



MIDDLEBURY
PERFORMING ARTS SERIES

P R E S E N T S

Schumann Quartet
Diana Fanning, Piano

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2021

7:30 PM · ROBISON HALL

MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE



SCHUMANN QUARTET

Erik Schumann, violin

Ken Schumann, violin

Liisa Randalu, viola

Mark Schumann, cello

with

Diana Fanning, piano

❧ Program ❧

Quartet in A Minor, Op. 13

Adagio. Allegro vivace

Adagio non lento

Intermezzo. Allegretto con moto – Allegro di molto

Presto – Adagio non lento

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809–1847)

Quartet in F Major

Allegro moderato

Assez vif

Très lent

Vif et agité

Maurice Ravel

(1875–1937)

❧ Intermission ❧

Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44

Allegro brillante

In modo d'una marcha. Un poco largamente

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Allegro ma non troppo

Robert Schumann

(1810–1856)

*This performance is made possible with support from the Paul Nelson Performance Endowment,
established in 2014.*

*Patrons are requested to turn off all electronic devices prior to the performance,
and to please refrain from texting.*

Photography and the use of audio or video equipment are prohibited.

Program Notes

MENDELSSOHN Quartet in A Minor, Op. 13

Note by Howard Posner, courtesy of the L.A. Philharmonic

The year Beethoven died, 1827, was also the year that his last five quartets appeared in print. They must have been lightning on the brain of the teenaged Felix Mendelssohn, who studied them avidly. Another bolt of lightning struck him at about the same time: he fell in love. History does not record any specifics about this episode, even who the girl was, but it left some significant mementos. In June Mendelssohn wrote the words and music to a song titled "Frage" (Question). It was published as Op. 9, No. 1, with a fictitious "Voss" getting credit for the words, which are:

Is it true that you always wait for me there in the leafy path by the grape arbor and ask the moonlight and the little stars about me? Is it true? What I feel can only be understood by someone who feels it with me, and who will stay forever true to me.

A few months after writing the song, Mendelssohn composed his second string quartet. The song underlies the entire quartet, as Mendelssohn emphasized when he had the published quartet include the complete song.

He wrote to a friend: "The song that I sent with the quartet is its theme. You will hear it - with its own notes - in the first and last movements, and in all four movements you will hear its emotions expressed. If it doesn't please you at first, which might happen, then play it again, and if you still find something 'minuetish,' think of your stiff and formal friend Felix with his tie and valet. I think I express the song well[.]"

So Mendelssohn wrote a quartet about being in love, and there is nothing stiff, formal, or old-fashioned about it. Young as he was, Mendelssohn had already produced a series of mature masterpieces, including the Octet and *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*, but nothing in those shining works foreshadowed the stormy power of this quartet.

The transformation can be attributed to a combination of early love and late Beethoven quartets. Listeners who know those quartets will hear many echoes of them in Mendelssohn's. It begins with a gentle, reflective prologue in A major, the end of which quotes the song's opening phrase, "Ist es wahr?" (Is it true?) The long-short-long of that phrase is the basis for much of follows.

It plays a role in all four movements, though it is sometimes less obvious to the ear than it is on paper. It dominates the principal theme of the allegro that follows, which is ushered in with a dramatic touch: a flurry of sixteenth notes sets the agitated mood, then the three lower parts foreshadow the theme, much as the orchestra might introduce a big operatic aria by hinting at the theme before the diva takes it up. An even more operatic touch is the movement's final cadence, a closing formula common in opera arias since Mozart (think of the Queen of the Night's famous second-act aria in *The Magic Flute*). What comes between is a tightly constructed movement about yearning and conflict, driven by dissonance and intricate counterpoint.

In the second movement, like the first, a peaceful major-key prelude gives way to an unsettling contrapuntal movement - this time a fugue with a chromatic subject. It sounds very modern for 1827 and at the same time archaic and modal, like a mannerist fantasy of the 17th century (or some movements in Beethoven's late quartets). It is doubly unsettling for being rhythmically puzzling. Though the basic rhythm is in three, the fugue subject is seven beats long, and the next voice unexpectedly enters as the first one reaches the seventh beat. The prelude returns, and its strains are blended with those of the fugue, now softened into major.

The third movement is another three-part structure. It begins as a graceful, sober nocturne, but soon runs off to fairyland for one of those shimmering, darting scherzos that Mendelssohn always had up his sleeve. The nocturne returns, but the fairies and moonbeams get the last word.

The fourth movement starts with another device characteristic of opera and Beethoven's last quartets: a tempestuous recitative by the violin over tremolos in the three lower parts. The main body of the movement recalls the mood of the first movement, and literally recalls its main theme, along with the second movement's fugue, now in duple rhythm instead of triple in one more rhythmic surprise. As themes from the different movements are telescoped together, the movement subsides into the music that began the first movement, and then the quartet ends with a quotation of the second half of "Frage" - "What I feel can only be understood by someone who feels it with me, and who will stay forever true to me." Mendelssohn seems to be telling us that we've just spent half an hour listening to what love feels like to him. Rarely did he let his listeners see so much of him.

RAVEL Quartet in F Major

Note courtesy of the L.A. Philharmonic

In 1903, the 28-year-old Ravel was completing his studies at the Paris Conservatory. By this time, he had been studying there for half of his life, and had entered the much-desired Grand Prix de Rome competition several times, though never receiving higher than second place. This first and only string quartet again failed to win him the prestigious award. However, the Quartet in F Major is an early demonstration of Ravel's brilliant juxtaposition of formality and sensuality, and his incredible use of tone color. At times it sounds like a much fuller string section than four instruments.

It is a common occurrence for artists to thrive within some sort of limitation or structure. So it was with Ravel, whose music blossomed under restraint. Though Ravel may have been the consummate perfectionist composer, he seems to have felt a certain freedom to be bold and spontaneous in writing the String Quartet. The String Quartet is often considered Ravel's first masterpiece and continues to be one of the most widely performed chamber music works in the classical repertoire, representing Ravel's early achievements and rise from obscurity.

The Quartet does follow the traditional four-movement classical structure. Like Debussy's String Quartet of a decade earlier, Ravel's Quartet also uses themes cyclically throughout the work. Ravel dedicated the piece to his teacher, Gabriel Fauré. The first movement marked *Allegro moderato - Très doux* (very sweet) is full of lyrical and soaring lines on the violin. The second movement, the shortest of the Quartet, is marked *Assez vif* (rather lively). The music shifts back and forth between *pizzicato* and more lyrical sections, all highlighting the triple meter with different rhythmic combinations reminiscent of Iberian folk music. The slower, more lyrical middle section of the movement sounds at times almost timeworn - primeval or exotic - with the first violin playing creaky, rising lines while the other strings pluck out eerie accompaniment. Low, *pizzicato* runs leap back into the first section material, and barge ahead to a stomping conclusion.

The nocturne-like third movement, *Très lent* (very slow), recycles melodic material from the first movement, moving between tension and relaxation throughout, with effective use of tremolo in the supporting lines. At several moments, the first violin soars high, full of romantic bittersweetness, then subsides, as stranger and more suspenseful themes take over. Although the music is slow and contemplative, there is a sense of inevitable movement forward, as if we are strapped into a roller coaster car moving slowly on the

track. Finally, it comes to rest high and soft, giving some peace after a great deal of disquiet.

The finale, *Vif et agité* (lively and agitated), starts and ends stormily, with moments of respite. Vigorous eighth notes open and are answered by recollections of the first movement. There is great unity in the String Quartet, with the cyclical themes throughout.

SCHUMANN Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44

Note by Benjamin Pomerance, courtesy of the Lake Champlain Weekly, October 20, 2021

“The Sounds of Triumph”

The news crackled through the parlor like lightning on the winter afternoon; Clara Schumann was ill – not gravely sick, mercifully, but indisposed enough that she would be unable to play the debut of her husband’s newest composition.

Perhaps disappointed groans arose from the guests on that December day in 1842, for anticipation had built about the newest creation to emerge from Robert Schumann’s pen, a previously unheard-of combination of a traditional string quartet plus a piano. Clara’s ailments would force all of them to wait to hear the work performed.

Then a 33-year-old man arose from the crowd. It was Felix Mendelssohn, one of the many gifted composers who had joined the Schumann family’s circle of friends. An audacious offer spilled from his lips. Having never seen a note of Robert’s quintet, he was nevertheless willing to sit down at the piano and sight-read the entire thing. Applause may have filled the room as Mendelssohn approached the instrument, knowing how hard his task would be. Yet Mendelssohn met the challenge, although he conceded that the music was “fiendishly difficult.”

Still, his work was not done. While sight-reading the quintet in front of an audience of fellow musicians, Mendelssohn had somehow managed to identify aspects of the piece’s architecture that he deemed to be necessary of repairs. Following the performance, he pulled Robert Schumann aside and offered his suggestions to his friend. It was enough to send Robert back into his workroom, performing surgery on the second and third movements. By the time the piece was next presented, he had incorporated Mendelssohn’s recommendations into the music.

Now, nearly 180 years after that frenetic debut, Diana Fanning hopes for a somewhat calmer experience when she performs Schumann's piano quintet with the Schumann Quartet: no illnesses, no sight-reading, and no post-concert revisions. Still, a different form of drama waits in the wings. The musicians of the Schumann Quartet will not arrive from Germany until the day [before] the concert. Other than a run-through in the afternoon, the quartet and the pianist will have no time together until the performance begins.

"It's going to be spontaneous combustion; I hope," laughs the woman who has taught burgeoning pianists at Middlebury College since 1975, an artist whose extensive performing experience in the United States and Europe can provide her with the confidence to laugh at such a situation. "Some of the excitement of this concert will come from the fact that we really will be new to each other. We'll all be listening carefully to each other, communicating with each other, exploring this great piece together, and I think the audience will feel that sense of freshness."

In a sense, it will be an environment that Schumann himself would have recognized: talented artists exploring chamber music on a college campus. As a law student at the University of Leipzig, bored with spending his hours with his nose stuck in legal tomes, he had recruited three friends to play piano quartets with him, a diversion from his days of drudgery. A diary entry dated March 13, 1829 offers a window into their gatherings, a night in which readings of Beethoven's Archduke Trio and a quartet of Schumann's own making mingled with "long-winded conversation," "good cheer" and "much Bavarian beer."

At times, an older man would join part of their gatherings, offering his critiques. Friedrich Wieck had already earned a reputation as one of the finest pedagogues in Germany, if not all of Europe, and Schumann had earned a coveted spot in Wieck's studio. Known as a fierce taskmaster, Wieck determined that Schumann had prodigious talent, even inviting the young man to live as a member of the Wieck household while studying with him. It was a decision that the teacher would soon bitterly regret.

Wieck wanted all of his children to become professional musicians. He harbored particularly high hopes for his second-born, Clara, meticulously charting out her studies in piano, violin, singing, theory and composition, as well as serving as her manager on her acclaimed concert tours. No room remained in his tightly wound schedule for his

prodigious daughter to fall in love, particularly not with an older man. When Robert came to live in the Wieck household, however, it wasn't long before a romance between Wieck's two prize pupils blossomed.

Wieck reacted by threatening to shoot Robert and throwing him out of his home. Yet the love affair continued, transitioning to letter-writing and clandestine meetings. After Robert proposed to Clara, she sought her father's consent, as she was too young according to the German laws of that era to marry without it. When her father refused, the couple brought a petition against him in court. A lengthy fight ensued, with Wieck declaring before the judge that Robert was "lazy, unreliable and conceited," as well as "unmanly" and "a mediocre composer."

Despite Wieck's thunderclaps, the court ultimately ruled in favor of the young lovers. On September 12, 1840, Robert and Clara were married, one day before her 21st birthday. Another court battle became necessary to force Wieck to let Clara have the piano on which she had played since childhood. For the next three years, the father avoided any significant communication with the daughter and son-in-law who had engaged him in these confrontations, reconciling with them only after the birth of his first two grandchildren.

Robert, however, appeared to pay little attention to his father-in-law's moods. The year of his marriage also proved to be the start of one of the most fruitful periods of his musical life. His compositional output in 1840 featured around 120 art songs, an outpouring of emotion from a man whose battles for Clara's hand in marriage were at last ending in success. In the following year, he turned to orchestral writing, producing his still-beloved "Spring" Symphony, and writing a second symphony in D-minor, which he would then revise and re-publish a decade later.

And in 1842, Fanning points out, Robert changed genres again, this time focusing his attention on the type of music that he had unsuccessfully tried to compose during his law student years. This time, the muse proved more willing. Carefully studying the chamber music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven with Clara, Robert found the inspiration to create three string quartets at a startling rate of speed. "Then he had this wonderful idea for something that really had never been done before," Fanning says. "Why not put a string quartet and the piano together?"

Reasons abounded for prior composers to refrain from attempting such a venture. "The piano had become mechanically very different by this point than it was in the days

of Haydn and Mozart and even Beethoven,” Fanning explains. “These changes had increased the piano’s power and dynamic range. There was also the addition of the damper pedal, which allowed the piano to have a more beautiful legato, sustaining notes and building resonance. For the first time, the piano could stand with the string quartet as an equal in sound.”

Armed with these technological advancements, the composer began writing his quintet in the autumn of 1842. “He must have really been on fire,” Fanning states. “He sketched the entire piece in five days. In about three weeks, he had finished writing it.” Presenting it to Clara as a gift, he longed to hear her perform the piano part for the first time, only to have to settle for Mendelssohn’s sight-reading at that now-legendary first performance. Still, the piece rapidly became a concert hall staple, with Clara playing the part written for her plenty of times.

If the deluge of art songs in 1840 represent the unadulterated adoration of a man head-over-heels in love, then this quintet offers similar feelings after a couple of years of maturation, imbued with the type of self-confidence that eluded Robert for large swaths of his life. The opening movement leaps boldly into the listeners’ ears, followed by a second theme that throbs with romance. Similar sensations emerge from the two trios in the third movement, and the sonata-rondo finale threatens to blow the roof off even the staidest concert hall.



Artist Biographies

Schumann Quartet

Erik Schumann, violin

Ken Schumann, violin

Liisa Randalu, viola

Mark Schumann, cello



The Schumann Quartet has reached a stage where anything is possible, because it has dispensed with certainties. This also has consequences for audiences, which from one concert to the next have to be prepared for all eventualities: “A work really develops only in a live performance,” the quartet says. “That is ‘the real thing’, because we ourselves never know what will happen. On the stage, all imitation disappears, and you automatically become honest with yourself. Then you can create a bond with the audience – communicate with it in music.” This live situation will gain an added energy in the near future: Albrecht Mayer, Menahem Pressler, Kit Armstrong, Anna Vinnitskaya and Anna Lucia Richter are among the quartet’s current partners.

A special highlight of the 21/22 season will be the four concerts at Wigmore Hall London, where the quartet is Quartet in Residence this season. Furthermore, the quartet will be back on tour in the USA after an enforced break. It will be a guest at the String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam, the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival and the MDR Musiksommer, as well as in Berlin, Schwetzingen, Frankfurt, Cologne and Dortmund. In addition, the quartet will be able to present two special programs in Madrid and Bilbao together with mezzo-soprano Anna-Lucia Richter.

Its album “Intermezzo” (2018 | Schumann, Reimann with Anna-Lucia Richter and Mendelssohn Bartholdy) has been hailed enthusiastically both at home and abroad and received the award “Opus Klassik” in the category quintet. It is celebrated as a worthy successor to its award-winning “Landscapes” album, in which in which the quartet traces its own roots by combining works of Haydn, Bartók, Takemitsu and Pärt. Among other prizes, the latter received the “Jahrespreis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik”, five Diapasons and was selected as Editor’s Choice by the BBC Music Magazine. For its previous CD “Mozart Ives Verdi”, the Schumann Quartet was accorded the 2016 Newcomer Award at the BBC Music Magazine Awards in London. In 2020 the quartet has expanded its discography with “Fragment” and his examination of one of the masters of the string quartet: Franz Schubert.

The three brothers Mark, Erik and Ken Schumann have been playing together since their earliest childhood. In 2012, they were joined by violist Liisa Randalu, who was born in the Estonian capital, Tallinn, and grew up in Karlsruhe, Germany. Those who experience the quartet in performance often remark on the strong connection between its members. The four musicians enjoy the way they communicate without words: how a single look suffices to convey how a particular member wants to play a particular passage. Although the individual personalities clearly manifest themselves, a common space arises in every musical work in a process of spiritual metamorphosis. The quartet's openness and curiosity may be partly the result of the formative influence exerted on it by teachers such as Eberhard Feltz, the Alban Berg Quartet, or partners such as Menahem Pressler.

Teachers and musical partners, prestigious prizes, CD releases – it is always tempting to speculate on what factors have led to many people viewing the Schumann Quartet as one of the best in the world. But the four musicians themselves regard these stages more as encounters, as a confirmation of the path they have taken. They feel that their musical development over the past two years represents a quantum leap. “We really want to take things to extremes, to see how far the excitement and our spontaneity as a group take us,” says Ken Schumann, the middle of the three Schumann brothers. They charmingly sidestep any attempt to categorise their sound, approach or style, and let the concerts speak for themselves.

And the critics approve: “Fire and energy. The Schumann Quartet plays staggeringly well [...] without doubt one of the very best formations among today's abundance of quartets, [...] with sparkling virtuosity and a willingness to astonish” (Harald Eggebrecht in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*). So there is plenty of room for adventure.

*Quotes taken from an interview with the classical music magazine VAN (vanmagazin.de)
Discography on Berlin Classics; Management by Arts Management Group, Inc., New York
For more info visit schumannquartett.com*



Diana Fanning, Piano

Diana Fanning has toured extensively as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout the eastern US and in Europe, concertizing in London, Paris, Geneva, Amsterdam, and Munich. After her first solo concert in Munich, a critic acclaimed “the effervescent brilliance and passionate sweetness of her playing” and added that “her virtuoso playing was rich in nuances.”



She has performed numerous times as a concerto soloist with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. Vermont Public Television featured her in a program of works by Scarlatti, Ravel and Chopin. Radio audiences throughout New England and Canada hear her frequently in live and taped performances over Vermont Public Radio, and she has also performed live on “Morning Pro Musica” (WGBH-FM) Boston and on WNYC, New York City.

As a chamber musician, Diana Fanning has toured New England as a member of the Ruggieri Chamber Soloists and has performed widely with cellist Dieuwke Davydov. The Davydov-Fanning Duo has gone on concert tours of Europe which included recordings for Radio Netherlands and has been presented in a Carnegie Recital Hall debut by the Concert Artists Guild International Competition.

Diana Fanning has been a guest artist with the Takacs String Quartet, with the Alexander String Quartet, with ensembles from the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, and with faculty members of the Point Counter Point Chamber Music Camp, which she and her husband Emory Fanning owned and directed for ten years.

Her major teacher has been Ruth Geiger of New York City; she also studied at the Conservatoire National de Paris. Diana Fanning teaches piano at Middlebury College, Vermont.





Our thanks to the 2021-2022 members
of the Performing Arts Series Society (PASS)
for their support of the series and arts at Middlebury.

Learn about PASS at go.middlebury.edu/pass,

Producers

Estate of Olin C. Robison
Rothrock Family Fund
Sunderman Family Concert Fund

Partners

Gail M. Braisted
Catherine Lee '92 and
Darius Nassiry
Rob and Marny Lichtenstein
Paul and Jennifer Nelson
Jean Seeler '60

Advocates

Bruce and Sue Byers
Magna and David Dodge

Patrons

Angelika and Buz Brumbaugh
Judith Irvén and Richard Conrad
Stephen and Emmie Donadio
Diana and Emory Fanning
Ross and Amy Gregory
David and Hillary Hamilton
Jean Humphrey
Will and Carolyn Jackson
Elizabeth Karnes Keefe and
Thomas Keefe
Richmond and Eleanor Littlefield
Rebecca Mitchell and
Andrew Demshuk
Al and Sally Molnar
Garreth and Kevin Parizo
Anton Rifelj
Robert R. Ruggiero and
Elizabeth Stabler
Robert S. Schine
Gail D. Smith

Patrons, cont.

Rebecca Strum
Jeanne and Marsdin Van Order
Mari Wright

Scholars

Victoria Albert '21.5
Malia Armstong '22.5
Elissa Asch '22.5
Sophia Bardetti '22
Caitlin Barr '22.5
Ben Beese '21.5
Theodore Best '22
Ciara Burke '22
Lilian Buzzard '22.5
Paul Flores Clavel '22
Issy Cochran '22
Emma Crockford '22.5
Hannah Deering '22
Alexandre Demoly '22
Molly Dorion '22.5
Hannah Ennis '22.5
Jackson Evans '22
Irith Fuks '21.5
Henry Ganey '22
Micaela Gayner '21
Grace Gillooly '23
Julian Gonzales-Poirier '23
Rose Heald '22.5
Linnea Hubbard-Nelson '22
Neta Kafka '22.5
Emi Kawahara '25 ★
Althea Kellet '22.5
Lizzie Kenter '23
Christian Kummer '22
Nimaya Lemal '21.5
Bo Liu '23
Colin Lyman '23

Scholars, cont.

Gabriella Martin '21.5
Maddison McKnight '22
Gabryail Meeks '22.5
Madison Middleton '22.5
Wilmer Steven Morantes '22
Jackson Mumper '22
Emily Nagatomo '22
Vem Nazarian '22.5
Haegan O'Rourke '22
Mano-Meelis Onni '23
Ryan Opiela-Young '22
Nestor Orozco-Llamas '23
Olivia Pintair '22.5
ZZ Pu '24
Maya Saterson '22
Graham Shelor '23
Zoe Sipe '23.5
Lucas Shin '22
Sophie Shiner '23
Yasmine Signey '22
Asa Skinder '22.5
Tejas Srinivasan '24 ★
Lia Swiniarski '21.5
Kexin Tang '22.5
Jackson Tham '22
Akari Tsurumaki '23
Miriam Weathers '22
Olivia Weisel '22
Alexis Welch '22.5
Connor Wertz '22
Alexander White '21.5
Hira Zeeshan '22
Yanruo (Alice) Zhang '23
Kelly Zhou '22
Chloe Zinn '22

★Performing Arts Series Intern



Join or renew NOW for 2021–2022 season!
Learn about PASS at go.middlebury.edu/pass,
the box office, or via brochures in the lobby.

ACCESS TO THE ARTS IS IMPORTANT TO US

Please contact the Box Office for specific requests.



Accessible parking, seating, and restrooms are available at all venues. Family/all-gender/accessible restrooms available at the Mahaney Arts Center (3rd floor) and the Wright Theatre lobby.



Relay calls are welcome via the Vermont Relay Service (711). See an usher, the Box Office, or visit go.middlebury.edu/artsaccess for more information on our accessibility services.



Assistive listening devices are available at most events.



Sign language interpretation available at select shows.



Large-print programs are available at many performances.



Low-cost or free transportation is available through Tri-Valley Transit, 802-388-2287 or www.trivalleytransit.org/dial-a-ride.

MAHANAY ARTS CENTER

Pieter Broucke, Associate Dean for the Arts

Liza Sacheli, Director, Mahaney Arts Center

Allison Coyne Carroll, Director, Performing Arts Series

Shannon Bohler, Arts Events Manager

Mark Christensen, Concert Hall Technical Director

Christa Clifford '93, Associate Director of Operations and Finance

Leeza Robbins, Box Office Manager

Land Acknowledgement

Middlebury College sits on land which has served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples since time immemorial. The Western Abenaki are the traditional caretakers of these Vermont lands and waters, which they call Ndaकिनna, or “homeland.” We remember their connection to this region and the hardships they continue to endure.

We give thanks for the opportunity to share in the bounty of this place and to protect it.