

presents...

BROOKLYN RIDER

Johnny Gandelsman | Violin
Colin Jacobsen | Violin

Nicholas Cords | Viola
Michael Nicolas | Cello

Thursday, October 8, 2026 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

Citizenship Notes

JOSEPH HAYDN

String Quartet in F Minor, Op. 20, No.5

Moderato

Menuet

Adagio

Finale: Fuga a 2 soggetti

DON BYRON

String Quartet No. 3*

I.

II. Russian March

III.

**ANGÉLICA
NEGRÓN**

Our Children Speak Spanish and English*

(for string quartet and pre-recorded electronics track)

TED HEARNE

We are Working Tirelessly for a Ceasefire*

INTERMISSION

BOB DYLAN

(arr. Colin Jacobsen)

The Times They Are A-Changin'

BEETHOVEN

String Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3

Introduzione: Andante con moto – Allegro vivace

Andante con moto quasi allegretto

Menuetto grazioso

Allegro molto

**Commissioned for Brooklyn Rider's 20th anniversary by Art of Elan, Carnegie Hall, and Tippet Rise Art Center*

**San Francisco Performances acknowledges the generosity of Concert Partners
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ARTISTS PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Brooklyn Rider for the fourth time. Brooklyn Rider made its SF Performances debut in November 2017.

Celebrating 20 years of shared musical exploration, **Brooklyn Rider** originated in a living room, four friends in search of an outlet for their curiosities. Inspired by the probing spirit of Germany's pre-WWI artistic collective *Der Blaue Reiter*, they recognized parallels with their creative community in Brooklyn at the time and began to build projects. Inspired by the rich repertoire of the past and the limitless canvas of new creation, Brooklyn Rider seeks to create meaningful and memorable experiences for their audiences.

To mark the twenty-year milestone, a wide range of projects are on the horizon for 2025 and beyond that, celebrating the key elements of their work. Honoring a long-standing relationship with the string quartets of Philip Glass (String Quartet #3 *Mishima* was on Brooklyn Rider's first public program), Brooklyn Rider has embarked on the first-ever retrospective of the composer's complete works for the medium. A major commission by Gabriela Lena Frank, *Frida's Dreams*, has been prepared for the 2025–26 season. The quartet expands their reach into the orchestral world in upcoming seasons with a major new work for quartet and orchestra by Nico Muhly, to be presented by a wide-ranging consortium of orchestras across Europe and North America. In the summer of 2025, the quartet presented a mini festival "Brooklyn Rider; Twenty Years At Play" at Lincon Center's Mostly Mozart Festival as well as a special concert at Tanglewood which featured the Schubert Cello Quintet

alongside the quartet's friend and mentor Yo-Yo Ma.

Brooklyn Rider has remained steadfast in their commitment to generate new music for string quartet at every phase of their history. Through commissioning, collaborative exploration, and the inimitable works of BR's own Colin Jacobsen, the quartet has left a lasting contribution to the repertoire.

Brooklyn Rider has had a voracious appetite for collaboration since their inception, encapsulating their wide-ranging projects and programmatic frames and giving rise to NPR Music's observation that Brooklyn Rider is "recreating the 300-year-old form of string quartet as a vital and creative 21st century ensemble." *The Butterfly* (In A Circle Records), an album which the *Irish Times* described as "a masterclass in risk-taking," explored a collaboration with the legendary Irish fiddler Martin Hayes.

PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet in F Minor, Op. 20, No. 5

JOSEPH HAYDN
(1732–1809)

Haydn's impact on the string quartet cannot be overstated. Practically every string quartet written subsequently owes a debt of gratitude to Haydn, the progenitor and certainly most prolific master of the medium. A case in point: Mozart's (no fewer than) six "Haydn" quartets were lovingly dedicated to "Papa" Haydn. And though our quartet is named after *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), Haydn's weighty contribution to the world of the string quartet was also present in our thinking, particularly his great "Rid-

er" Quartet. Curiously, Haydn's quartets are full of nicknames; a shaving accident, for example, resulted in the monicker for the "Razor" Quartet, Op. 55, No. 2. The Op. 20 "Sun" quartets, a set of six quartets with an absolutely stunning array of inventive thinking, harmonic and structural invention, and compositional techniques, are so named because of the sun motif on the cover of the original publication.

The *F Minor Quartet, Op. 20, No. 5*, is a veritable playground of flattened hierarchy, mirroring the contemporaneous philosophical and political shifts underway during the Age of Enlightenment. Haydn proved that the string quartet, essentially a discussion among four equals, was the perfect vehicle to mirror the zeitgeist. In this quartet, the *serioso* qualities of *F minor* are explored conversationally, detouring to related keys and moods. The inner movements, a brooding *Menuet* and a serenading *Adagio* in variation form, both harken to the Baroque era while simultaneously having an inventive foot towards the future (in that, he shares similarities with his student, Beethoven). And like others in the Op. 20 set, this quartet features a fugal *Finale* in mostly hushed tones, showcasing the deft compositional skill of Haydn and modeling an absolute equality of voices.

— Program note by Nicholas Cords

String Quartet No. 3

DON BYRON
(B. 1958)

Grammy® Award nominee, Pulitzer Prize finalist, clarinetist, and composer, Don Byron is an impeccable musician across an eclectic array of genres. He drew inspiration from his early exposure to calypso, symphonic music, salsa, and jazz, and he found acclaim in the New York avant-garde and free jazz scenes of the 1980s and '90s. He also gave influential performances during that era's klezmer resurgence. His recordings span a wide range of composers, from Ornette Coleman and Chopin to Bernstein and Roy Orbison, and his own creative work has addressed a wide variety of social themes. *Tuskegee Experiments* (Nonesuch, 1992) and *Nu Blaxploitation* (Blue Note, 1998) are two of his most noted recordings. The composer has not provided a program note for this work, but it was commissioned by Brooklyn Rider as part of our *Citizenship Notes* project. He shared that he was under the creative

influence of iconic *Looney Tunes* composer Carl W. Stalling in the first movement, Gabriel Prokofiev in the second, and legendary film and television composer Lalo Schiffrin—the original theme to *Mission Impossible* is one of his most enduring works—for the third.

—Program note by Nicholas Cords (adapted from the *New England Conservatory of Music*)

Our Children Speak Spanish and English

ANGÉLICA NEGRÓN
(B. 1981)

Our Children Speak Spanish and English explores the complexities of Puerto Rican American citizenship, shaped by colonization, imperialism, and racialization. Following the US takeover of Puerto Rico in 1898, American authorities sought to assimilate Puerto Ricans by imposing English-language education and American values. Schoolchildren in the early 20th century had to sing the following patriotic song after reciting the Pledge of Allegiance:

Puerto Rico is a beautiful island.

It belongs to the United States.

Our children speak English and Spanish.

And salute our flag every day.

The piece takes its title from this song and is also inspired by Jack Delano's 1946 photograph, *Pledging Allegiance to the Flag in a School in Puerto Rico*, which shows a young Puerto Rican girl holding the American flag. Behind her, a blackboard displays simple Spanish phrases—such as the days of the week—that, while basic on the surface, invite deeper reflection when viewed through the lens of Puerto Rico's ongoing colonial relationship with the United States.

One phrase in particular, "*Mamá no tiene casa*" ("Mom doesn't have a house"), resonates today with issues like gentrification, displacement, and disaster capitalism. I wanted to highlight these words by having them spoken by Puerto Rican children. I invited family and friends to help bring this to life: thank you to Eduardo José, Isla, Leah, Tiago, Amalia, and Julia for lending their voices, and to their parents for making it possible.

Despite what the title might suggest, it's no accident that the children speak these words only in their native language of Spanish. This piece is dedicated to Puerto Rican children and to the future they deserve.

—Program note by Angélica Negrón

We Are Working Tirelessly For a Ceasefire

TED HEARNE
(B. 1982)

In a 2004 interview with Susan Briante, the Chilean visual artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña framed her own work as a response to our collective "unwillingness to see." She said, "Democracy is like a poem; if you don't use it, it disappears. The media and (political, social, economic) powers have found a way to speak about democracy as if it were a given, something that is already here. That is a substitution of reality. It represents a desire to see an image instead of what is real." *We Are Working Tirelessly For a Ceasefire* is a reflection on this desire—the impulse to construct our own reality through incessant reiteration.

The title refers to the assurance given by many American liberal policymakers throughout the 2024 election cycle—in full contradiction of reality—that they were doing everything they could to pressure the state of Israel to stop its assault on the people of Gaza.

We Are Working Tirelessly For a Ceasefire was commissioned by Brooklyn Rider for its program *Citizenship Notes* and premiered at Tippet Rise Art Center in September 2025. Thank you to Jena Osman for consulting during the composition of this piece.

—Program note by Ted Hearne

"The Times They Are A-Changin'"

BOB DYLAN
(B. 1941)

"Heraclitus, I believe, says that all things pass and nothing stays, and comparing existing things to the flow of a river, he says you could not step twice into the same river".

—Plato

As we mark the United States of America's 250th birthday, we find ourselves indeed in a time of great change, socially, politically, economically, culturally. The interesting thing about Dylan's song, also from a time (the '60s) of great societal upheaval, is how it instantly became a timeless classic. Perhaps part of its success (other than the clearly hewn lyrics, the anthemic chords, and Dylan's unique singing style) is that it enunciates a timeless prin-

ciple, attributed to Heraclitus, "the only constant is change," and it encourages us to have courage in the face of this change. The river analogy does indeed feel apt to describe lived experience: currents, eddies going every direction, progress in some aspect of society while another is flowing backwards.

My arrangement/fantasy based on this song attempts to capture some of that layered experience and is structured as a (mostly) instrumental theme and variations, tone-painting the lyrics as they speak to me. And so, we continue to swim ... (forward?).

—Program note by Colin Jacobsen

String Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3, "Razumovsky"

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

Written in 1806 on the heels of the "*Eroica*" Symphony, the set of three "*Razumovsky*" Op. 59 string quartets infuses a similar grand egalitarian spirit. In fact, Op. 59, No. 3, is often dubbed the "*Eroica*" of the genre. Beethoven was in a defiant mood, shaking his fist at his increasing deafness, at many figures in his own personal orbit, and even from afar, at the ever-present Napoleon Bonaparte himself! The "*Eroica*" Symphony, famously, was to be known as the "Bonaparte," as Beethoven had long admired him for what he saw as a liberating revolutionary spirit. But when Napoleon declared himself Emperor of France, Beethoven furiously scratched him off the title page, rededicating the work as a "Heroic Symphony, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man." Exactly who is this great man is the subject of debate, but the triumphant, inclusive, and revolutionary spirit present in both the symphony and Op. 59, No. 3, could possibly suggest that this music, in fact, champions the individual, the Everyman.

An ambiguous diminished-seventh chord sets off the pensive introduction to this journey, but quickly yields to an ebullient, decidedly celebratory first movement. The melancholic second movement, set to the plaintive beating drum of the cello pizzicato, is somewhat enigmatic within Beethoven's output. Perhaps here he is paying homage to the dedicatee of the

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Op. 59 set, the Russian Count Andrey Razumovsky. The movement feels from another world, causing Beethoven scholar Alexander Thayer to muse that Beethoven “was showing the Russians that he could dish up a Russian-sounding theme as good, if not better, than any Russian.”

The anachronistically dubbed *Menuetto* (Beethoven had not written a minuet since his Op. 31) leads to the finale by way of a connective coda, setting off heightened

expectations (ahem, especially for the violinist!). The highly virtuosic writing of the fugal finale—making use of the Baroque musical form just as his mentor Haydn did in his Op. 20, No. 5—shows Beethoven very much writing for the future; how challenging the interlocking rhythms and twisting contrapuntal figurations must have felt at the time (they still do)!

And at the end of this hero’s musical journey, we are left with a feeling that Beethoven is speaking to us on multiple levels. Is it a joyful summation of our hu-

man ability to rise above life’s challenges, a celebration of the inherent equality of people, or perhaps a moment of joyful defiance in the face of deafness? In Beethoven’s sketchbook pages for this fugal finale, the following affirmation appears: “Never again need you feel ashamed of your deafness, nor others wondering at it. Can anything in the world prevent you from expressing your soul in music?”

—Program note by Nicholas Cords