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ARTIST SERIES: CALIDORE QUARTET

PROGRAM

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Quartet in F minor for Strings, Op. 80 (1847)

Allegro vivace assai

Allegro assai

Adagio

Finale: Allegro molto

Calidore String Quartet (Jeffrey Myers, Ryan Meehan, violin; Jeremy Berry, viola; Estelle Choi, cello)

--INTERMISSION (Q&A with the artists)--

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Quintet in G major for Two Violins, Viola, Cello, and Bass, Op. 77 (1875)

Allegro con fuoco

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Poco andante

Finale: Allegro assai

Calidore String Quartet (Jeffrey Myers, Ryan Meehan, violin; Jeremy Berry, viola; Estelle Choi, cello);
Xavier Foley, bass

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Quartet in F minor for Strings, Op. 80 (1847)

Felix Mendelssohn (Hamburg, 1809 – Leipzig, 1847)

In 1847, the last year of Mendelssohn's life, everything was normal until it wasn't. He was fantastically busy as always, conducting concerts at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, where he was music director. In April he made his tenth and final visit to England, directing performances of his oratorio *Elijah*, performing Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, conducting his "Scottish" Symphony, and making official visits to

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Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He was widely celebrated and in the prime of his life. But when he returned home he received the devastating news that his sister Fanny had died on May 14 at the age of 41. Suddenly, everything stopped. Mendelssohn collapsed at the news and was unable to attend the funeral. He took a break, traveling to Baden-Baden to rest and then to Switzerland for the summer. While in Switzerland, he painted watercolors of the idyllic scenery and composed this string quartet, his last. Grief stricken from beginning to end, the quartet isn't like many of Mendelssohn's other works; it's aggressive, angular, and almost raw. The first movement launches into a compact sonata form of Beethovenian drama and contrast. The second movement is a darkly resolute scherzo. The slow movement, based on a melody that Mendelssohn wrote down in a letter to his sister in 1830, is pathos laid bare with the first violin taking the lead. The last movement is not a typical finale, though in 2/4 time and marked *Allegro molto*, it is roiled by unsettled tremolos and alternately slashing and soaring figures in the first violin. The ending, neither cathartic nor exhilarating, does nothing to dispel the disturbing atmosphere.

By September, Mendelssohn was starting to feel better but a visit to his sister's grave set him back again. He suffered a series of strokes beginning in October and died on November 4, 1847. He was 38. This quartet, written in the short lull between his beloved sister's death and his own, was Mendelssohn's final major work, a last expression of his tortured mental state, and his final word on the vagaries of life and death.

Quintet in G major for Two Violins, Viola, Cello, and Bass, Op. 77 (1875) **Antonín Dvořák (Nelahozeves, 1841 – Prague, 1904)**

When his *Slavonic Dances* were published on November 15, 1878, Dvořák became wildly famous overnight. But like many seemingly instant successes, his breakthrough was years in the making. He started his career as a performer: he spent nine years as principal violist in the Provisional Theatre in Prague (1862–71), and later served as organist at the Church of St. Vojtěch (1874–77). He composed mostly in secret while at the Provisional Theatre (“None but the friends who shared my apartments knew how much I wrote, tore up, and burnt.”), and ended his tenure there by announcing he was composing an opera. After a few bumps in the road and a complete re-write, the opera *King and Charcoal Burner* premiered at the Provisional Theatre on November 24, 1874. It must have been a poignant milestone for Dvořák to have an opera performed at the theatre he had performed at for so long. Yet he was still struggling. He was well-known in Prague but virtually unknown outside Bohemia.

In the years after his first opera, Dvořák developed his mature style, steeped in the tradition of Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms with Slavonic coloring mixed in, and always presented with his characteristically appealing melodies and natural rhythms. The quintet's first movement introduces the piece with the cello and bass in long, held notes before the other instruments join and casually find their places. Once the movement starts in earnest it sets the tone for a work of intricate interplay between the five instruments. The second and fourth movements are both based on melodies that could be pulled straight from exuberant Slavonic folk dances. The slow, third movement, in contrast, is heartfelt but almost meticulously poised, never overwrought, and climaxes in a surprising duet for violin and cello that shifts and reflects back all the movement's intriguingly beautiful qualities.

This quintet won a competition sponsored by the Prague-based Artistic Circle and was premiered on March 18, 1876 in Prague. However, it had to wait until 1888, when Dvořák was at the height of his

fame, for publication. His publisher Simrock released it with the artificially high opus number of 77 to make it less obvious that it wasn't newly composed, a practice Dvořák hated. The published version also differed from the original. The original 1876 version had five movements, including an Intermezzo that Dvořák adapted from an earlier string quartet. He removed the Intermezzo in 1883 and published it under the title *Notturmo*, leaving the quintet with the more traditional four movements that we know today.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The **Calidore String Quartet** has been praised by the *New York Times* for its “deep reserves of virtuosity and irrepressible dramatic instinct” and by the *Los Angeles Times* for its balance of “intellect and expression.” Recipient of a 2018 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the 2017 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, the quartet first made international headlines as winner of the \$100,000 Grand-Prize of the 2016 M-Prize International Chamber Music Competition. The quartet was the first North American ensemble to win the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, was a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, and is an alum of CMS's Bowers Program.

In the 2019-20 season, the Calidore String Quartet celebrated both its tenth anniversary and the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth by presenting cycles of his string quartets at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, and the Universities of Buffalo, Toronto, and Delaware. Additionally, the Calidore premiered a new work by composer Anna Clyne inspired by Beethoven's “Grosse Fuge” and commissioned by Music Accord in performances at Lincoln Center, Princeton University, Penn State University, Caramoor, San Francisco Performances, and Boston's Celebrity Series. The quartet also made its debut at Strathmore and with Kansas City's Friends of Chamber Music. In Europe, the Calidore performed in series in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Spain, and Switzerland. Highlights of recent seasons have included performances in major venues throughout North America, Europe, and Asia such as Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Kennedy Center, Berlin Konzerthaus, Brussels BOZAR, Cologne Philharmonie, Seoul's Kumho Arts Hall, and at significant festivals, including the BBC Proms, Verbier, Ravinia, Mostly Mozart, Music@Menlo, Rheingau, East Neuk, and Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The Calidore String Quartet's second Signum album, entitled *Babel*, was released in October 2020 and features works by Schumann, Shostakovich, and Caroline Shaw. The quartet's other recordings include 2018's *Resilience* including “lively, intelligent performances of an attractive and thought-provoking program” (*Gramophone*) of quartets by Mendelssohn, Prokofiev, Janáček, and Golijov; quartets by Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn recorded at the 2016 Music@Menlo festival; a debut album of quartets by Mendelssohn and Haydn, and an album of music commemorating the World War I centennial.

As a passionate supporter of music education, the Calidore String Quartet is committed to mentoring and educating young musicians, students, and audiences. The Calidore serves as quartet-in-residence at the University of Delaware and the University of Toronto. It has conducted master classes and residencies at Princeton, Stanford, University of Michigan, the Colburn School, Stony Brook University, UCLA, and Mercer University. The Calidore String Quartet was founded at the Colburn School in Los Angeles in 2010. Within two years the quartet won grand prizes in the Fischhoff, Coleman, Chesapeake,

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and Yellow Springs competitions, and captured top prizes at the 2012 ARD Munich International String Quartet Competition and Hamburg International Chamber Music Competition. Using an amalgamation of “California” and “doré” (French for “golden”), the ensemble’s name represents a reverence for the diversity of culture and the strong support it received from the place of its founding, Los Angeles, California, the “golden state.”

Double bassist **Xavier Foley** is the recipient of a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. He was recently recognized on New York WQXR’s “19 for 19” Artists to Watch list and featured on PBS Thirteen’s NYC-Arts. As a concerto soloist, he has performed with orchestras including the Atlanta Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Nashville Symphony. Also a composer, he was co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall and the Sphinx Organization for a new work entitled *For Justice and Peace* for Violin, Bass, and String Orchestra, which was performed at Carnegie Hall last season as part of a program designed to promote social justice. Other distinctions include First Prizes at the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, Astral National Auditions, Sphinx’s Competition, and International Society of Bassists Competition. In 2018, he made acclaimed debuts in the Young Concert Artists Series at Merkin Concert Hall and the Kennedy Center. He has also given recitals at New York’s Morgan Library and Boston’s Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. An active chamber musician, he has been re-engaged to perform on tour and at Alice Tully Hall with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center as a member of CMS’s Bowers Program. A native of Marietta, Georgia, Mr. Foley is an alum of the Perlman Music Program and earned his bachelor’s degree from the Curtis Institute of Music with Edgar Meyer and Hal Robinson. His double bass was crafted by Rumano Solano.