



presents...

# ATTACCA QUARTET

Amy Schroeder | Violin  
Domenic Salerni | Violin

Nathan Schram | Viola  
Andrew Yee | Cello

Saturday, October 11, 2025 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

**HAYDN**

**String Quartet in F Major, Opus 50, No. 5**  
**"The Dream"**

*Allegro moderato*

*Poco adagio*

*Tempo di menuetto: Allegretto*

*Finale: Vivace*

**LANG**

**daisy**

*first daisy*

*second daisy*

INTERMISSION

**A series of Nocturnes arranged by Attacca Quartet**

**BARTÓK**

**String Quartet No. 4, Sz.91**

*Allegro*

*Prestissimo, con sordino*

*Non troppo lento*

*Allegretto pizzicato*

*Allegro molto*

Attacca Quartet is represented by MKI Artists  
70 S Winooski Ave., #318, Burlington, VT 05401    [mkiartists.com](http://mkiartists.com)



## ENSEMBLE PROFILE

*San Francisco Performances presents Attacca Quartet for the third time. They made their debut on the PIVOT series in January 2024.*

The two-time Grammy Award-winning **Attacca Quartet** has been hailed as one of the most versatile and innovative ensembles of its generation—a true quartet for modern times.

Seamlessly moving between traditional classical repertoire and cutting-edge contemporary projects, the ensemble is redefining what a string quartet can be.

Their bold exploration of genre is exemplified in their 2021 releases: *Real Life*, a genre-bending collaboration featuring TokiMONSTA, Daedalus, and Anne Müller; and *Of All Joys*, pairing music by Philip Glass and Arvo Pärt with Renaissance works. In 2019, their groundbreaking album *Orange* with composer Caroline Shaw earned them a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, a feat repeated in 2023 with the follow-up *Evergreen*.

Attacca has performed at major venues and festivals including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Wigmore Hall, the Concertgebouw, Big Ears Festival, and Ojai Festival. Internationally, they've appeared at Gothenburg Konserthus, MITO Festival (Italy), Teatro Mayor (Bogotá), Fundación Beethoven (Chile), and more. Orchestral collaborations include performances with the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, the Co-

lombian National Orchestra, the National Orchestra of Catalunya, and the Nagoya Philharmonic in Japan.

Expanding their reach beyond classical stages, Attacca was the first string quartet to collaborate with Billie Eilish and FINNEAS, appearing with them on *Saturday Night Live*. The group also features on the soundtracks for the upcoming Ken Burns documentary *Leonardo da Vinci* (score by Caroline Shaw) and the film *We Grown Now* (score by Jay Wadley).

In the 2025–26 season, the quartet will perform across the United States for leading chamber music organizations including San Francisco Performances, the Center for the Art of Performance in Los Angeles, the Phillips Collection, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Formed at Juilliard in the early 2000s, Attacca made its professional debut at Carnegie Hall in 2003. Early accolades include First Prize at the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition, the Grand Prize at the Coleman Competition, and multiple honors at the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition.

Attacca Quartet is also deeply committed to education and engagement, serving as guest artists and teaching fellows at institutions such as the Lincoln Center Institute, University of Texas, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Juilliard, and Bravo! Vail. Celebrated for their artistry, innovation, and boundary-defying programming, they continue to build bridges across genres and generations.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### String Quartet in F Major, Opus 50, No. 5 “The Dream”

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN  
(1732–1809)

During the 1780s Haydn took a break from writing string quartets—between 1781 and 1787 he wrote only one. This was otherwise a fertile period for the composer (it saw the completion of 15 symphonies, including the entire set of “Paris” Symphonies), but he was content to let the quartet form rest for a while. Then he returned to it in the summer of 1787 with the six quartets that make up his Opus 50. These six string quartets are sometimes known as the “Prussian” Quartets because Haydn dedicated the set to King Friedrich Wilhelm II, the cello-playing monarch in Berlin (this is the same king for whom Mozart is supposed to have written his “King of Prussia” Quartets).

Haydn was nearing the crest of his powers when he wrote these quartets. He was 55 years old and had already written 89 of his symphonies, and now—as he returned to the string quartet after a long absence—he brought a new focus and concentration. He had become interested in these years in building sonata-form movements not on the two separate theme-groups of classical form but instead on one principal theme. This theme would be full of infinite possibilities for development, and Haydn might spin secondary material out of some subordinate feature of the theme—a tiny motif or a rhythmic pattern. This makes for incredibly alive music, vital and constantly developing. The outlines of traditional sonata form blur a little in this music, and the fun here lies in watching Haydn build extended movements out of such concentrated material.

The *String Quartet in C Major* is a compact work (only about 18 minutes long), and it has an unusual nickname, “The Dream,” inspired by the second movement. The opening *Allegro moderato* is one of Haydn’s tightly-focused monothematic movements—the entire movement grows out of the genial violin duet heard at the very beginning. Even as this pleasing little tune is being announced, however, Haydn ratchets up a degree of harmonic tension in the quiet accompaniment, and soon the energy pent up in that beginning explodes on fiery violin runs and rapid exchanges between the instruments. At just the point we expect a

second theme, Haydn offers a variant of the opening idea, and the busy development continues to spin off energy as it explores further possibilities of that theme. The mood changes completely with the second movement, marked *Poco adagio* and set in B-flat major. Haydn specifies that the very beginning should be *dolce* (“sweet, gentle”), and over a quietly throbbing accompaniment the first violin sings a long and ornate melody. This subdued, almost hypnotic atmosphere has earned the nickname “The Dream” for the entire quartet, though energetic outbursts from the first violin suggest that this dream may not be completely untroubled. Haydn returns to the home key of F Major for the *Menuetto*, but this music is so free harmonically that only nominally is it in that key—Haydn throws in all kinds of unexpected sharps and flats, and these give this movement its saucy swagger. The quartet concludes not with a rondo but with a sonata-form movement that hurtles along its 6/8 meter (the marking here is *Vivace*). Once again Haydn builds an entire movement out of the bustling main idea, and along the way he demands some virtuoso playing from all four performers before this movement comes to its close on two very firm chords.

## daisy

**DAVID LANG**  
(B. 1957)

David Lang has prepared a program note on his website:

“My piece *daisy* was commissioned specifically to be premiered on a program with George Crumb’s *Black Angels*—one of my favorite pieces, and also one of the great quartets written in my lifetime. I wasn’t asked to compose a new piece that would react to *Black Angels* but I couldn’t help but think about it, while writing my own quartet. The piece was formative for me—I was 13 years old when *Black Angels* was written, 15 when I bought the first recording, 16 when I heard it in the soundtrack of the film *The Exorcist*, and 19 when I first heard it live, played by the Kronos Quartet.

“One thing that is almost always mentioned when people discuss *Black Angels* is that it was written during the Vietnam War. Crumb dates the score ‘in tempore belli 1970’—in time of war. And you can hear it, in the dark and tragic intensity of the music. I remember that time in my country, very well. I was too young to be drafted to fight in Vietnam but old enough to feel the great upheaval and pain in my community, all around me.

America’s president just before *Black Angels* was composed was Lyndon Baines Johnson [LBJ]. He was responsible for the massive escalation of America’s presence in Vietnam, which was a little ironic, since LBJ had campaigned for president as the candidate who promised not to destroy the world. His campaign included what many consider the most effective political ad in American history—it featured an innocent young girl plucking the petals off a flower, who is then interrupted by the mushroom cloud of an atomic bomb. The name of the ad was ‘Daisy.’

“My quartet *daisy* remembers this moment in American history, and it proposes two different futures for the innocent. The opening movement—‘*first daisy*’—begins in a gentle openness that is soon forgotten, and taken for granted, and which then becomes relentlessly overwhelmed. The concluding movement—‘*second daisy*’—imagines what might happen if that gentle and open spirit could be believed, and valued, and supported, and preserved.”

## String Quartet No. 4, Sz.91

**BÉLA BARTÓK**  
(1881–1945)

Bartók’s *Fourth String Quartet* of 1928 is a work of extraordinary concentration. Over its brief span, materials that at first seem unpromising are transformed into music of breathtaking virtuosity and expressiveness. Bartók’s biographer Halsey Stevens suggests that the *Fourth* “is a quartet almost without themes, with only motives and their development,” and one of the most remarkable things about the *Fourth Quartet* is that virtually all of it is derived from a simple rising-and-falling figure announced by the cello moments into the first movement. Bartók takes this six-note thematic cell through a stunning sequence of changes that will have it appear in an almost infinite variety of rhythms, harmonies, and permutations. So technical a description makes this music sound cerebral and abstract. In fact, the *Fourth Quartet* offers some of the most exciting music Bartók ever wrote.

The *Fourth Quartet* is one of the earliest examples of Bartók’s fascination with arch form, an obsession that would in some ways shape the works he composed over the rest of his life. There had been hints of symmetrical formal structures earlier, but the *Fourth Quartet* is the first explicit and unmistakable statement of that form—the form here is palindromic. At the center of this five-movement quartet is a long slow

movement, which Bartók described as “the kernel” of the entire work. Surrounding that central movement are two scherzos (“the inner shell”) built on related material, and the entire quartet is anchored on its powerful opening and closing movements (“the outer shell”), which also share thematic material. There is a breathtaking formal balance to the *Fourth Quartet*, and that balance is made all the more remarkable by its concentration: the entire five-movement work spans only 23 minutes.

Bartók’s *Third Quartet* had seen a new attention to string sonority, but the *Fourth* takes us into a completely new sound-world. It marks the first appearance of the “Bartók pizzicato” (the string plucked so sharply that it snaps off the fingerboard), but there are many other new sounds here as well: strummed pizzicatos, fingered ninths, chords arpeggiated both up-bow and down-bow. If the *Third Quartet* had opened up a new world of sound for Bartók, in the *Fourth* he luxuriates in those sounds, expanding his palette, yet employing these techniques in the service of the music rather than as an end in themselves.

Many observers have been tempted to describe the outer movements of the *Fourth Quartet* as being in sonata form, and it is true that they are structured—generally—on the notion of exposition, development, and recapitulation. But to try to push these movements into a traditional form is to violate them. The outer movements of the *Fourth Quartet* do not divide easily into component sections, and in fact the entire quartet is characterized by a continuous eruption and transformation of ideas. Themes develop even as they are being presented and continue to evolve even as they are being “recapitulated.” For Bartók, form is a dynamic process rather than a structural plan.

The *Allegro* opens with an aggressive tissue of terraced entrances, and beneath them, almost unobtrusively, the cello stamps out the quartet’s fundamental thematic cell in the seventh measure. This tight chromatic cell (all six notes remain within the compass of a minor third) will then be taken through an infinite sequence of expansions: from this pithy initial statement through inversions, expansions to more melodic shapes, and finally to a close on a massive restatement of that figure.

If the outer movements are marked by a seething dynamism, the three interior movements takes us into a different world altogether. Bartók marks the second movement *Prestissimo, con sordino* and mutes the

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instruments throughout. The outer sections are built on the opening theme, which is announced by viola and cello in octaves. The central section, which does not relax the tempo in any way, rushes through a cascade of changing sonorities—glissandos, pizzicatos, grainy *sul ponticello* bowing—before the return of the opening material. This movement comes to a stunning close: glissandos swoop upward and the music vanishes on delicate harmonics.

At the quartet's center lies one of Bartók's night-music movements. Textures here are remarkable. At the beginning Bartók asks

the three upper voices—the accompaniment—to alternate playing without and with vibrato: the icy stillness of the former contrasts with the warmer texture of vibrato. Beneath these subtly-shifting sonorities, the cello has a long and passionate recitative that has its roots in Hungarian folk music, and the first violin continues with a series of soaring trills suggestive of bird calls.

The fourth movement is the companion to the second, this one played entirely pizzicato. The viola's main theme is a variant of the principal theme of the second movement, here opened up into a more melodic shape. This use of pizzicato takes many forms in this movement: the snapped

"Bartók pizzicato," arpeggiated chords, strummed chords, glissandos.

Brutal chords launch the final movement. This is the counterpart to the opening movement, but that opening *Allegro* is now counterbalanced by this even faster *Allegro molto*. Quickly the two violins outline the main theme, a further variation of the opening cell, which returns in its original form as this music dances along its sizzling way. As if to remind us how far we have come, the quartet concludes with a powerful restatement of that figure.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger