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# **STRADIVARI ANNIVERSARY CONCERT**

**ISIDORE STRING QUARTET WITH  
MISHA AMORY, VIOLA  
NINA LEE, CELLO**

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**IN MEMORIAM JON W. NEWSOM (1941-2025)  
CHIEF, MUSIC DIVISION, 1997-2005**

**Made Possible by  
The Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation  
& The St. Nicholas Fund  
in the Library of Congress**

**Thursday, December 18, 2025 ~ 8:00 pm  
Friday, December 19, 2025 ~ 8:00 pm  
The Library of Congress  
Coolidge Auditorium**

## **The Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation in the Library of Congress**

In 1935, Gertrude Clarke Whittall (1867-1965) gifted the Library of Congress five Stradivari instruments – three violins, one viola, and one violoncello. At her express wish, the instruments are used in concerts for the benefit of the American people. Mrs. Whittall established the GERTRUDE CLARKE WHITTALL FOUNDATION to provide for the maintenance of the Stradivari and to support those concerts that featured them. In 1938, the Whittall Pavilion was funded and built to house the Stradivari. Mrs. Whittall continued to enlarge the Foundation's endowment, and in 1941 established the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation Collection of Autograph Musical Sources and Autograph Letters. Composers represented in the collection include Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Paganini, Schoenberg, Schubert, Clara Schumann, Wagner, and Weber. In 1950, Mrs. Whittall also established the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and Literature Fund to enable the public to hear poets reading their own works, actors interpreting Shakespeare and other great dramatists, and poets and critics lecturing on literature. On December 4, 1963, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia honored Mrs. Whittall with a citation for distinguished service. The citation states that "Her gifts of music and literature to the people of the United States, through the Library of Congress, have brought the arts into the lives of many Americans; have enriched the Library's collections and extended its influence; and have given the American people great treasures and pleasant experiences."

## **The St. Nicholas Fund in the Library of Congress**

The St. Nicholas Fund was established in 2024 through the generosity of a longtime concertgoer who began attending the Library's concerts in the 1960s. The Fund supports activities focused on Western classical music (from the 1600s forward), including concerts and performances, commissions and transcriptions, mini-festivals, media projects, concert production, and educational programming to introduce school age audiences to classical music.

**Preconcert Conversation**  
6:30 pm, Whittall Pavilion

Please request ASL and ADA accommodations five days in advance of the concert at 202-707-6362 or [ADA@loc.gov](mailto:ADA@loc.gov).  
The use of recording devices is strictly prohibited.



*Jon W. Newsom (center) pictured with the Juilliard String Quartet in the Coolidge Auditorium, 1998.*

*In memoriam*

## **Jon W. Newsom** **(1941-2025)**

*"Jon's legacy as a scholar and leader is present in the work of the Music Division every day. His thoughtfulness and dedication placed the Music Division at the forefront of the Library's evolution in the digital age. We are grateful for his service to the American people."*

~Nicholas A. Brown-Cáceres, Acting Chief, Music Division

# A Tribute to Jon W. Newsom

Jon W. Newsom, former chief of the Music Division, passed away in Delaware on September 26, 2025. Newsom began his Library of Congress career in October of 1966 as a reference librarian. He also acted as an acquisition specialist prior to his promotion as head of the Music Reference Department in 1974. Jon was named acting chief on two occasions before being named Chief of the Music Division from 1997 until his retirement in 2005.

Newsom was born in New York City on May 22, 1941. He earned an AB in music from Columbia College in New York City in 1963, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. In 1965, he earned a master's degree in fine arts in musicology from Princeton University where he was a Woodrow Wilson fellow. After receiving his MFA, Newsom worked as a teaching assistant at Princeton University while completing the coursework for a PhD, before coming to the Library. During his time at Princeton, Newsom studied musicology under W. Oliver Strunk and composition with Roger Sessions. A gifted pianist, he also studied privately with jazz pianist Lennie Tristano.

Newsom edited and oversaw several Library publications, including facsimiles of major Music Division treasures. The Brahms Violin Concerto, Mozart *Gran Partita*, and the Mendelssohn Octet were published in full color with authoritative essays. Newsom also edited/authored several books, including *Perspectives on John Philip Sousa* (1983) and *The Rosaleen Moldenhauer Memorial, Music History from Primary Sources: A Guide to the Moldenhauer Archives* (2000). Newsom produced several recordings, including *Our Musical Past: A Concert for Brass Band, Voice, And Piano* (1974) and *Our Musical Past: Two Silent Film Scores - Fall of a Nation* (Victor Herbert), *Gloria's Romance* (Jerome Kern) (1986).

Newsom was instrumental in a major effort to increase the Music Division's holdings in jazz. The collections of Charles Mingus, Gerry Mulligan, and Ella Fitzgerald were acquired largely through his efforts. This initiative culminated in a major series of concerts at the historic Lincoln Theater in 1996 that featured jazz greats Buddy Collette, Gerald Wilson, and Benny Carter.

Following his retirement, Newsom continued to teach in several ongoing education programs in Lewes, Delaware. Jon's wife, Iris Bodin Newsom (a long-time employee of the Library of Congress Publishing Office), passed away in 2022.

The Music Division is honored to welcome Jon's family to the Coolidge Auditorium for the Stradivari Anniversary Concerts.

*Loras John Schissel  
Senior Music Specialist  
Music Division*

The Library of Congress  
Coolidge Auditorium  
Thursday, December 18, 2025 ~ 8:00 pm  
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*In memoriam*  
Jon W. Newsom (1941-2025)  
Chief, Music Division, 1997-2005

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# **STRADIVARI ANNIVERSARY CONCERT**

## **ISIDORE STRING QUARTET**

**ADRIAN LEE, VIOLIN | PHOENIX AVALON, VIOLIN**  
**DEVIN MOORE, VIOLA | JOSHUA MCCLENDON, CELLO**

**WITH**

**MISHA AMORY, VIOLA**  
**NINA LEE, CELLO**

# Program

## CHORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR STRING QUARTET

### ARR. DEVIN MOORE

*Kyrie* (chant)

*In dulci jubilo* (ca. 1730) - J.S. Bach

*Gloria* (chant)

"Ich schwing mein Horn ins jammertal"

from 5 *Lieder*, op. 41, no. 1 (1861-62) - Johannes Brahms

*Credo* (chant)

*Sanctus* (chant)

*Agnus Dei* from Mass in B min., BWV 232 (1733) - J.S. Bach

*Geistliches Lied*, op. 30 (1856) - Johannes Brahms

### BEETHOVEN, LUDWIG VAN (1770-1827)

String Quartet in B-flat major, op. 18, no. 6 (1801)

*Allegro con brio*

*Adagio ma non troppo*

*Scherzo (Allegro)*

*La Malinconia (Adagio) - Allegretto quasi Allegro*

## INTERMISSION

### BRAHMS, JOHANNES (1833-1897)

*Sextet in B-flat major for two violins, two violas,  
and two violoncelli*, op. 18 (1859-60)

*Allegro ma non troppo*

*Andante ma moderato*

*Scherzo: Allegro molto*

*Rondo. Poco Allegretto e grazioso*

*Isidore String Quaret*

*Misha Amory, viola and Nina Lee, cello*

# About the Program

## **Brahms: The Admirer** *Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms*

Johannes Brahms's deep admiration for both Johann Sebastian Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven profoundly shaped his compositional style and artistic ideals. From Bach, Brahms inherited a reverence for rigorous contrapuntal technique, structural clarity, and the seamless integration of voices—qualities that are evident in his mastery of fugue, canon, and variation form. Brahms saw Bach not only as a fountainhead of musical craftsmanship but also as a spiritual and intellectual guide, inspiring him to pursue complexity balanced by coherence. This is especially apparent in Brahms's late works—where Baroque forms and counterpoint serve as a foundation for his Romantic expression.

Equally significant was Brahms's relationship with Beethoven's legacy. Beethoven's innovations in expanding the emotional and structural possibilities of classical forms presented both a challenge and a model for Brahms. While Brahms admired Beethoven's boldness and dramatic intensity, he also felt the weight of Beethoven's towering presence in the symphonic and chamber music genres. Rather than attempting to imitate Beethoven's grand heroic style directly, Brahms sought to continue his tradition by combining classical balance and formal discipline with his own Romantic sensibility. This respectful dialogue with Beethoven is reflected in Brahms's dedication to absolute music—works that express deep feeling without programmatic content—and his careful development of motifs and themes.

Together, Bach and Beethoven shaped Brahms's musical identity: Bach's contrapuntal mastery provided the technical backbone, while Beethoven's expressive scope offered a vision of music as a profound, transformative art. A vital component of the three Bs, Brahms would leave a lasting impression on the music world as an academic traditionalist, a tortured perfectionist, a hopeless romantic, and a one of a kind composer. This particular program aims to understand Brahms as an innovative traditionalist with a deep reverence for the legacies of compositional giants Johann Sebastian Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven.

The first part of the program is structured to evoke the traditional layout of the Tridentine Mass. This design alludes to the enduring influence and central role of sacred music in Western art, not merely as historical reference but as a living source of expression. Interspersed with arrangements of choral works by Bach and Brahms that reinterpret this liturgical form, the program follows the skeletal structure of the Mass Ordinary: *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*. In adopting a structure from the past and reshaping it with contemporary sensibilities, the program reflects a core aesthetic of Brahms: the reverent blending of old and new, in which tradition becomes a foundation for renewed artistic voice.

## **J.S. Bach, *In dulci jubilo***

Johann Sebastian Bach's chorale harmonizations are among the most influential contributions to Western music, shaping the foundation of tonal harmony and choral writing. Drawing on well-known Lutheran hymn tunes, Bach created four-part settings that combine elegant voice leading with rich harmonic expression, often used as teaching models for centuries. Though many were originally written as components of larger cantatas and passions, these chorales have endured as standalone pieces admired for their clarity, structure, and spiritual depth. Their pedagogical impact is profound—generations of composers, theorists, and students have studied them to understand functional harmony, counterpoint, and the expressive potential of simple melodic material.



## **Johannes Brahms, "Ich schwing mein Horn ins jammertal" from *5 Lieder, op. 41, no. 1***

"Ich schwing mein Horn ins Jammertal" ("I Blow My Horn into the Vale of Tears"), op. 41, no. 1, is the opening piece of his 1862 collection of five part-songs for unaccompanied male chorus. Set in B-flat major and marked *Andante*, the work draws on a melancholic text from the *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* anthology, a collection of German folk poetry. The poem portrays a hunter who—having lost his quarry—bids a sorrowful farewell to the chase, symbolizing themes of unfulfilled longing and resignation.

Brahms's setting captures the poem's somber mood through a gently undulating melodic line and rich harmonic textures, evoking the imagery of a horn call echoing through a desolate landscape. The piece exemplifies Brahms's affinity for folk-inspired material and his skill in crafting expressive choral works that blend simplicity with emotional depth.



## **J.S. Bach, *Agnus Dei* from Mass in B minor, BWV 232**

Bach's Mass in B minor is widely regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces of Western sacred music. Completed near the end of his life, the Mass is not a liturgical work in the traditional sense but rather a monumental compilation of sacred music drawn from various points in Bach's career. It unites a wide range of musical styles—from Renaissance polyphony to operatic drama—into a cohesive and spiritually profound whole, reflecting both Bach's deep faith and his extraordinary compositional craft.

The *Agnus Dei*, one of the Mass's final movements, is a deeply introspective alto aria that offers a quiet, meditative plea for mercy. Set in the unusual key of G

minor, the piece features a solo voice accompanied by unison violins and continuo, creating a uniquely expressive texture that mirrors the timbre of the human voice. Adapted from earlier material, the aria exemplifies Bach's ability to transform and elevate existing music into a work of spiritual depth and emotional clarity.

The Latin text *Agnus Dei* ("Lamb of God") comes from the Christian liturgy and refers to Jesus Christ as the sacrificial offering who takes away the sin of the world. Traditionally sung before Communion, the text has inspired centuries of musical and artistic interpretations. In Bach's hands, this ancient prayer becomes a moment of serene reflection and quiet intensity, preparing the listener for the final invocation of peace.



## **Johannes Brahms, *Geistliches Lied*, op. 30**

Composed in 1856, Johannes Brahms's *Geistliches Lied* ("Sacred Song"), op. 30, is a serene and harmonically rich motet originally scored for four-part choir and organ. Set to a seventeenth-century text by Paul Flemming, the piece is a musical prayer for inner peace and submission to divine will: "Let nothing ever grieve thee, distress thee, or fret thee." The text's message of calm trust in God's guidance is mirrored in Brahms's elegant counterpoint and luminous harmonic palette.

Written in a double canon at the ninth, *Geistliches Lied* demonstrates Brahms's early mastery of intricate contrapuntal technique, a skill he admired in Renaissance and Baroque composers—especially J.S. Bach. Despite the formal complexity, the music remains gentle and flowing, with a soothing, chorale-like quality. The piece closes with a peaceful "Amen," leaving the listener with a sense of quiet resolution and spiritual reassurance. As one of Brahms's earliest sacred choral works, *Geistliches Lied* already shows the composer's lifelong balance of intellect and devotion.

*Devin Moore*  
*Isidore String Quartet*



## **Ludwig van Beethoven, *String Quartet in B-flat major*, op. 18, no. 6**

Ludwig van Beethoven started sketching the opus 18 quartets in 1798, two decades before the piano became the instrument of choice for amateurs in the 1820s.<sup>1</sup> The string quartet repertoire proliferated in the late eighteenth century, becoming profitable for publishers and of high interest to skilled amateurs who performed in smaller settings such as homes, salons, and soirées. Before new music reached publishers, composers debuted it for select audiences whose commissions and

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1 Jean Swafford, *Beethoven* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 250.

sponsorships fueled artistic creation in major European cultural centers.<sup>2</sup> In Vienna, where Beethoven lived for most of his life, these patrons included the elite aristocracy along with a rising upper class enjoying new economic prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

When Prince (and violinist) Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz offered Beethoven 400 florins to compose six string quartets, Beethoven felt confident enough to accept the challenge thanks to the success of his three opus no. 9 string trios.<sup>4</sup> The pressure must have felt immense; at the same time Prince Lobkowitz offered the identical commission to Franz Joseph Haydn, Beethoven's former tutor and the person responsible for cementing the string quartet as a genre, having completed over sixty before 1798. Chamber music performances featured music by multiple composers; consequently, Beethoven would have known his quartets would likely be performed alongside those of both Mozart and Haydn.<sup>5</sup> He labored over the resulting opus 18 quartets for nearly two years.

Twentieth-century scholars were not kind to the opus 18 quartets when comparing them to the string quartets by Haydn and Mozart and the later quartets by Beethoven himself. Opinions soften considerably in later twenty-first-century scholarship; musicologist William Kinderman notes they may be the most frequently performed of Beethoven's quartets.<sup>6</sup>

The opening *Allegro con brio* movement is the most heavily criticized. It is not due to poor craftsmanship, but perhaps because Beethoven did not take any risks with this movement. It is in clear sonata form, and when the expository material returns it does so with minimal variation. Still, in both form and melody it is firmly rooted in the style of the late Classical period and would have sounded at home on a program of his contemporaries. The *Adagio ma non troppo* is both relaxed and agile, the movement never feeling bogged down in its own tempo. Precise counterpoint and skillful writing for the viola and cello allow the unique timbre of the ensemble to shine. Those who doubted Beethoven's ability to compose well for string quartet need not have worried, the *Adagio* "evinces immaculate workmanship."<sup>7</sup>

The ebullient *Scherzo* is a joke embodied. Wherever one might think the downbeat is, it is not. Beethoven passes sforzandi between the instruments and uses abrupt dynamic changes to realize a complex metric ambiguity. The mood shifts are just as abrupt: charm begets chiding, which turns humorous before changing again. Scholars are most intrigued by the *La Malinconia* that opens the finale.

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2 Leon Botstein, "The Patrons and Publics of the Quartets" in *The Beethoven Quartet Companion*, Robert Winter and Robert Martin, eds. (University of California Press, 1994), 86.

3 Ibid, 86.

4 Angus Watson, *Beethoven's Chamber Music in Context* (The Boydell Press, 2010), 84.

5 Ibid, 84.

6 William Kinderman, ed., *The String Quartets of Beethoven* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 13.

7 Joseph Kerman. *The Beethoven Quartets* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 75.

One can almost hear this section set as a choral piece, as the four-bar phrases and homogenous rhythms lend themselves to be set to text.<sup>8</sup> While the movement opens in the B-flat major in which the *Scherzo* concluded, the mood drops immediately as diminished seventh chords interrupt the quiet stasis. The harmonic unrest is punctuated by the sudden dynamic changes from the *Scherzo* but when drawn out at the *Adagio* tempo, the result is heartrending.

By 1798 Beethoven's deafness had reached a stage where it was impossible to ignore and he was experiencing bouts of depression.<sup>9</sup> Still determined to momentarily forget, the following *Allegretto* immediately pulls the listener into an *alla Tedesca* dance. After the material from *La Malinconia* interrupts a second time, the *Allegretto* reappears *Prestissimo*, as if rushing to forget the darkness as the piece draws to a frenetic conclusion.

Stephanie Akau  
Senior Archivist  
Music Division



## Johannes Brahms, Sextet in B-flat major, op. 18

When Brahms composed his first string sextet (op. 18) in 1859-60, he was still a young man in his mid-twenties, whose only published chamber work had been composed earlier in the decade (the op. 8 piano trio), a work that he would later significantly revise. But it was part of a compositional regimen that explored a variety of ensemble types, mirroring in a way his efforts with the op. 11 and op. 16 orchestral serenades that served to help prepare him for larger structures like the first piano concerto and eventually the symphonies. The op. 18 sextet marked the beginning of a chamber focus that would also yield between 1859 and 1865 a bounty of exceptional works, including first two piano quartets, the piano quintet, the second string sextet, the first cello sonata, and the horn trio. In a way this body of work was preparing him for writing string quartets. There is an inherent balance that having three pairs of the same instrument (two violins, two violas, and two cellos) provides, and in the course of his first foray into the unusual medium he took great advantage of the various configurations available to him. Even though it is a relatively early work of Brahms, it nevertheless contains many hallmarks of the mature composer's output, including creative orchestrational choices that offer a great deal of variety throughout the work.

Despite its bucolic atmosphere, the opening of the *Allegro ma non troppo* first movement is intriguing for a number of reasons. First there is the deceptive simplicity of the music. The cellos provide the outer voices—melody and bass—which were paramount considerations for Brahms in general. The first viola provides an inner accompaniment, and this trio opening lasts nine measures before the texture changes to add the two violins.<sup>10</sup> This is another intriguing

8 Kerman, 78.

9 Watson, 102.

10 The second viola has to sit out the first 22 measures, most likely for bad behavior.

element, given the direction the music flows as the exposition continues. Is the melody over at the tenth measure, and that measure just serves as a dominant pickup to the return of the melody? Or is that measure the beginning of a ten-measure set? On one hand, the lack of pickup measure at the beginning lends itself to an *in medias res* experience of the opening material, while on the other, it genuinely feels at first to be an add-on pickup measure to a new instance of the main theme, articulated with the sonority change that comes with the added violins. But then immediately after the second appearance of the main theme, the “pickup measure” turns into a melodically important idea that grounds a four-bar phrase and a seven-bar phrase:

Example 1  
a)

**Allegro ma non troppo**

1. Violine  
2. Violine  
1. Bratsche  
2. Bratsche  
1. Violoncell  
2. Violoncell

*poco f*  
*poco f espressivo*  
*poco f*  
*poco f*  
*espressivo*

melodic start  
pickup  
ornament

pickup measure  
melodic start  
*poco f espressivo*  
*poco f*  
*espressivo*

Brahms Sextet no. 1 in B-flat major, op. 18, I: mm. 1-11

b)

Brahms Sextet no. 1 in B-flat major, op. 18, I: mm. 20-23

Brahms delights in this type of confusion of expectations. Everyone can recognize the idea as one they have heard, but they may lose their bearings depending on the context of its presentation. Brahms is able to be so flexible with his phrase lengths because he builds across-the-barline melodic extensions into the melodies, and by establishing that as an expected component of the melody, the ability to transgress expected phrase lengths is baked into the fabric of the otherwise “simple”-sounding music. Brahms also plays with expectations by redeploying his downward-trending ornamental gesture as a rising figure as the music continues after the initial statements of the theme (see Examples 1a and 1b).

These examples must stand for many that would display the sophistication of Brahms’ writing. After developing the expositional material a bit further, a transitional theme (important for setting up a lilting waltz figure) leads to the second theme proper, which features a passionate, expansive melody played by the first cello. As with the initial melody, this idea is then played with a larger group of instruments led by the first violin. The close of the exposition involves the further parsing of the melody and effective orchestrations that include misterioso plucked strings. By the start of the development section, the introductory “pickup” is not seen in its original guise for some time. The development and the recapitulation blend to a degree, in that Brahms continues to develop his material well into the recapitulation. The moment of recapitulation comes in the midst of an offbeat idea, and although the melody is presented *più forte* in the violas and first cello, it is obscured a bit by the overlapping accompaniment.<sup>11</sup> The second theme is taken up by the first viola, and then the first violin and first cello take it—new combinations in different instrumental registers are always being explored. When the first theme returns it is transformed, giving space for its component motives to breathe. A brief *pizzicato* coda in all voices leads to the final bowed cadence.

<sup>11</sup> This technique of alteration at the point of recapitulation dates back at least to the op. 1 piano sonata (which was composed after the op. 2 sonata), and marked an early way in which Brahms sought to play with classical norms.

The *Andante: Variation* set of the second movement features pensive and mysterious music with coiled energy just below the surface. Brahms made a solo piano version of the second movement for Clara Schumann (in addition to the four-hands version of the entire sextet), which remained unpublished until 1927.<sup>12</sup> The Library of Congress holds the holograph manuscript of this piano arrangement in the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation Collection—the Library also possesses the complete holograph manuscript score of the first sextet in its string version, in the same Whittall collection.

The variations begin with a stately theme presented by the first viola and supported by the other bass voices in the ensemble. Similarly to the opening movement, the second presentation of the theme adds the violins to the mix, then repeats that additive process for the second part of the theme. Variation 1 features sixteenth-note accompanimental *arpeggios*, followed in Variation 2 with sixteenth note sextuplets with horn call configurations and some melodic exploration. This is a classical variation technique in which the accompaniment gradually becomes “faster” (or rather, more attacks per beat). In Variation 3 the cellos play waves of 32nd note scales while the other voices alternate harmonic articulations with melodic fragments. The fourth variation is the expected major mode instantiation of the theme, accompanied by traveling eighth notes. But Brahms takes it a step further in Variation 5, penning an ethereal transformation of the material, keeping to the major mode at first—one might consider this an inverse presentation of the theme with the upper voices prominent until the addition of *pizzicato* cello notes. In Variation 6, the final one, the variation is largely orchestral. We return to the main theme, this time presented in the first cello with plucked echoes in the violins. The violins offer a melodic presentation of the closing material, exchanging with the lower voices. The movement closes softly in D major.

The rustic third movement offers a fast and folksy dance, with some fun dissonances in both the main material and the contrasting trio. A rousing coda rounds it off for an F-major finish. The final movement is a *rondo* that includes trills and ornaments that reference earlier movements. We again have the sonority of two cellos and one viola, with another presentation of the theme in the violins and other viola. The lower half offers a beautiful secondary melody before the full ensemble closes with the primary theme. As episodes are developed, there are clear integrations of ideas that tie the movements together. Although the material seems simple, Brahms, as usual, finds interesting harmonic and melodic pathways for the music to traverse. Imitative counterpoint and the use of pedal points and textural shifts allow Brahms to continually renew the music and realize the potential of his material. Near the close of the movement Brahms returns to the oppositional low/high trios, with each playing a single idea in alternation with the other, creating a combination of divided forces with a unified composite structure. As the movement nears the end, we have a textural echo from the first movement of plucked music, and as the direction to play with increasing animation is reached, bowed material gradually reintegrates with the plucked sounds until everyone is feverishly bowing to the work’s conclusion.

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12 Bozarth, George S. and Walter Frisch, “Brahms, Johannes” (Grove Music Online, 2001).

*The Music Division holds over 50 music manuscripts in Brahms's hand, including the holograph manuscript of Brahms's Sextet in B-flat major, op. 18, which is part of the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation Collection. These unique holdings include: Brahms's holograph manuscripts and arrangements of his own works, others' holograph manuscript arrangements of Brahms's music, Brahms's holograph manuscript cadenzas to other composers' works, and others' holograph manuscript cadenzas to Brahms's concertos.*

*David Henning Plylar, PhD  
Senior Music Specialist  
Music Division*



## About the Artists

Winners of a 2023 Avery Fisher Career Grant, and the 14th Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2022, the New York City-based **Isidore String Quartet** was formed in 2019 with a vision to revisit, rediscover, and reinvigorate the repertory. The quartet is heavily influenced by the Juilliard String Quartet and the idea of "approaching the established as if it were brand new, and the new as if it were firmly established."

The quartet began as an ensemble at The Juilliard School, and has coached with Joel Krosnick, Joseph Lin, Astrid Schween, Laurie Smukler, Joseph Kalichstein, Roger Tapping, Misha Amory, and numerous others.

In North America, the Isidore Quartet has appeared on major series in Boston, New York, Berkeley, Chicago, Ann Arbor, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Durham, Washington, D.C., Houston, San Francisco, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, and has collaborated with several eminent performers including James Ehnes and Jeremy Denk. Their 25/26 season includes performances in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Calgary, Tulsa, Pasadena, Santa Barbara, New York, Washington's Library of Congress, plus return engagements in Montreal, Berkeley, Houston, La Jolla, Phoenix, Indianapolis, Baltimore, and Spivey Hall in Georgia. First-time collaborations include clarinetist Anthony McGill, cellist Sterling Elliott, and the Miró Quartet.

In Europe, the quartet has performed at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and in Bonn (Beethoven Haus), Stuttgart, Cologne, and Dresden, among many others. During 25/26 they make their debuts in Paris (Philharmonie) and London (Wigmore Hall). Over the past several years, the quartet has developed a strong connection to the works of composer and pianist Billy Childs, performing his second and third quartets throughout North America and Europe. In February 2026 they will premiere a new Childs quartet written expressly for them.

Both on stage and outside the concert hall, the Isidore Quartet is deeply invested in connecting with youth and elderly populations, and with marginalized communities who otherwise have limited access to high-quality live music performance. They approach music as a “playground” and attempt to break down barriers to encourage collaboration and creativity. The name Isidore recognizes the ensemble’s musical connection to the Juilliard Quartet: one of that group’s early members was legendary violinist Isidore Cohen. Additionally, it acknowledges a shared affection for a certain libation: legend has it a Greek monk named Isidore concocted the first genuine vodka recipe for the Grand Duchy of Moscow.



Since winning the 1991 Naumburg Viola Award, **Misha Amory** has been active as a soloist and chamber musician. He has performed with orchestras in the United States and Europe, and has been presented in recital at New York’s Tully Hall, Los Angeles’s Ambassador series, Philadelphia’s Mozart on the Square festival, Boston’s Gardner Museum, Houston’s Da Camera series and Washington’s Phillips Collection. He has been invited to perform at the Marlboro Festival, the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, the Vancouver Festival, the Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center, and the Boston Chamber Music Society, and he has released a recording of Hindemith sonatas on the Musical Heritage Society label. Amory is a founding member of the Brentano String Quartet.

Amory holds degrees from Yale University and The Juilliard School; his principal teachers were Heidi Castleman, Caroline Levine, and Samuel Rhodes. Himself a dedicated teacher, Amory serves on the faculties of The Juilliard School in New York City and the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.



Through a public school program, **Nina Lee** began learning cello in Chesterfield, Missouri at the age of ten. Six years later, she left home to study with David Soyer at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She went on to complete her Bachelors and Masters of Music at the Juilliard School in New York City with Joel Krosnick, attended the Tanglewood Music Festival, and toured with the Marlboro Music Festival where she collaborated with Mitsuko Uchida, Andras Schiff, Felix Galimir, and Samuel Rhodes.

In 1999, Lee joined the Brentano Quartet with whom she has been privileged to perform throughout North America, Australia, New Zealand, England, France, Germany, Spain, Japan, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy. In addition, she has not only recorded the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven but has also championed new music represented in her quartet’s commissioned works of Stephen Hartke, Steve Mackey, Vijay Iyer, James MacMillan, Bruce Adolphe, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Shulamit Ran (to name a few).

Among the various projects the Brentano Quartet has undertaken, it was asked to record the soundtrack to the 2012 film *A Late Quartet*, which centered around Beethoven’s Op. 131. The film, starring Philip Seymour Hoffman, Christopher Walken and Catherine Keener also featured Lee playing herself in a cameo.

As important to her life as a musician, Lee has made a commitment to teaching chamber music. She has been on the faculty at Princeton and Columbia Universities and is currently coaching chamber music at the Yale School of Music where the Brentano Quartet is in residence. She has also participated as a guest faculty member at the St. Lawrence String Quartet Chamber Music Seminar and the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. She also has made appearances at the Spoletto Festival USA and La Jolla SummerFest.

Lee makes her home in Brooklyn, New York, where she lives with her husband and 2 children. When she isn't playing the cello or teaching, she loves spending time with her family, cooking, entertaining, organizing chamber music salons and finding new ways to be creative.



## Upcoming Events at the Library of Congress

Visit [loc.gov/concerts](https://loc.gov/concerts) for more information

The winter/spring 2026 season will be announced  
Wednesday, January 7, 2026.

Tickets for January-March events are available Wednesday, January 14, 2026.

Tickets for April-May events are available Wednesday, February 4, 2026.





**THE GERTRUDE CLARKE WHITTALL  
FOUNDATION  
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**



**Library of Congress Stringed Instrument Collection**

Instrument collecting at the Library of Congress began with the generosity of Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall, who donated five stringed instruments made by Antonio Stradivari to the Library of Congress in 1935. Since that time, the Library's Music Division has acquired six additional stringed instruments through generous donations. The additional violins were made by Stradivari, Nicolò Amati, Jean Baptiste Vuillaume, and Giuseppe Guarneri (two violins) in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The Library acquired the "Fulton, ex Baird, Tuscan-Medici" viola in 2025 through the generous support of David and Amy Fulton, and the Baird Family/The Tuscan Corporation.



**The Whittall Stradivari Collection**

**VIOLIN BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1700, "WARD"**

*Played by Adrian Steele*

The "Ward" acquired its name from J. Ward of London. Ward owned the violin for over 40 years; on his death it passed to the Hills. The violin next was Swiss-owned, before being returned to England, where it came into the possession of Nathan Posner. Posner sold both the "Ward" and the "Castelbarco" violins to Mrs. Whittall. The "Ward" is especially beautifully preserved and shows Stradivari's transition from the long pattern seen in the "Castelbarco" to the later, widened pattern of the "Betts." The scroll varies from the majority of Stradivari's work because the quarter-cut direction of the grain is found in the front and back as opposed to the sides. The instrument has a grafted neck, by A. F. Moglie of Washington, D.C., in the 1950s and identified by an "A. F. MOGLIE" brand on the neck that was observed when the fingerboard was removed.

**VIOLIN BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1699,  
"CASTELBARCO"**

*Played by Phoenix Avalon*

This violin was, with the "Castelbarco" cello of 1697, once a part of the quartet of Stradivaris owned by Count Cesare Castelbarco of Milan. After the count died, it was sold in London to Jean Baptiste Vuillaume. The violin later was sold to several other owners until it was purchased in about 1875 by John Mountford, who also owned the "Kreisler" Guarneri. Mountford owned this violin until his death, at which time it passed to the Hills of London and then to a Mrs. Renton of Guildford, Surrey. Nathan Posner bought this violin from Mrs. Renton and brought it to the United States. He in turn sold it to Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall.

## **VIOLIN BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1704, “BETTS”**

The “Betts” is among the most legendary violins to have come from Stradivari’s workshop. Part of that status comes from the fabulous bargain that John Betts made in its acquisition. In about 1820, an individual entered his shop at the Royal Exchange in London and offered the violin, in a pristine state. A deal was made and the instrument changed hands for the sum of only one guinea. It remained a treasured part of Betts’ collection, but after the death of his son in 1852, the violin came into the hands of W. E. Hill & Sons of London followed by a variety of distinguished owners. By 1920, the “Betts” was owned by R. D. Waddell of Glasgow. In 1923, Jay C. Freeman of Wurlitzer’s approached Waddell in Scotland and came away with the “Betts” as well as the “Leduc” Guarneri. Wurlitzer’s sold the “Betts” to John T. Roberts of Hartford, Connecticut, who later acted as an intermediary in its sale to Mrs. Whittall.

## **VIOLA BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1727, “CASSAVETTI”** *Played by Devin Moore*

The “Cassavetti” arrived in England through David Laurie, who sold it to Alexander Cassavetti. In 1928, the agents of department store-magnate Rodman Wanamaker of Philadelphia bought it from George Hart to add to the extraordinary ensemble being assembled by Wanamaker to play orchestral concerts in his stores. After Wanamaker’s untimely death in 1929, the entire collection passed to the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company and the “Cassavetti” appeared in their 1931 catalog. It was sold to John T. Roberts, who eventually sold it to Mrs. Whittall, joining the “Betts” with which he previously had parted. The “Cassavetti” viola is built from the same mould (still surviving in the Stradivari museum in Cremona, Italy) as the “Fulton, ex Baird, Tuscan-Medici” viola, though comparative measurements demonstrate the range of variation due to different edge widths and natural distortion.

## **VIOLA BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, 1690, “FULTON, EX BAIRD, TUSCAN-MEDICI”** *Played by Misha Amory*

Originally part of an ensemble made for the Grand Prince of Tuscany, Ferdinando de Medici, this 1690 viola eventually was separated from its brethren and sold in 1803 to an Englishman in Florence. Over the next 100 years, the viola landed in France, returned to England, and eventually made its way to New York City through the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company. In 1925 it was sold to Herbert N. Straus, a German whose family had founded the Macy’s department store empire. The viola was later acquired by Cameron Baird of Buffalo, New York. His widow, Jean Baird, loaned the instrument to the Library in December 1977 through a collaborative custodial arrangement with The Tuscan Corporation. The Library acquired the viola in 2025 through a gift from David and Amy Fulton and an in-kind contribution by the Baird Family.

**VIOLONCELLO BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1697,  
“CASTELBARCO”**

*Played by Joshua McClendon*

The known history of this magnificent cello begins with Count Cesare Castelbarco of Milan. Today the violoncello is united in a quartet of Stradivaris, as it was in Castelbarco's collection; one of its musical partners was the 1699 violin also in the Library's collection. After the count's death, the instrument passed to Egidio Fabbri of Rome, who first acquired it from Vuillaume. It later came into the possession of his son-in-law, the Marchese de Piccolellis, and then went into obscurity. In *How Many Strads?* (1945), Ernest N. Doring recounts his experience in advising a family in New York on their cello. He was confronted with the “Castelbarco,” which had been in New York—unknown—for a number of years. It later passed to Hills in London and next to Wurlitzer in New York, which included an illustration of the cello in their 1931 catalog. In 1934 the “Castelbarco” came into the possession of Mrs. Whittall. The “Castelbarco” is significant for a number of reasons, not least in that it is one of a handful of Stradivari cellos of the large form that still retain their original, large, uncut dimensions. This cello is one of several uncut Stradivari cellos—along with the 1690 “Medici,” the 1696 “Aylesford,” and the 1701 “Servais”—which retains its original body outline and size.



**On Loan from the Smithsonian Institution  
National Museum of American History  
Instrument Collection**

*Special thanks to Kenneth Slowik,  
Curator of Musical Instruments, Smithsonian Institution*

**VIOLONCELLO BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1701,  
“SERVAIS”**

*Played by Nina Lee*

Of the roughly five thousand musical instruments in the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the Servais Stradivarius cello of 1701 (named for the Belgian virtuoso Adrien-François Servais, who performed on the instrument for over two decades prior to his 1866 death) holds pride of place. It is a magnificent instrument of great visual beauty, robust and bold in overall conception, yet refined in myriad details of execution. Like the Library's "Castelbarco" cello of four years earlier, it is one of only a handful of the thirty-some extant large instruments by Stradivari that have not been reduced in size—in some cases by as much as over three centimeters—to make it conform to the standard dimensions of the so-called “full-size” cello established by Stradivari with his forma B model, first seen in 1707. That the "Servais" has survived uncut to this day may be attributed to its fierce guardianship by Charlotte Bergen, who owned the instrument from 1929 until she donated it to the Smithsonian in 1981. The exceptional resonance of the "Servais" is especially apparent in the darkly luminous tone of its low register, making it ideal for the supporting second cello parts of string sextets and octets.



# LET THE PEOPLE HEAR IT

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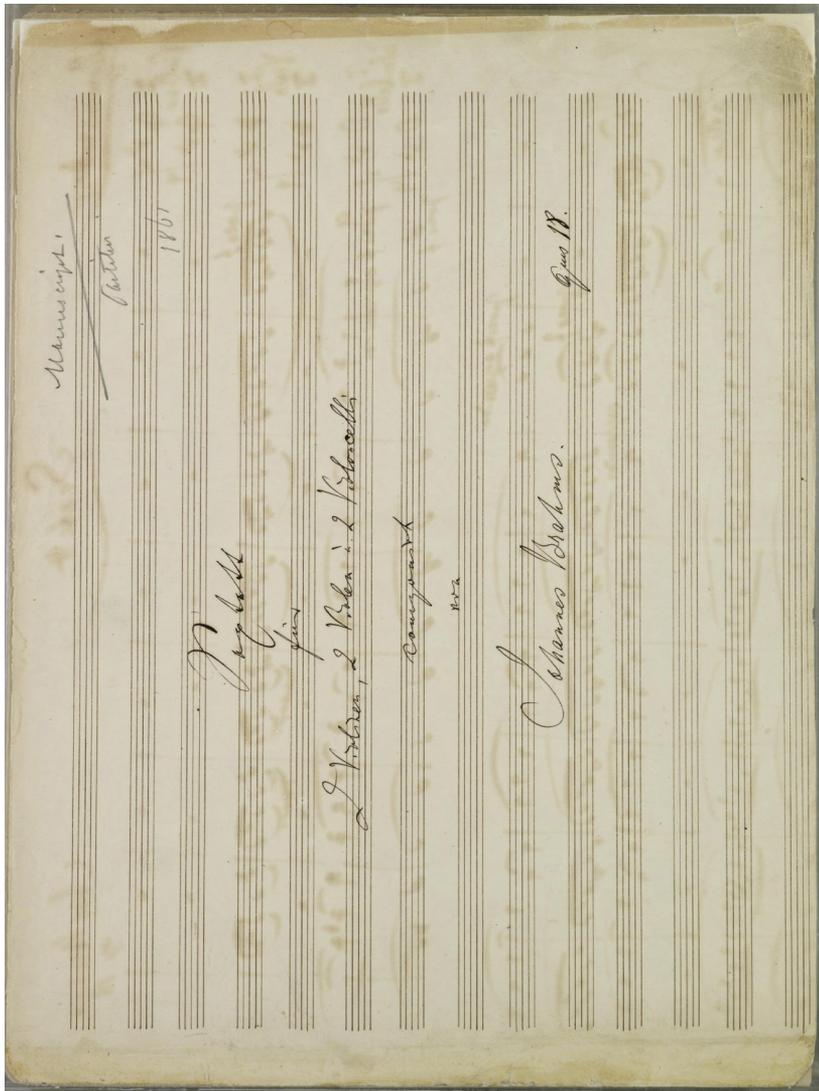
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Since 1925, the Library of Congress has presented one of the most prestigious and innovative concert series in the United States. Philanthropist Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge founded the series with the purpose of sharing music of the highest caliber with the American people. Her vision was clear: concerts would be free and open to all, the finest touring artists and ensembles would appear, and both traditional and new repertoire would be performed. The Library's Coolidge Auditorium, renowned for its sublime acoustics, has hosted the world premiere of Martha Graham and Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* (1944), residencies by the likes of Rosanne Cash and John Adams, and the 2023 Salute to Strayhorn festival marking the arrival of the jazz legend's collection at the Library.

*Let the People Hear It: Concerts from the Library of Congress at 100* shares the history of this remarkable series through the people, music, and collections that have inspired countless listeners. Photographs, historical documents, and unique music manuscripts demonstrate how the concert series enriched and preserved America's musical, dance, and theater heritage, all while fostering a community of music lovers.

Now available through the Library of Congress Shop





Cover and first page of the holograph manuscript of Brahms's Sextet in B-flat major, op. 18.  
Gertrude Clarke Whittall Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

Sextett.

Allgemein nicht troppo

John Strauss

Op. 18.

Violino I  
Violino II  
Viola  
Violoncello  
Ottob. I  
Ottob. II

Two staves of musical notation, likely for the Oboe parts, with dynamic markings such as 'poco f marcato' and 'crescendo'.

# Concerts from the Library of Congress

The Coolidge Auditorium, constructed in 1925 through a generous gift from Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, has been the venue for countless world-class performers and performances. Gertrude Clarke Whittall presented to the Library a gift of five Stradivari instruments which were first heard here during a concert on January 10, 1936. These parallel but separate donations serve as the pillars that now support a full season of concerts made possible by gift trusts and foundations that followed those established by Mrs. Coolidge and Mrs. Whittall.



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Gifts from Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge and Gertrude Clarke Whittall are the pillars that support what has grown over 100 years into a full season of concerts available to all. The concerts are made possible by their gifts and vision, and by gifts from generous donors who follow their example.

The Coolidge Auditorium, constructed in 1925, has been the venue for countless world-class performers and performances. The five Stradivari instruments presented to the Library by Mrs. Whittall were first heard here during a concert on January 10, 1936.

The unprecedented gifts by Mrs. Coolidge and Mrs. Whittall and others ensure that music will fill the halls for generations to come.



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