



Isidore String Quartet

Thursday | April 18 | 7:30 pm

THE Valley
Concert
Society

OUR 41ST
SEASON
2023-2024

World Class Music

Program Guide

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Programme

**String Quartet No. 25 in C major,
Op. 20, No. 2 (1772)**

Joseph Haydn
1732-1809

Moderato

Adagio

Minuetto: Allegretto

Fuga a quattro soggetti

String Quartet No. 2 “Awakening”(2012)

Billy Childs
b. 1957

Wake Up Call

The White Room

Song of Healing

Intermission

**String Quartet No. 15 in A minor,
Op. 132 (1825)**

Ludwig van Beethoven
1770-1827

Assai sostenuto - Allegro

Allegro ma non tanto

Molto adagio - Andante (“Heiliger Dankgesang...”)

Alla marcia, assai vivace

Allegro appassionato

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Isidore String Quartet’s appearance is supported,
in part, by the Career Development Program of the
Banff International String Quartet Competition

www.bisqc.ca

The Isidore String Quartet appears by arrangement with
David Rowe Artists www.davidroweartists.com

Isidore String Quartet

Adrian Steele and Phoenix Avalon, violins

Devin Moore, viola

Joshua McClendon, cello

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 members of the quartet are violinists Adrian Steele and Phoenix Avalon, violist Devin Moore, and cellist Joshua McClendon. The four began as an ensemble at the Juilliard School, and following a break during the global pandemic reconvened at the Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival in the summer of 2021 under the tutelage of Joel Krosnick. In addition to Mr. Krosnick, the ISQ has coached with Joseph Lin, Astrid Schween, Laurie Smukler, Joseph Kalichstein, Roger Tapping, Misha Amory, Timothy Eddy, Donald Weilerstein, Atar Arad, Robert McDonald, Christoph Richter, Miriam Fried, and Paul Biss.

Their Banff triumph brings extensive tours of North America and Europe, a two-year appointment as the Peak Fellowship Ensemble-in-Residence at Southern Methodist University in Dallas beginning in 2023-24, plus a two-week residency at Banff Centre including a professionally produced recording, along with extensive ongoing coaching, career guidance, and mentorship.

The Isidore Quartet has appeared on major series in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Durham, Washington (JFK Center), San Antonio, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, and has collaborated with a number of eminent performers including James Ehnes, Jeremy Denk, Shai Wosner, and Jon Nakamatsu. Their 23/24 season will feature appearances

in Berkeley (Cal Performances), Boston (Celebrity Series), Washington DC (Phillips Collection), New York (92nd St. Y), Chicago, Baltimore, Ann Arbor, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, Tucson, Phoenix, Santa Fe, La Jolla, Aspen, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and at Dartmouth College, and Spivey Hall in Georgia, among many others. European highlights include Edinburgh, Lucerne, Brussels, Amsterdam, Hanover, Frankfurt, and Hamburg's ElbPhilharmonie.

Outside the concert hall the quartet has worked with *PROJECT: MUSIC HEALS US* providing encouragement, education, and healing to marginalized communities - including elderly, disabled, rehabilitating incarcerated and homeless populations - who otherwise have limited access to high-quality live music performance. They have also been resident ensemble for the Contemporary Alexander School/Alexander Alliance International. In conjunction with those well-versed in the world of Alexander Technique, as well as other performers, the ISQ explores the vast landscape of body awareness, mental preparation, and performance practice.

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!



Programme Notes

Joseph Haydn

Born in Rohrau, Austria, March 31, 1732; died in Vienna, 1809

String Quartet No. 25 in C major, Op. 20, No. 2 (1772)

Haydn's Op. 20 quartets are pillars of the string quartet repertoire, works that both solidified the genre as worthy of its own lineage and introduced new compositional techniques into the post-baroque classical world. Composed in 1772, the 40-year old Haydn was already well established as a composer, leading a busy life composing symphonic, chamber, and vocal works for the court of Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy.

In the second Op. 20 quartet, Haydn begins immediately to challenge the existing hierarchy of voices in the quartet, announcing the theme with a three-voice texture led by the cello. The traditional melodic instrument, the first violin, is made to wait its turn to state the theme once more before the exposition can continue. In the aftermath of such treason, Haydn, never lacking wit, seems almost to tease the first violinist with the cello's sixteenth note flourishes shortly thereafter, to which the first violin immediately responds with a dramatic run of its own.

Beyond the warm embrace of his melodies and the ease of his musical dialogue, Haydn also veers into darker territory in the quartet, introducing the concept of *sturm und drang*, clearly influenced by the burgeoning romanticism of his contemporaries and the more operatic modes that he was writing in for his other duties in the Esterhazy court. The second movement introduces itself in a desperately grand, almost garishly ornamented statement from the whole quartet, before a series of outbursts and laments, as if part of an operatic recitative. Haydn pairs this with an ever-developing chromaticism, incredibly apparent in the waning moments of the second movement and in the opening of the third.

In the third movement, Haydn adds to the minuet an ever-present drone, creating a bagpipe-like texture and allowing him to cleverly introduce the subject of the fourth movement fugue chromatically against the G drone. In the finale, Haydn

once again sets up the drama, marking the quartet *sotto voce* until the dam can no longer hold, leading to a dramatic and unexpected flurry of forte sixteenth notes that lead us to the end of the piece.

—Note by Adrian Steele

Billy Childs

(b. 1957)

String Quartet No. 2 “Awakening”

Los Angeles-native Billy Childs began publicly performing on the piano at the age of six and would eventually receive a bachelor’s degree in composition from the University of Southern California Community College of the Performance Arts. As a performer and composer, Childs was in demand early on, collaborating with pillars of the jazz industry, signing with Windham Hill Records in 1988, and receiving commissions from prestigious soloists and ensembles (LA Phil, DSO, Kronos Quartet, Ying Quartet). A formative education, extensive experience, and an unwavering self-conception allowed the five-time Grammy Award-winning Billy Childs to develop a unique voice as a pianist and composer in both the classical and jazz spheres.

Commissioned by the Ying Quartet and completed in 2012, *String Quartet No. 2 “Awakening”* depicts the emotional, physical, and spiritual journey in dealing with the serious illness of a loved one; it is inspired by Childs’ real life experience with his wife. After she was diagnosed with a pulmonary embolism and taken into emergency care, Childs, a state over, was notified of the situation and immediately rushed to be with her. This three-movement work outlines the complex emotional journey, providing insight into the vulnerability of the composer.

The first movement, titled *Wake Up Call*, opens with a tremolo/trill in the second violin and viola, set against snap pizzicato in the cello, and a twelve-tone opening pronouncement in the first violin, expressing his initial shock at learning of his wife’s hospitalization. This cacophony of an anxiety-ridden sound-world is juxtaposed with a reflective middle section overcome with heartbreakingly lyrical

cascades of melody that accumulate throughout the quartet, evoking a sense of uncontrollable anguish, fear, and lamentation. This brief look inside the composer's psyche is swiftly dissipated as the opening material engulfs the music once again. *Wake Up Call* gives us a glimpse into both the external and internal experience of Childs in this time of unknown.

The White Room, the second movement, conveys the powerlessness and urgency he experienced waiting at her bedside through the use of a plaintive melody set against heartrending bi-tonal harmonies. Utilizing various extended techniques (false harmonics, glissandos, Bartok pizzicatos), Childs manifests the feeling of being in the sterile, unwelcoming hospital room devoid of comfort with its blindingly white walls and eerily repetitive machinery noises. The mechanical landscape eventually avalanches into two cadenzas in the viola and first violin that seem to spew rage, anger, and torment. The doubled sixteenth note figure that pervades the movement, resembling a heartbeat, rises and falls as the emotional arch takes shape, eventually settling into a state of numbness and fatigue.

The final movement, *Song of Healing*, is an ode to recovery and rediscovery, with the viola's introductory melody expressing the slow process of healing and a new respect for the transient and delicate nature of life. The centerpiece of this movement is a conversation that occurs between the first violin and cello, signifying the real-life conversation between Childs and his wife as the two began to compartmentalize and understand the impact that this event had on their relationship. The love, trust, and unencumbered expression of emotion can be viscerally felt as this duo rejoins the quartet as the movement comes to a close. A sense of healing, or at least a willingness to heal, is felt as the final chord - a hopeful A Major - dissolves into silence.

Childs, through a unique, yet familiar compositional style evocative of 21st-century multigenric perspective, acknowledges and expresses the familiarity of fear, anguish, and resolution regarding the fleeting nature of life, yielding a work that speaks directly to the human experience.

—Note by Devin Moore

Ludwig Van Beethoven

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

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132 (1824-5)

The five string quartets and *Grosse Fuge* that Beethoven composed during the last five years of his life mark the pinnacle of his chamber music. Ideas from one spill over to the next. The A minor quartet was the second of the sequence to be completed and was originally laid out in four movements. Then, in the spring of 1825, Beethoven fell seriously ill, with a variety of debilitating diseases. Towards the end of May, he began to recover and the change in his physical well-being had a profound impact on the quartet.

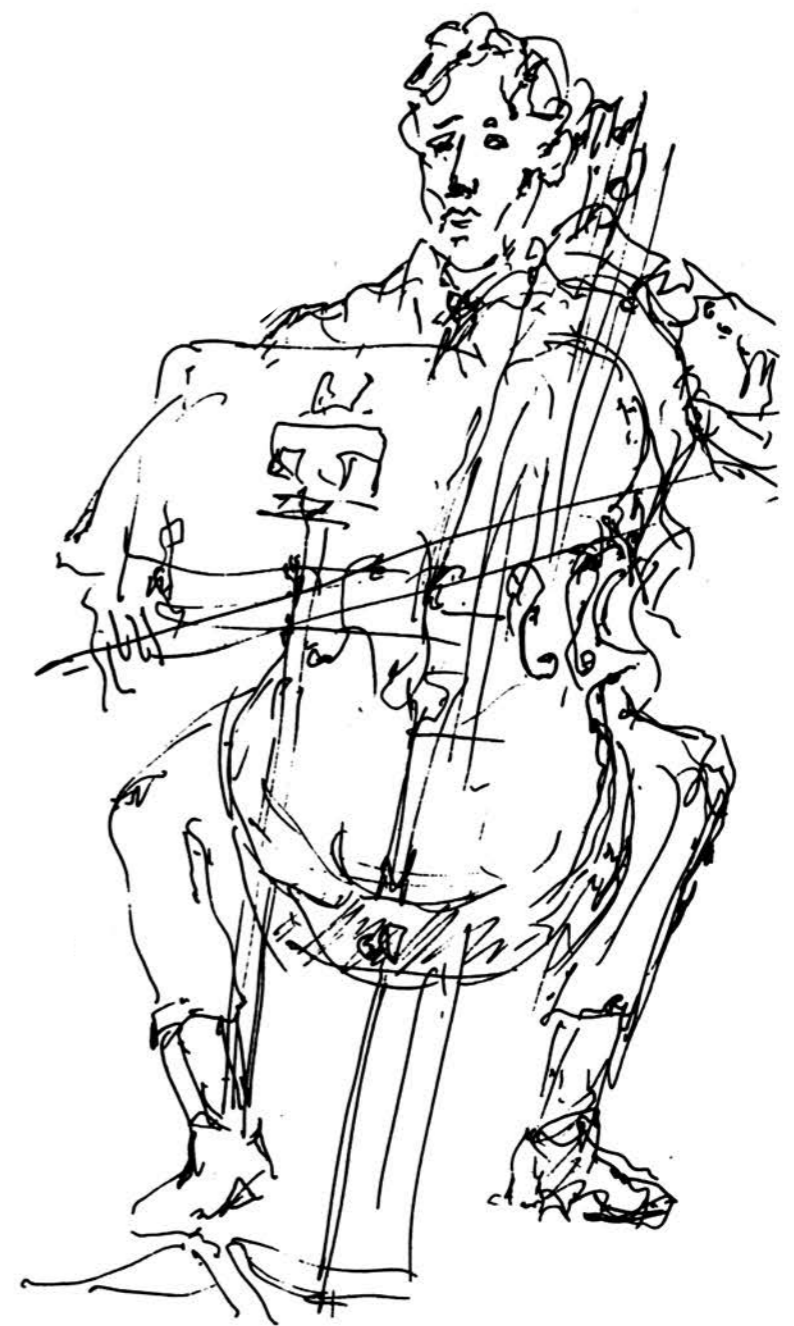
A central slow movement was the immediate result. Beethoven marked it ‘Sacred Song of Thanksgiving to the Deity from a Convalescent, in the Lydian Mode’ (*Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart*). It is one of the most sublime pieces of music ever written – and one of the longest quartet movements at almost half the length of the quartet itself. Its contemplative stillness is enhanced by the conscious use of an old church mode known as the Lydian mode. Beethoven mentions it in the score, as if to remind us that the old church modes, with their spiritual, often mystical and tonally ambiguous connotations, were a deep source of inspiration in his late works. The slow movement’s successive alternations of *Adagio* and *Andante* bring new expressions of relief from the composer. These are noted in the margin of his score as ‘Feeling new strength’ and ‘You returned my strength to find me in the evening’ and, in the final section, ‘With the most intimate feeling.’ Because of the generally dark character of much of the quartet, this transcendental slow movement seems to radiate inner release from outward suffering.

Beethoven made this slow movement the centerpiece of a vast, arch-like structure. The quartet opens with an *Allegro*, built around two contrasting themes, and presenting a thread of unresolved contradictions. The movement departs from

conventional form as does the substantial scherzo, which follows. Its central pastoral episode, nominally a trio section, begins with a musette-like theme high on the first violin. It continues with a *ländler* theme which Beethoven wrote down in his sketchbook when he first went to Vienna many years earlier. After the sublime, heavenly slow movement, the mood is abruptly broken by a march – which brings us back to earth with a bump. As in the Ninth Symphony, an instrumental recitative leads to the finale. Its impassioned, waltz-like theme, which gives way to an unequivocal feeling of joy, was, in fact, originally designed to be the finale of the Ninth before Beethoven decided on a choral ending for this work. Both works end with a feeling of transcendence and triumph.

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Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca



About the Valley Concert Society

Beginnings

The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra was key to creating the society. They had been performing outreach concerts in Clearbrook with the help of some Abbotsford residents taking care of local arrangements. The symphony suggested that this group form a local society that would present programs offered by the symphony for a fixed fee.

On July 12, 1983, a group gathered in the home of Paul Moritz and elected an organizing committee with Paul as its president. On August 31, 1983, the BC Government issued the Certificate of Incorporation that made The Valley Concert Society a reality.

An intense campaign of mailing and phoning as well as advertising and fund-raising followed, all of it intent on procuring an audience and sufficient funding for their opening season. They achieved their goals with little time to spare, and the season opened with a chamber group from the VSO playing the program you will hear today. The rest of the first season consisted of two performances by the full symphony and a concert featuring the VSO's concertmaster Gerald Jarvis on violin and pianist Linda Lee Thomas.

A similar season was planned for the next year, but the society was not able to sell sufficient subscriptions, and the season was cancelled. They did receive a grant for \$500 and were able to present one concert featuring the Vancouver Cantata Singers.

A period of grappling with various organizational and promotional ideas resulted in a new beginning with a new format. Instead of relying exclusively on the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the society presented a variety of small-group performers. The Purcell String Quartet opened the season on November 1; they were followed by programs featuring the Vancouver Chamber Choir, pianist Robert Silverman, and the quintet A Touch of Brass. The VSO did perform once to close the season.

Forty Years of Outstanding Music

The Valley Concert Society has brought over 200 remarkable musical experiences to the residents of Abbotsford. The most frequent performer has been the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, which performed sixteen times in the first nineteen seasons. The Victoria Symphony and the North Shore Sinfonia also played three times each. Smaller chamber orchestras made frequent appearances including such outstanding groups as I Musici de Montreal, Tafelmusik, and the Pacific Baroque Orchestra.

Choral groups were often booked. They came from near—the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Vancouver Cantata Singers, and Chor Leone—and from far—the Soweto Choir of South Africa, the Cuban National Choir, and the Little Eagles of Siberia. Smaller vocal ensembles included

Chanticleer, QuintEssence, and Gesualdo Six. Some of Canada's greatest singers made solo appearances: Maureen Forrester, Isabel Bayrakdarian, and Ben Heppner.

Solo piano recitals included such transcendent talents as Robert Silverman, Janina Fialkowska, Charles Richard-Hamelin, and David Jalbert.

Classic chamber music repertoire held an important place in the society's history. The Shostakovich, Minguet, and St. Lawrence String Quartets all made memorable visits to Abbotsford. The Gryphon Trio played in Abbotsford three times, and the recent performance by Ehnes, Tsang, and Armstrong was unforgettable.

Other diverse strings made an appearance. Guitars came in solo, trio, and quartet combinations. Rita Constanzi performed on a solo harp while harp ensembles brought several varied programs, as did the Langley Ukulele Ensemble.

There were some definite favourites among the many brass groups that performed. A Touch of Brass, Foothills Brass, and Cosmos Brass played here a combined fourteen times. Less common were woodwind ensembles such as the Prairie Winds from Chicago and the Winds of the Southern Cross from Brisbane, Australia.

The diversity of performing groups was endless. The Sidestreet Strutters were a Dixieland combo, Acclarion came with a clarinet and accordion, Sal Ferreras performed twice with a percussion ensemble, Trio Voronezh brought Russian music, there was a concert featuring only a bassoon and a guitar. Chris Jarrett performed a piano accompaniment to the silent film classic Battleship Potemkin. The actor Colin Fox narrated a program based on letters between Robert and Clara Schumann along with music by a soprano and piano.

People to Remember

George Zukerman was never a part of The Valley Concert Society, but he looms as an enormous figure throughout the history of the organization. He was a critical contributor during the restructuring of the society in its third year by providing performers who were touring in the area. He himself performed in Abbotsford more than once on his bassoon as part of varied groups. He came to the rescue on one occasion when the Kiev Symphony Orchestra did not come as scheduled, and he filled in with a program entitled The Great Mozart Hunt. He also narrated programs, including his last one in April of 2022 less than a year before his death at age 95.

Paul Moritz was the founding president of The Valley Concert Society and provided effective leadership for that intrepid group that had the vision to bring this kind of music to our city. He served intermittently in that position until 1997. The society recognized his important contribution by naming a bursary in his honour.

Lorna Keith was the longest serving president in the society's history. She assumed that position after Paul Moritz stepped down until her retirement in 2014. She guided the organization through the transition from the Abby Arts Centre to the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium as performing

venues. The society named the endowment fund that it holds at the Abbotsford Community Foundation in her honour, a fitting tribute as she played a key role in establishing that fund.

Liz Carter was the last remaining charter member of the board when she passed away during the season in 2015. While not very visible publicly, she was enormously valuable behind the scenes. She chaired the committee that programmed each season. She was the Volunteer Coordinator. She was the House Manager. Liz had her hands on most of the organization's key functions. It was a considerable challenge to replace her many roles on short notice. The society honoured her memory by giving her name to its pre-concert talk.

VCS Contributes to the Community

The Valley Concert Society has two key elements in its mission statement. Providing concerts and other musical performances is the obvious one. The second is to support the musical education of young people in the community. The organization addresses this goal in several ways.

■ *Bursaries*

The Valley Concert Society has created two bursaries to be given annually to deserving music students in the community. They are named in honour of two founding board members, Paul Moritz and Marjorie Nixon. The value of the awards has increased over the years and currently stands at \$500. The society also provides a scholarship for the Abbotsford Music Festival named in honour of former board member Rudy Baerg at a value of \$200.

■ *Master Classes*

Since 2016, The Valley Concert Society has been holding master classes which give talented young music students the opportunity to work on a prepared piece of music with some of the artists that we bring to our stage. Piano students have had the privilege of working with such luminaries as Jane Coop and Charles Richard-Hamelin. In alternate years, string students have worked with the likes of Bryan Cheng, Nancy Dahn, and are working with violist Molly Carr this year.

■ *Performances*

The society has provided several opportunities for local music students to perform publicly. At its 25th and 35th anniversaries, it presented a concert of former bursary winners. This gave the audience the opportunity to experience the talent of these remarkable young people. The society has also programmed two past bursary winners in its regular season, recognizing their growth as musicians.

■ *Community Outreach*

In the season just past, The Valley Concert Society has initiated a new venture aimed at allowing various members of the community to enjoy the wonderful artistry of our performers. Axiom Brass played for seniors in a high-rise complex, and for children participating in a Day Camp at The Reach. This year the society is presenting an outreach concert to the community served by the Salvation Army. These concerts come at no cost to the audience.



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Season Calendar

Vetta Chamber Music

Sunday, October 22, 3:00 pm



Vancouver's **Vetta Chamber Music** will help us celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the founding of VCS. They will play the music that was performed at the first concert in 1983, works by Haydn, Mozart, and Brahms.

J.S. Bach's Long Walk in the Snow

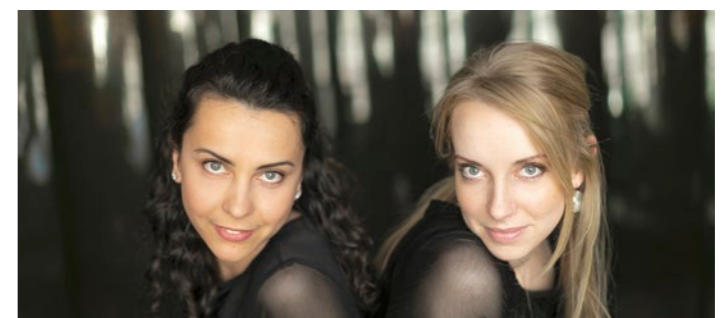
Friday, November 10, 7:30 pm



CBC Radio personality **Tom Allen** joins a harpist, violist, pianist, and vocalist to tell the dramatic story of a 400 km walk undertaken by the young Bach along with music composed by the master.

Carr-Petrova Duo

Friday, February 23, 7:30 pm



Violist **Molly Carr**, member of the legendary Juilliard String Quartet, and pianist **Anna Petrova** come from New York to present an evening of music featuring an instrument that more often accompanies than takes the spotlight.

Vancouver Chamber Choir

Friday, March 15, 7:30 pm



One of Canada's premier vocal ensembles returns under its new Artistic Director **Kari Turunen**. This award-winning choir has earned an international reputation for bringing choral music of the highest calibre.

Isidore String Quartet

Thursday, April 18, 7:30 pm



Four musicians from across the breadth of the USA came together at The Juilliard School to form an outstanding quartet. They are winners at the most recent Banff International String Quartet Competition.

Laura Altenmueller

Friday, May 10, 7:30 pm



Pianist **Laura Altenmueller** is another of the many great young musicians that have come out of Abbotsford. She has earned her doctorate in musical performance in Ontario and returns to perform for her home town.



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We invite you to become a member of the society.

- COST:** \$10 per person annually
BENEFITS: Vote at General Meetings.
 Invitations to special events.
 Reserved seating at concerts.

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