

MARY ANNE RENNOLDS

# CHAMBER CONCERT SERIES

2024-25



# HARLEM QUARTET

April 6, 2025 | 3:00 PM

Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall  
W.E. Singleton Center

**vcuarts** | music

# Harlem Quartet

*Ilmar Gavilán, violin*  
*Amy Schroeder, violin\**  
*Jaime Amador, viola*  
*Felix Umansky, cello*

**LUDWIG VAN  
BEETHOVEN**  
(1770-1827)

**String Quartet No. 5 in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5**

Allegro  
Menuetto  
Andante cantabile  
Allegro

**GUIDO  
LÓPEZ-GAVILÁN**  
b. 1944

**Cuarteto en Guaguanco**

*INTERMISSION*

**CAROLINE SHAW**  
b. 1982

**Entr'acte**

**FANNY  
MENDELSSOHN  
HENSEL**  
(1805-1847)

**String Quartet in E-flat Major**

Adagio ma non troppo  
Allegretto  
Romanze  
Allegro molto vivace

The Harlem Quartet appears by arrangement with Epstein Fox Performances.  
Amy Schroeder is substituting for Melissa White.

# Notes on the Program

## STRING QUARTET NO. 5 IN A MAJOR, OP. 18, NO. 5

Beethoven's Op. 18 quartets were published in 1801. The set is dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz, a friend and supporter of Beethoven. One of the great achievements of the Op.18 quartets is how they simultaneously honor the past conventions of Haydn's and Mozart's quartet writing while successfully laying the groundwork for Beethoven's mature style of composition. This fifth quartet pays homage to Mozart's String Quartet in A Major, K.464, in sentiment, style, and form. It was very likely written fourth in the series of six quartets, for they were not composed in the sequence in which they are numbered. Like all the Op. 18 quartets, No. 5 is in four movements, but it is the only one to swap the order of the inner movements with the *Menuetto* second rather than third.

The first movement is the longest and in sonata-allegro form. Aside from some similarities to Mozart's String Quartet in A Major, K.464, you might notice a similarity to Beethoven's own Second Violin Sonata, also in the key of A Major. There are two main themes here in this movement, the second a handsome cloud that casts a rich, dark shadow over the cheerfulness of the first theme.

The *Menuetto* (notably not a *Scherzo*) comes second. It is still in A major, and the elegance is continued, though with an abrupt excursion into a blunt C-sharp minor in the second part, from which the gentle music reacts as if nothing had happened. The brief trio section introduces the sentiment of an Austrian country-dance, enlivened by unexpected accents on the third beat.

Exceeded in length by only the first movement, the *Andante cantabile* is a theme-and-variations movement with five

charming variations. The theme is noble and graceful, featuring a song-like melody with a very simple harmonic underpinning as an accompaniment. The jaunty first variation begins in the cello and climbs up through the other instruments. The second variation features a running triplet line in the first violin that is accompanied by the lower three voices. The third variation, led by the viola, introduces a more bubbling atmosphere with the violins playing active couplet figures against the somewhat serious melodic line. The fourth variation returns to the sentiment of the theme, conjuring serene beauty with a tightly harmonized texture of moving lines and suspensions. The fifth variation is rustic Beethoven at its best, and then a brief coda closes the movement.

The *Allegro* finale, dwarfed by the previous movement, again is a sonata-allegro movement with a recapitulation and coda. The first theme is the real focus here, and the initial opening sets it off, with this subject providing most of the momentum that propels it forward. The second theme is apparently again inspired by Mozart, but the development focuses mostly on the first theme. The overall understated, subtle nature of this quartet is greatly contrasted with the final outburst of excitement in this final movement, and yet, despite the increase of energy and growing momentum, the movement quietly closes the door behind itself as it floats to an evaporative close.

*By Kurt Baldwin. Revised by Stephen Schmidt*

## **CUARTETO EN GUAGUANCO**

Guido López-Gavilán is a Cuban musician, composer, arranger, and conductor. But for today's purposes, he is equally important as the father of the Harlem Quartet's first violinist, Ilmar Gavilán.

He began his musical studies at the Amadeo Roldan Conservatory in Havana, graduating in choral conducting with maestro Manuel Ochoa in 1966. He completed orchestral conducting studies with maestro Daniil Tiulin, and orchestration,

counterpoint, piano, and musical analysis with teachers José Ardévol, Leo Brouwer, Esther Ferrer, Harold Gramatges, and Edgardo Martín. He subsequently obtained a scholarship to study at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow with Professor Leo Guinsburg, graduating in orchestral conducting in 1973.

López-Gavilán has received awards in the most important composition competitions held in Cuba and as a conductor has achieved extraordinary success, and received recognition from international critics for outstanding performances in Latin America and Europe. He has also been invited as a guest speaker to many important festivals and musical events at various prestigious universities. In 2005 he was awarded the UNESCO Medal in Chile. His piece *Conga*, especially written for the Sixth World Symposium of Choral Music, Minneapolis, Minn., was premiered at the Symposium's opening concert. He has also made an outstanding contribution to the development of the Cuban Youth Orchestra Movement. He is the President of the Havana Festival and Chairman of the Orchestral Conducting Department at the Instituto Superior de Arte. He is a founding member of the Colegio de Compositores Latinoamericanos de Música de Arte.

Guido López-Gavilán's style of composition incorporates rhythms from Cuban popular music, polytonality, unconventional sound resources and fine lyricism. His music ranges from humorous and joyful compositions to solemn and dramatic works. He is one of the most popular musicians of his generation, not only among musicians but with the rest of the Cuban people who know his melodies such as *A Memory*, the *Cumbanchero Variations* or *Camerata in Guaguancó*.

The *Cuarteto en Guaguanco* is a Cuban dance for quartet, based on a dance that is very similar to the salsa clave. The salsa clave rhythm is a two-measure pattern that alternates between three and two beats. In the *Guaguanco*, the third note

of that rhythm is delayed, adding to its difficulty. Another interesting (and difficult) feature of this work is that the players must occasionally play and pluck their instruments at the same time.

## **ENTR'ACTE**

Caroline Shaw is one of the most celebrated composers alive today, but even after becoming the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 (not to mention numerous Grammy Awards), she still identifies herself simply as a musician — a term that encompasses her expansive work as a violinist, singer, improviser, and producer. She began studying violin at the age of two with her mother, a Suzuki teacher, and she formed her own string quartet while growing up in Greenville, North Carolina. Still, she waited until 2009 to compose the first in what has become a groundbreaking series of quartets. She studied violin at Rice University and Yale and composition at Princeton.

Composition aside, Shaw is known as a musician who appears in many guises. She performs primarily as violinist with the American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME) and as vocalist with Roomful of Teeth. She also works with the Trinity Wall Street Choir, Alarm Will Sound, Attacca Quartet, Wordless Music Orchestra, Ensemble Signal, AXIOM, The Yehudim, Victoire, Opera Cabal, the Mark Morris Dance Group Ensemble, Hotel Elephant, the Oracle Hysterical, Red Light New Music, and Robert Mealy's Yale Baroque Ensemble.

In 2014-2015, Shaw was the inaugural Early-Career Musician in Residence at Dumbarton Oaks, the historic estate in Washington, D.C. once owned by the diplomat Robert Wood Bliss and his wife, arts patron Mildred Bliss. The house, which once played host to meetings between international delegates that blossomed into the United Nations, was given to Harvard University and functions as a research and cultural hub.

Shaw herself writes about *Entr'acte*: “*Entr'acte* was written in 2011 after hearing the Brentano Quartet play Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2 — with their spare and soulful shift to the D-flat major trio in the minuet. It is structured like a minuet and trio, riffing on that classical form but taking it a little further. I love the way some music (like the minuets of Op. 77) suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice’s looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition.”

## STRING QUARTET IN E-FLAT MAJOR

Fanny Mendelssohn’s String Quartet in E-flat major was written in 1834 but was based on an unfinished piano sonata she had composed five years earlier. This extraordinary, rhapsodic work is her only mature string quartet, and among those currently known to us, it is one of the first surviving string quartets written by a woman. Mendelssohn herself reflected wonderingly how, as “not an eccentric or overly sentimental person,” she had come to write such music. For her, this arose from having encountered the exceedingly moving and emotional style of Beethoven when she was a child.

Like Clara Schumann, she expressed doubt in her abilities to handle large-scale forms, arguing that she “lacked the ability to sustain ideas properly and give them the needed consistency.” Her forms are unconventional, but the piece works brilliantly in performance. It opens with an extended somber-sounding *Adagio ma non troppo*, including a lengthy, minor-key, fugal passage. The spiky and playful *Allegretto* that follows also leans constantly into the minor key in an extended scherzo-and-trio form. These first two movements were reworked versions of the opening movements of her Piano Sonata. Together they lead to the expressive heart of the quartet—the elusive, searching *Romanze*, in which Mendelssohn constructs a dreamlike world of German Romanticism in music of astonishing harmonic originality. Some light emerges in the closing *Allegro molto vivace*, which starts off as a playful romp. However, the darker,

troubled undertones of the previous movements are not abandoned until the end, when the cobwebs are blown away by the sheer energy of the four instrumental parts.

During Fanny's lifetime, the work was performed only once, in private. Her brother Felix strongly disapproved of it, especially of what he perceived as an undisciplined approach to form. This might have contributed to the fact that she never wrote another quartet. It is important to point out, however, that she did not alter or revise what she wrote. The quartet remains in its original form, just as she envisioned it.

*By Natasha Loges. Revised by Stephen Schmidt*



# Artist Biographies

Grammy-winning **Harlem Quartet**, featuring **Ilmar Gavilán**, **Melissa White**, **Jaime Amador**, and **Felix Umansky**, has earned acclaim for its dynamic performances and fresh approach to classical music. The *New York Times* praised their “panache,” while the *Cincinnati Enquirer* lauded their “new attitude to classical music.” Grammy-winning woodwind virtuoso Ted Nash of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra has been quoted saying, “Harlem Quartet is one of the greatest string quartets I have ever heard. They can play anything.”

This ensemble has performed in 47 states and four continents, has been featured on numerous national television spots such as the Today Show and News Hour, and has even performed for first lady Michelle Obama at the White House. They are most well-known for their innovative programming, both through their own work and collaborations, which seamlessly mixes classical repertoire with jazz and Latin, as well as contemporary works by composers from underrepresented backgrounds, championing diversity in classical music to their core. Equally dedicated to education, Harlem Quartet engages communities through residencies and outreach programs, fostering a love for music among diverse audiences. Their commitment has been recognized through prestigious grants, such as the Cultural Connections Artist-In-Residence grant from James Madison University and the 2016 Guarneri String Quartet grant from Chamber Music America, facilitating impactful community partnerships and educational initiatives. Harlem Quartet has also served as quartet-in-residence at institutions such as the John J. Cali School of Music in Montclair and the Royal College of Music in London.

In collaboration with renowned artists such as pianists Michael Brown and Awadagin Pratt, clarinetists Paquito D’Rivera and Anthony McGill, and jazz legends Stanley Clarke and John Patitucci, the quartet continues to push musical boundaries.

Harlem Quartet's ongoing partnership with Imani Winds has resulted in acclaimed performances and a 2023 GRAMMY Award for their recording *Passion for BACH & COLTRANE*.

Beyond chamber music, Harlem Quartet also performs string quartet works with orchestras including a special arrangement of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* for string quartet and orchestra by Randall Craig Fleischer, which premiered with the Chicago Sinfonietta in 2012. The quartet has recorded this work, along with compositions by Michael Abels and Benjamin Lees, on the Cedille Records release *Delights and Dances*. This season, they will perform Edward Hart's *A Charleston Concerto* with the Charleston Symphony both locally and on tour to commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the City of Charleston.

Harlem Quartet's discography includes a wide range of their own albums and guest features, most notably their collaboration on *Hot House* with Gary Burton and Chick Corea, which earned a Grammy for Best Instrumental Composition. Their 2020 album *Cross Pollination* features works by Debussy, William Bolcom, Dizzy Gillespie, and Guido López-Gavilán. Released in August 2024, their most recent *Havana Meets Harlem* was recorded with Aldo López-Gavilán and showcases his original compositions for piano quintet.

Highlights of Harlem Quartet's 2024-2025 season include appearances at Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Broad Stage, Art Power in San Diego, Gaillard Center, SUNY Buffalo and the Mary-Anne Rennolds Series as well as residencies at Interlochen Center for the Arts, Queens University in Charlotte, NC, and Youngstown State University.

Joining the Harlem Quartet today in the second violin chair is New York based violinist and pedagogue Amy Schroeder, a founding member of the GRAMMY award winning Attacca Quartet and wife of the Harlem Quartet's cellist Felix Umansky. Since its inception the Attacca Quartet has won an array of awards including the

grand prize in the Osaka International String Quartet Competition, the National Federation of Music Clubs Centennial Chamber Music Award, the Arthur Foote Award from the Harvard Musical Association, and the Lotos Prize in the Arts from the Stecher and Horowitz Foundation. The quartet has held prestigious residencies, including one at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They are currently in residence at Texas State University in San Marcos.

## **About the Mary Anne Rennolds Chamber Concert Series**

The Department of Music at Virginia Commonwealth University has presented the top chamber music performers in the world to Richmond audiences for more than forty years. VCU Music's series, originally founded as the Terrace Concerts, debuted in 1983 in partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Today, the series is named in honor of Mary Anne Rennolds, one of Richmond's greatest music patrons. A fund was established in her memory to present chamber music events in Richmond, independently of the Terrace Concerts.

Please consider donating to the fund in honor of Mary Anne Rennolds and her legacy. To donate online, please go to <https://support.vcu.edu/give/Arts>. Search by keyword and look for "Rennolds". The fund name is "Mary Anne Rennolds Chamber Concerts".

If you would like to provide a check donation, checks can be made out to the VCU Foundation with Rennolds Chamber Concerts in the subject line. Checks may be mailed to VCU Arts Music attn: Linda Johnston at 922 Park Avenue, Box 842004, Richmond, VA 23284-2004.

Thank you for supporting the premier chamber music series in Richmond.

# UPCOMING VCU EVENTS

**Trumpet Studio Recital**  
Monday, April 7th 7:00 PM  
James Black Recital Hall

**Chamber Brass Ensemble**  
Tuesday, April 8th 5:00 PM  
Singleton Center

**Flute Choir & Woodwind Ensemble**  
Tuesday, April 8th 7:00 PM  
Singleton Center

**VCU Choirs present "Belonging"\***  
Wednesday, April 9th 7:00 PM  
Singleton Center

**Low Brass Studio**  
Thursday, April 10th 7:00 PM  
Singleton Center

**University Band\***  
Friday, April 11th 7:00 PM  
Singleton Center

**Percussion Ensemble**  
Sunday, April 13th 4:00 PM  
Singleton Center

**Saxophone Studio Recital**  
Monday, April 14th 8:00 PM  
Singleton Center

**Secondary Piano Studio Recital**  
Monday, April 21st 4:00 PM  
James Black Recital Hall

### **Guitar Ensemble**

Tuesday, April 22nd 7:00 PM  
James Black Recital Hall

### **String Area Recital**

Wednesday, April 23rd 3:00 PM  
James Black Recital Hall

### **Horn Studio Recital**

Wednesday, April 23rd 5:00 PM  
James Black Recital Hall

### **A Toast to Opera: VCU Opera's 75th Anniversary Gala^**

Saturday, April 26th 7:00 PM  
Singleton Center

### **String Area Recital**

Monday, April 28th 2:00 PM  
James Black Recital Hall

\*Require a ticket. Tickets are \$12.00 for the general public, \$5.00 for VCU Students.

^Tickets for "A Toast to Opera.." are \$20.00.

Tickets may be purchased at: [arts.vcu.edu/music-tickets](https://arts.vcu.edu/music-tickets)

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The VCU Friends of Music Scholarship Fund continues to assist many of our VCU Music students with significant scholarship funding, making it possible for them to pursue their education. To contribute to this fund online, please go to: <https://support.vcu.edu/give/Arts>. Search by keyword and look for "Friends of Music".

For additional information on how to support VCU Music, please email [music@vcu.edu](mailto:music@vcu.edu) or call 804-827-4541. Your support is valuable and appreciated.

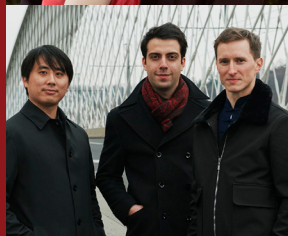
**ANNOUNCING THE 2025-26 SEASON**



**MARY ANNE RENNOLDS**

# CHAMBER CONCERT SERIES

**2025-26**



**Bax & Chung Piano Duo**

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2025 | 3 PM**

**Trio Zimbalist**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2025 | 3 PM**



**Apollo's Fire  
Baroque Orchestra**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2026 | 3 PM**

**Dover Quartet**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026 | 3 PM**



**Juliette Tacchino, soprano**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2026 | 3 PM**



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*All performances held in the Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall,  
W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts. Artists and  
dates are subject to change.*