

**FRIENDS of
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world-class musicians



Photo: Suntory Hall

Friends of Chamber Music
presents

MIRÓ STRING QUARTET

April 30 – May 7, 2021

Welcome to the 25th Season Finale of the Friends of Chamber Music Series with a concert performed by the world-class ensemble from our own home state of Texas, the Miró String Quartet!

This has been a challenging year for all of us, and our guest musicians and we are eagerly waiting the time that we can return to live performances. At the same time, we hope to learn from our experiences and make future years of our concert series as widely available as possible, with virtual videos that accompany live concerts, streamed to your living rooms during and after our events and beyond Brazos County and state lines, to time zones wherever our listeners may be.

The Miró String Quartet has selected two works to perform for us. Both compositions explore the notion of Home, a place where each one of us and we all belong. One work is very new; it's written by an American composer, Kevin Puts, in 2019. His string quartet, "Home," was commissioned, in part, by the Miró Quartet and premiered by this ensemble at the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival. Another composition featured on the program is a 19th-century classic by Antonin Dvořák, his acclaimed "American" quartet. Everyone knows the influence that Dvorak's travels in America had on "The New World Symphony." But this Czech composer was also influenced in his chamber music by African American and Native American melodies he heard, and even the sounds of American locomotives and songbirds. While few believe that Dvořák directly lifted the spirituals and tunes he heard here into his own works, he himself claimed that he "should never have written these works 'just so' if it hadn't" been for his experiences in America.

Following the concert, we look forward to interviewing the musicians of the Miró Quartet, together with Peter Witt, a Friends of Chamber Music supporter and patron, whom we've invited to join us for this conversation.

An important part of what we do is educational Outreach, and we're delighted to announce our new initiative, the Friends Scholarship. Two Scholarship awards will be offered to local high school seniors who graduate this May and have plans to continue their music activities in college. We are not restricting these to music majors; rather students majoring in any college program qualify, as long as they intend to continue their participation in music. We have advertised this competition at our local schools, but if you know of any students who are homeschooled or take individual music lessons and who might be not aware of this opportunity, please encourage them to apply for the Friends Scholarship on our website.

We are very grateful for the wonderful support of the Plass Arts Foundation and the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley. Without this help, we couldn't have continued offering free virtual events featuring our outstanding guest artists during this stressful year.

Most of all, we thank you, the Friends of Chamber Music supporters! We appreciate your participation and energy, your gracious reviews, and generous support! Truly it is due to your contribution to cultural life in the Brazos Valley, even during hard times, that we can all enjoy this remarkable chamber music series.

We're looking forward to greeting you, in person, at our concerts and special events in the Fall!



Andreas Kronenberg

President

Friends of Chamber Music

Mission Statement

FRIENDS *of*
CHAMBER
MUSIC
— world-class musicians

Friends of Chamber Music brings music from diverse periods and cultures, performed by world-class musicians, to the Brazos Valley. Through concerts and outreach programs at area schools, we strive to enhance the cultural life of the community.

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Educational Outreach

FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

As an extension of the Friends of Chamber Music's Educational Outreach Program, we've launched the community-oriented FRIENDS SCHOLARSHIP Program. The aim of this initiative is to support students in their continuous involvement with music that helps establishing healthy brain patterns, contributes to general well-being, and benefits balanced lifestyle.

We recognize graduating seniors from Bryan and College Station, including public and private schools and homeschooled students, who have demonstrated excellence in music through their high school career and have a plan to continue music studies in college by

- pursuing music as their major or minor, or
- joining college band, orchestra, choir, or other music groups, or
- taking individual music lessons for credit.

The Friends Scholarship award is \$1,000 for the first academic year at college.

The application deadline is May 5, 2021, 11:59 pm.

The Application Form and supplemental materials should be submitted online at the Friends of Chamber Music's website, <https://www.fcmtx.org/scholarship>.

Scholarship recipients will be chosen by the Friends of Chamber Music Scholarship Committee and notified, along with their parents and teachers, via email by May 10, 2021.

The Encore!

Following the concert, stay tuned for the traditional Friends of Chamber Music's ENCORE interview! This time, we've invited Peter Witt, an enthusiastic supporter and patron of Friends of Chamber Music, to take part in the conversation that we recorded with the musicians of the Miró String Quartet.

MIRÓ STRING QUARTET

Daniel Ching, violin

Willian Fedkenheuer, violin

John Largess, viola

Joshua Gindele, cello

HOME: Place Where We Belong

Kevin Puts | *Home*, for string quartet (2019)

Antonín Dvořák | String Quartet No. 12, Op. 96, “*American*” (1893)

I. Allegro ma non troppo

II. Lento

III. Molto vivace

IV. Finale: vivace ma non troppo

Winner of numerous prestigious awards, including the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for his debut opera *Silent Night*, Kevin Puts' works have been commissioned, performed, and recorded by leading ensembles, and soloists throughout the world, including Yo-Yo Ma, Renée Fleming, Jeffrey Kahane, Dame Evelyn Glennie, the New York Philharmonic, the Tonhalle Orchester (Zurich), the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Miro Quartet, and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Cincinnati, Detroit, Atlanta, Colorado, Houston, Fort Worth, St. Louis, and Minnesota. His newest orchestral work, *The City*, was co-commissioned by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in honor of its 100th anniversary and by Carnegie Hall in honor of its 125th anniversary. His new vocal work *Letters From Georgia*, written for Soprano Renée Fleming and orchestra and based on the personal letters of Georgia O'Keeffe, had its world premiere in New York in Fall 2016, and his first chamber opera, an adaptation of Peter Ackroyd's gothic novel *The Trial of Elizabeth Cree* commissioned by Opera Philadelphia, had its world premiere in September 2017, followed by performances with Chicago Opera Theater in February 2018.

Silent Night, commissioned and premiered in November 2011 by Minnesota Opera and co-produced by Opera Philadelphia, has been produced at Fort Worth Opera, Cincinnati Opera, the Wexford Opera Festival, Calgary Opera, Montreal Opera, the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Atlanta Opera, Opera San Jose, and Michigan Opera Theatre. In 2013, his choral works *To Touch The Sky and If I Were A Swan* were performed and recorded by Conspirare. His second opera, also commissioned by Minnesota Opera, *The Manchurian Candidate*, based on the novel, had its world premiere in 2015.



A former Composer-in-Residence of Young Concerts Artists, he is currently a member of the composition department at the Peabody Institute and the Director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer's Institute.

Kevin Puts | *Home*, for string quartet (2019)

As Kevin Puts writes, “Performing this fourth quartet of mine requires all four members of the quartet to retune their instruments to the pitches of a C-major harmony. Historically, this act of employing a tuning other than the customary stack of perfect fifths in all instruments has been referred to as scordatura. It allows the quartet to resonate in a unique way when its open strings are played, thereby creating a sonic representation of “home” and one which is abandoned after the idyllic atmosphere of the work’s first several minutes in search of new and unfamiliar harmonic terrain.”

The work was inspired and informed by the refugee crisis in Europe, and it raises questions of who belongs where and what the idea of ‘home’ means to all of us.

Antonín Dvořák | String Quartet No. 12, Op. 96, “*American*” (1893)

Antonin Dvořák’s own immigrant experience forms the backdrop for the composition of his string quartet nicknamed “the American Quartet”.

In 1892 Dvořák decided to leave his native land of Bohemia to come to America and settle in New York City, where he took up a job teaching composition and conducting at a brand-new music conservatory that would later become the Juilliard School. But Dvořák missed his home very much while living in New York and by the time summer vacation rolled around he had found a Czech expatriate community in the distant farming town of Spillville in Iowa where he and his family could reconnect with his native people and culture. Dvořák and his family determined to spend their entire summer there soaking up Bohemian food, language and folk life before going back to their new home of New York City in the fall.

Paradoxically it was in this immigrant farm town that Dvořák first became familiar with the many diverse voices that made up the American musical landscape at that time: tunes and chants sung by native American peddlers, the longing melodies he heard in African American spirituals, the folksy fiddle playing of American dance music, and even the calls of native songbirds all find their way into this quartet, written quickly in Spillville during the summer of 1893.

Though Dvořák would eventually decide that America couldn't be his permanent home, with this string quartet he left a legacy especially for his young American composition students telling about their own musical America. Dvořák admonished them to not look to Europe and the past to find their own musical voice, but rather to look to their home around them, to its diversity of voices here and now, and find their own way to bring those voices together into one message, one new world.

And it's Dvořák's own vision, that of an immigrant seeing his new home for the first time, appreciating its diversity and its unity that we hear in the "American" string quartet.

--John Largess

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Daniel Ching, violin
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John Largess, viola
Joshua Gindele, cello

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, TX, and thriving on the area's storied music scene, the Miró takes pride in finding new ways to communicate with audiences of all backgrounds while cultivating the longstanding tradition of chamber music.

In their 2020-21 season, the Miró Quartet continues to explore a diverse way of performing concerts consisting of pre-recorded virtual concerts, live-streams, and in-person socially distanced concerts. They are regularly performing newly commissioned pieces along with works of Dvořák and Schubert. They will perform at The Bowdoin International Music Festival in July and in Rockport, MA alongside famed clarinetist Anthony McGill in August.

The Miró celebrated its 25th anniversary in the 2019-20 season by performing a wide range of repertoire that pays homage to the legacy of the string quartet and also looks to the future of chamber music and string quartet playing in the U.S. In honor of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, the Quartet performed the composer's complete string quartets in concert and on recording. Recently the Quartet embarked on a year-long string quartet cycle at Chamber Music Northwest, where it is in residence this season. The Quartet has previously performed full Beethoven cycles at Tokyo's Suntory Hall, Chamber Music Tulsa, and the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival in Washington State. Beyond the concert hall, the Miró concluded its recording cycle of Beethoven's string quartets with the release of a complete box set on Pentatone in November 2019. The ensemble began this recording project in 2005 with the release of the Op. 18 quartets, and the finished cycle represents not only the Beethoven's journey as a composer, but also a 14-year journey for the Quartet.

The Quartet also continued its Archive Project, honoring the American string quartet tradition by recreating historic recitals by iconic, early 20th-century ensembles, including the Flonzaley, Kneisel, and Kolisch Quartets. In past seasons, the Miró has performed a program, conceived by the Kneisel Quartet for its own 25th anniversary in 1910, featuring works by Mozart and Schubert paired with new music at the time from Glière, Franck, and Servais. Performances took place at Weill Recital Hall (where the Kneisel Quartet also frequently performed) presented by Carnegie Hall, and at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, as well as in Toronto, ON; Troy, NY; and Clemson, SC. The Miró also performed the Kolisch Quartet program with which the ensemble made its 1935 American debut. This debut included the world premiere of Bartók's Quartet No. 5 and the U.S. premiere of Berg's *Lyric Suite*, and the Miró performed this program in Austin, TX and Indianapolis, IN.

The Miró Quartet has championed the music of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts for more than a decade, and 2019–20 season it premiered a new string quartet titled *Home*, composed by Mr. Puts for the Miró's 25th anniversary. The work was presented by a consortium of commissioning partners, including the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival in Eastsound, WA (world premiere), Chamber Music Detroit, and Chamber Music Tulsa. Alongside that, the Miró also performed *Credo*, the composer's first work written for them (also featured on the recording *The Miró Quartet Live!*), in cities across the U.S.

Highlights of recent seasons include a sold-out return to Carnegie Hall to perform Beethoven's Op. 59 quartet, performances for the New York Philharmonic with Gabriel Kahane, appearances with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (both in New York and at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and Detroit Chamber Music Society), and performances at The Phillips Collection, Chamber Music Monterey Bay, Green Music Center, and Emerald City Music in Seattle. The Quartet also recently debuted in Korea, Singapore, and at the Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival. A favorite of summer chamber music festivals, the Miró Quartet has recently performed at La Jolla Music Society's SummerFest, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, OK Mozart, and Music@Menlo. The Miró regularly collaborates with artists such as violinist Martin Beaver, mezzosoprano Sasha Cooke, percussionist Colin Currie, cellist Clive Greensmith, and clarinetist David Shifrin, as well as with pianists Wu Han, Anton Nel, Jon Kimura Parker, and André Watts.

Formed in 1995, the Miró Quartet was awarded first prize at several national and international competitions including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Competition. Deeply committed to music education, members of the Quartet have given master classes at universities and conservatories throughout the world, and since 2003 the Miró has served as the quartet-in-residence at the University of Texas at Austin Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music. In 2005, the Quartet became the first ensemble ever to be awarded the coveted Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Having released many celebrated recordings, the Miró recently produced an Emmy Award-winning multimedia project titled Transcendence. A work with visual and audio elements available on live stream, CD, and Blu-ray, Transcendence encompasses philanthropy and documentary filmmaking and is centered around a performance of Franz Schubert's Quartet in G major on rare Stradivarius instruments. The Miró records independently and makes its music available on a global scale through Apple Music, Amazon, Spotify, Pandora, and YouTube.

The 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 for more information.

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OUR MISSION

Friends of Chamber Music brings music from diverse periods and cultures, performed by world-class musicians, to the Brazos Valley. Through concerts and outreach programs at area schools, we strive to enhance the cultural life of the community.

COVID-19 & FRIENDS DIGITAL SERIES

Friends of Chamber Music has transformed concerts, interviews with artists, and educational outreach programs into FRIENDS DIGITAL SERIES of virtual events available online to our community and around the globe in 2020-2021.

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Your support will help advance Friends of Chamber Music's mission to enrich life in the Brazos Valley and bring the art of music to students at local schools and colleges. Please, donate generously!

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