we seemingly have an intimate look and listen into his heart about being in love. The String Quartet No. 2 is not only influenced by Mendelssohn’s heart, but by his passion found from avidly studying the final quartets of Beethoven. Echoes of these last works are heard throughout.

The first movement’s opening notes “Ist es wahr?” (Is it true?) the long-short-long phrase has a presence in all four movements. The second movement begins peacefully but gives way to a fugue with a chromatic subject. Likewise, the third movement is another part structure. It dashes from a graceful nocturne to a signature Mendelssohn scherzo -energetic and darting- and returns again to a peaceful calm.

The fourth movement is marked Presto and continues with Beethoven-like devices from his last quartets. Tremolos in the lower 3 parts are the foundation for a violin recitative. The first movement’s mood returns with the main theme and the second movement’s fugue returns. Intertwining these previous themes, the Quartet concludes with a moment from “Frage.”

“What I feel can only be understood by someone who feels it with me, and who will stay forever true to me.”

Robert Schumann

Piano Quintet in E flat major, Op. 44

“It is music’s lofty mission to shed light on the depths of the human heart.”

~ Robert Schumann

Uniquely bringing the piano to join a conventional string quartet, this pioneering and epic four-movement quintet was composed in 1842, Schumann’s “year of chamber music.” Following a pattern of composing works in clusters, he concentrated on piano pieces from 1831 to 1839; 1840 produced songs, while the year 1841 yielded his first symphonies. However, within only nine months during 1842 Schumann had given us three Op.41 string quartets dedicated to his friend Felix Mendelssohn, the first of his piano trios later published as Op. 88 under the title *Fantasiestücke*, a Piano quartet, Op.47, and what some have called his greatest chamber work, the Quintet in E-flat major for piano and strings.

From Cobbett’s *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* (1929), Richard Aldrich observed:

“ Schumann’s chamber music of 1842 is in many ways among the most perfect of all the products of his genius; the purest and most powerful in its beauty, the strongest in its form, best balanced in its substance, and best adapted in its technical means and processes to the expression of the composer’s thought. There is little that seems tentative, experimental, or uncertain in touch. He entered, to all appearances, full-fledged and confident upon the difficult and problematic art of chamber music.

The Piano Quintet and Quartet are frequently performed in large concert halls with a nine-foot-long concert grand piano. Beautiful as such renditions may be, they fundamentally distort the delicate balance of public and private which chamber music of Schumann’s time epitomized. Clara Schumann’s diary entry from Moscow, 1844, is revelatory in this regard: ‘On Thursday the 2nd of May (April 20 according to the Russian calendar) at 1 o’clock we gave a matinee at our place. We had invited 30-40 people . . . The Quintet constituted the beginning and was exceptionally well liked: I would have liked to play it at my last concert, but the hall is too big for chamber music.’”

The Quintet is dedicated to Schumann’s wife, Clara, and she was the pianist for the public premiere January 8, 1843 at the Leipzig Gewandhaus. She was to have performed the first private performance but due to illness, friend Felix Mendelssohn was called in and sight-read the “fiendish” piano part.

The four movement work opens with all five instruments presenting the bold forceful theme only to be followed by a gorgeous cantilena melody. Latin for “old familiar song”, a cantilena is a passage written in a lyrical, vocal style. The cello and viola engage in a conversational dialogue and we are then given long, virtuosic piano runs against sustained string chords. The fiery conclusion of the first movement races to once again end as we began with bold chords.



The second movement “in the style of a march” is a somber funeral march. Quoting Melvin Berger in his *Guide to Chamber Music* he states: “The second movement...clearly refers to a funeral march, not in any personal mournful sense but as an objective musical experience.”

This second movement has been heard in the 1982 film *Fanny and Alexander* directed by Ingmar Bergman, as well as in the 1992 *Buffy and the Vampire Slayer*, and in the 1934 horror film *The Black Cat*.

The *molto vivace* (very lively) Scherzo begins and ends with the contrasting perpetual motion of racing scales flanking a lovely, lyrical

melody. The entire work is “cyclic” in form so that the bold opening theme from the first movement reappears in the powerful final movement. The two themes are masterfully combined in a three-voice double fugue.

According to historical consultant and music critic Tully Potter: “The quintet is a portrait of Clara on two levels; the virtuosic piano part reflects her status as one of the great nineteenth-century pianists, and the lovely phrases given to the viola surely represent her more private self, the Clara that Robert knew.”

~ Emma Mills Bledsoe 2021



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The Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival's threefold mission is to:

1. Present the world's greatest musical artists in chamber music concerts of classical and alternative genres for diverse audiences;
2. Offer music education to concert attendees, students, and aspiring young musicians; and
3. Promote local businesses and tourism by attracting music lovers from Nassau County, Northeast Florida, and beyond.



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