

**Lydian String Quartet presents
Beethoven+**

**String quartets by Ludwig van Beethoven on
the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his
death in 2027, matched with contemporary
compositions**

Concert I

Sunday, November 16, 2025 @ 3 PM

Goethe-Institut Boston

170 Beacon Street



The Lydian String Quartet, in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Boston, presents the complete string quartets of Ludwig van Beethoven in a series of eight concerts over two years, culminating with the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's death in Spring 2027. Each concert will present two Beethoven quartets framing contemporary works that demonstrate Beethoven's lasting influence and providing new context for listening and understanding these canonical works in today's world.

Beethoven+
(2025–2027)

Sunday, November 16, 2025, 3:00 PM: Concert I

Sunday, January 18, 2026, 3:00 PM: Concert II

Sunday, February 22, 2026, 3:00 PM: Concert III

Sunday, May 29, 2026, 3:00 PM: Concert IV

Concert I Program

String Quartet No. 4 in C minor, Op. 18, No 4 (1798-1800)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Allegro ma non tanto
- II. Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto
- III. Menuetto. Allegro
- IV. Allegretto – Prestissimo

***Kongsgaard Variations* (2006)**

Anders Hillborg (b. 1954)

~Intermission~

String Quartet No. 12 in E-flat major, Op. 127 (1825)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Maestoso – Allegro
- II. Adagio ma non troppo e molto cantabile
- III. Scherzo. Vivace
- IV. Allegro

The Lydian String Quartet
Julia Glenn and Clara Lyon, violins
Mark Berger, viola
Joshua Gordon, cello

***The Lydian Quartet would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who donated to our fundraising campaign at Brandeis University last year. Our ability to present this series in partnership with the Goethe-Institut Boston is due in large part to your generosity in giving.*

Program Notes

A personal introduction

Where to even begin! The monumental task of performing a complete Beethoven cycle is of course a bucket-list project for any string player. There is perhaps no other collection of works that better summarizes the totality of human existence than these 16 string quartets. For me personally, the Beethoven journey will always begin with Op. 18, No. 4. Quite literally, it was the very first string quartet that I ever performed! As a scrawny 12-year old in the midwest, I was excited to be going away to my first summer music camp, held on a state university campus about an hour away from my home. At the very first chamber music session, I walked into a room with three other awkward teenagers, and waiting for us on the music stands was this Beethoven C minor string quartet. Of course the *sturm und drang* intensity of the first movement blew me away, and that childhood experience

of making music with three of my friends forever hooked me on quartet playing. To this day, every time I get to play Op. 18, No. 4 I am still excited by the stormy drama of the first movement, the subversive humor of the 2nd movement (that begins as a fugue where everyone enters in the wrong measure), the whirlwind dance of the Minuet, and of course the madcap virtuosity of the finale.

This first concert concludes with Op. 127, the first of Beethoven's late quartets. Although written in the same key signature (E-flat major being the relative major of C minor), what a different musical world! From the majestic chords of the opening, this is music that is constantly folding in on itself with music of lyrical intimacy and at times an almost spiritual dimension. Years ago, I had a professor point out that one of the most interesting aspects of late Beethoven is not just the content of the movements, but how each movement connects to the next. This is perfectly evident in Op. 127. Notice how the epic first movement, instead of ending triumphantly as one might expect, gently recedes, and how the second movement emerges from the same harmony of its final chord. That chord unfolds seamlessly into the theme-and-variations 2nd movement, certainly one of the most profound and beautiful slow movements in all of Beethoven. The scherzo, by contrast, immediately jolts the audience out of the dream with four pizzicato chords – about as far from the sound world of the 2nd movement as possible! The galloping dotted rhythms and jocular humor of the Scherzo are the perfect foil to all of the intensely lyrical music of the first two movements, ending with the full quartet in unison slamming the door shut

with a descending octave. How to move to the finale after this? Beethoven abruptly opens the door just as he slammed it shut with the quartet in unison with a rising octave! And of course Beethoven is saving something very special for the very end. After a relatively conventional finale, the coda opens up into an entirely new sonic world in C major, changing from duple meter to an ethereal, flowing 6/8 to present the main theme one last time, now completely transformed.

~Mark Berger

Kongsgaard Variations (2006)

Anders Hillborg (b. 1954)

The etiquette on a bottle of Arietta wine displays a couple of bars of the Arietta theme from the manuscript of Beethoven's last piano sonata, No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111. When I was asked to compose a piece in honor of this fabulous wine, I naturally decided that this theme should have a key role. But whereas Beethoven produces a set of rigorous variations with a steadily increasing intensity curve (the Arietta theme, serenely beautiful and calm in the beginning, culminating in what can best be described as the first ragtime in music history, before fading back to serenity) – my *Kongsgaard Variations* are more like meditations, with no directional process.

The music floats aimlessly through the centuries, displaying reminiscences of Baroque, Folk, Renaissance and Romantic musics, but always with Beethoven's Arietta theme at its epicenter. Although scarcely audible, the piece actually starts with music directly derived from

the Arietta theme, leaving out the melody but maintaining the same rhythmical flow and harmonic landscape, as if Beethoven's music is dreaming about yet another variation of itself. Arietta means "little song," and these opening bars are then cloned and mutated into other "little songs" that occur on several occasions in the piece.

After the introductory section, the first violin takes on a simple, thoughtful solo motif which is again cloned and mutated and appears later in the piece in different shapes. Then comes a viola solo – joyful, as if in a trance – which leads to a section where all instruments sing in praise of wine and music. Shortly after the middle of the piece, we hear the Arietta theme for the first time, but strangely distorted and stretched, in the same way a cubist painting twists the motif it uses – almost as if the music is being played backwards. A simple chorale follows that lands us in the music that began the piece, and then, finally, comes the first part of Beethoven's theme in C major in its pure, original shape. This is succeeded by the second part of the theme in A minor (here again distorted in the manner described earlier) before the music evaporates into a mist of harmonics.

Kongsgaard Variations is warmly dedicated to John and Maggy Kongsgaard.

~Anders Hillborg

Anders Hillborg gained his first musical experience singing in choirs and he was also involved in various forms of improvised music. From 1976 to 1982 he studied counterpoint, composition and electronic music at the

Royal College of Music in Stockholm, where his teachers included Gunnar Bucht, Lars-Erik Rosell, Arne Mellnäs and Pär Lindgren. Brian Ferneyhough, who was a guest lecturer at the College of Music on several occasions, was also an important source of inspiration.

Apart from occasional teaching positions, Hillborg has been a full-time freelance composer since 1982. His sphere of activity is extensive, covering orchestral, choral and chamber music as well as music for films and pop music.

The Lydian String Quartet

From its beginning in 1980, the Lydian Quartet has embraced the full range of the string quartet repertory with curiosity, virtuosity, and dedication to the highest artistic ideals of music making. In their formative years, the Lydians were awarded top prizes in international string quartet competitions, including Evian, Portsmouth and Banff, culminating in 1984 with the Naumburg Award for Chamber Music. In the years to follow, the quartet continued to build a reputation for its depth of interpretation, performing with "a precision and involvement marking them as among the world's best quartets" (Chicago Sun-Times). From the acknowledged masterpieces of the classical, romantic, and modern eras to the remarkable compositions written by today's cutting-edge composers, the Lydian Quartet approaches music-making with a sense of exploration and personal expression that is timeless.

The Lydians have performed extensively throughout the United States at venues such as Jordan Hall in Boston; the Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; Lincoln Center, Miller Theater, and Weill Recital Hall in New York City; the Pacific Rim Festival at the University of California at Santa Cruz; and the Slee Beethoven Series at the University at Buffalo. Internationally, the Quartet has made appearances in Taiwan, France, England, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Armenia and Mexico.

The Lydians' 30+ currently available commercial recordings reflect their diverse and far-reaching repertoire, including works by Beethoven, Brahms, Ives, Lazarof, Ornstein, Persichetti, and Schubert as well as American contemporary composers they have long known and collaborated with such as Martin Boykan, Yu-Hui Chang, Eric Chasalow, Peter Child, John Harbison, Lee Hyla, Steven Mackey, David Rakowski, Kurt Rohde, Harold Shapero, and Yehudi Wyner.



2025-2026 SEASON
BOSTON PHILHARMONIC

BRAHMS Alessandro Deljavan, piano	Oct. 19, 3 PM	MOZART/BRUCKNER Kristian Bezuidenhout, piano	Feb. 13, 8 PM
VERDI Ailyn Perez, soprano Daniela Mack, mezzo-soprano John Osborn, tenor Maharram Huseynov, bass Chorus pro Musica Donald Palumbo, artistic advisor	Nov. 23, 3 PM	MAHLER Dame Sarah Connolly, mezzo-soprano Chorus pro Musica Radcliffe Choral Society The Choristers of Saint Paul's Choir School	Apr. 11, 8 PM

BOSTON PHILHARMONIC YOUTH ORCHESTRA

BERNSTEIN / BRAHMS / PROKOFIEV Guy Braunstein, violin Zvi Plessner, cello	Nov. 7, 8 PM
TAKEMITSU / DEBUSSY / MAHLER	Feb. 27, 8 PM
HARBISON / GERSHWIN / COPLAND Makoto Ozone, piano	May 3, 7 PM

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Please join us for our upcoming Beethoven+ concerts at the Goethe-Institut Boston!

Concert II: January 18, 2026 @ 3pm

Beethoven – String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op. 18, No. 3

Peter Ruzicka – String Quartet No. 1: *Introspezione. Dokumentation*

Beethoven – String Quartet No. 16 in F major, Op. 135

Concert III: February 22, 2026 @ 3pm

Beethoven – String Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95
“Serioso”

Hans Thomalla – *Bagatellen*

Beethoven – String Quartet No. 9 in C major, Op. 59, No. 3

Concert IV: May 29, 2026 @ 7:30pm

Beethoven – String Quartet No. 2 in G major, Op. 18, No. 2

Reena Esmail – *Zeher (Poison)*

Beethoven – String Quartet No. 15 in A minor, Op. 132

Please scan for tickets and more information:



Upcoming concerts in November @ Goethe-Institut Boston

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Sound Icon performs compositions by Helmut Lachenmann and select students including Helmut Lachenmann: *Guero*, Marc André: *Un-fini III*, Pierluigi Billone: *Mani.Δικη*

Wednesday, November 19, 2025, 8:00 PM |
Admission free

Performances of Lachenmann's works by students from Boston-area conservatories including *Berliner Kirschblüten*, *Fünf Variationen über ein Thema von Franz Schubert*, *Wiegenmusik*, *Dal Niente*, *Marche Fatale*


Friday, November 21, 2025, 6:30 PM |
Admission free

Callithumpian Consort performs compositions by Helmut Lachenmann including *Pression für einen Cellisten*, *temA*, *Ein Kinderspiel*, *Serynade*

Friday, November 21, 2025, 8:00 PM |
Admission free

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