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Calidore String Quartet with
Gabriela Montero, *piano*

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Calidore String Quartet

Gabriela Montero, *piano*

Jeffrey Myers, *violin*
Ryan Meehan, *violin*
Jeremy Berry, *viola*
Estelle Choi, *cello*
Gabriela Montero, *piano*

String Quartet No. 5
in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5
Allegro
Menuetto
Andante cantabile
Allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Canaima: A Quintet for Piano
and Strings (2024)*
Andante
Scherzo. Prestissimo
Tepui. Tranquillo, meditativo
Fuerzas oscuras. Allegro furioso e percussivo

Gabriela Montero
(b. 1970)

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Piano Quintet No. 2 in
 A Major, Op. 81, B. 155
 Antonín Dvořák
 (1841-1904)
 Allegro, ma non tanto
 Dumka: Andante con moto
 Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace – Poco tranquillo
 Finale: Allegro

*Co-commissioned by Spivey Hall

Pre-Concert Talk with Kurt Zeller, 2:00 pm

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PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5

Joseph Haydn set the pattern for composing string quartets in sets of six, and both Mozart and Beethoven saw fit to honor the older composer by following suit. Since Beethoven was the only one of the three to leave sketches revealing aspects of his compositional process, musicologists have been wrangling inconclusively over the order of composition of the six quartets that make up Opus 18, their job made more difficult by the fact that some of the early sketchbooks are missing. Their arguments are based on their differing perceptions of the composer's creative development, plus the persistent belief that with every new work, a great composer must blaze new creative trails. The Opus 18 quartets do indeed break with tradition, but very unevenly, the last three containing the largest number of structural innovations: No. 4 with its absence of a slow movement but with both a scherzo and a minuet; No. 5 with experiments in handling theme and variations; and No. 6 with its cross-rhythms and especially its slow introduction to the allegretto finale. But while these quartets break with tradition in some aspects, it was Haydn himself who throughout his long career continually developed and refined the string quartet genre, tacitly sanctioning further innovations.

We know from Beethoven's sketchbooks that the quartets were begun in the summer of 1798 and that No. 3, the first to be written, was essentially finished by the end of the year. All six were published by Tranquillo Mollo & Co. in 1801 in the order we know them today, but in two sets of three spaced several months apart. In a letter to his friend Franz Anton Hoffmeister, another publisher, Beethoven complained, "Herr Mollo recently published my quartets again, but full of mistakes and errata – on a large scale and on a small scale. They swarm like little fishes in water, that is to say, *ad infinitum*." It remains one of music history's mysteries exactly where the infinite number of mistakes were and whether, indeed, musicians are still playing them to this day.

Beethoven was familiar with and admired Mozart's Quartet in A Major, K. 464, commenting on it to Carl Czerny: "That is what I call work! In it Mozart was telling the world: Look what I could create if you were ready for it!" The overall arrangement of his own A Major Quartet follows that of his predecessor.

The simple, vigorous opening statement is reminiscent of the openings of the late Haydn quartets, but the development is more aggressive than those of the old master. As in Mozart, the second movement is a *Menuetto*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

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rather than the usual slow movement. The lilting character of the delicate theme makes it almost waltz-like.

The slow movement, a theme and five variations, is where Beethoven breaks with his eighteenth-century predecessors. He begins with a simple, sweet melody – he wrote “pastorale” above it in the score – and develops a set of variations that stray further from the original theme than was common at the time. This movement is definitely the center of gravity of the quartet.

The nervous theme that opens the last movement dominates it and makes for a strangely agitated finale. Towards the end of the development, perhaps in honor of his model, Beethoven sneaked in a thinly disguised quote from Mozart’s A Major Quartet.

Canaima: A Quintet for Piano and Strings (2024)*

Gabriela Montero
(b. 1970)

Venezuelan composer and pianist Gabriela Montero is best known for her stunning improvisations before live audiences, trying to revive that art after over a hundred years of neglect. A child prodigy, she made her first public appearance with an orchestra at age eight.

Montero was one of four musicians (with violinist Itzhak Perlman, clarinetist Anthony McGill, and cellist Yo-Yo Ma) who in 2009 performed John Williams’ Air and Variations on Simple Gifts at Barak Obama’s inauguration. However, there was a catch. The temperature was below freezing, making the instruments unstable and hard to keep in tune. So, two days prior, the musicians recorded the work indoors, broadcasting it during the inauguration, with the musicians miming the performance with the piano keys decoupled, the strings’ bows soaped to silence them, and the clarinet reedless.

Montero premiered her Piano Quintet with the Calidore String Quartet in April of this year at the Gilmore Piano Festival. The title *Canaima* refers to the Canaima National Forest - a World Heritage Site that includes the Angel Falls, which is being decimated by indiscriminate mining and deforestation.

Montero explains: “The first movement opens with a quotation from an indigenous Jivi song recorded by the Venezuelan explorer Charles Brewer-Carías in 1970. The song provides the leitmotif for an elegiac homage to the region and its indigenous people, as it winds its way, river-like, throughout the work.

"A light, but ambiguous second movement Scherzo suggests both innocence - a people as-yet undisturbed by the outside world, untouched by dark forces - and the ritual, repetitive processes of cooperative work necessary for group survival.

"The contemplative third movement evokes the timelessness of the majestic Tepui - house of the Gods to the indigenous Pemón people - a table-top mountain formation that dominates the geological character of the Gran Sabana, and Canaima National Park in particular. We are reminded of the sacred dominion and permanence of nature in one of the world's most ancient landscapes.

"Human encroachment dominates the chaotic and violent fourth movement *ostinato*, as order is disrupted and brutalized. It serves as a clarion call for both acknowledgment and action in one of the planet's most bio-diverse regions, a remote region that has fallen victim to the politically expedient prioritization of other, competing ecological and political crises."

**Piano Quintet No. 2 in
A Major, Op. 81, B. 155**

**Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)**

In his youth, Antonín Dvořák had been a prolific but obscure composer, winning a number of prizes in local competitions, yet languishing in the viola section of the Prague Opera Orchestra. It was Johannes Brahms who put the young composer on the map in 1878 by introducing him to his publisher, Simrock, and offering him continual encouragement throughout his career. Soon after Simrock published the first set of Slavonic Dances, Op. 46, Dvořák's career finally took off.

By the mid-1880s Dvořák was in great demand as a composer and conductor, especially in Germany and England, where he was elected an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society of London. He was even invited to an audience with the Austrian Emperor Franz Josef I. For the first time in his life, this butcher's son from a backwoods Bohemian village had finally attained widespread recognition and financial security.

In the pile of the composer's early unpublished works was a Piano Quartet in A Major (Op. 5), composed in 1872, in which he was beginning to distance himself from the influences around him and develop his own musical voice. He was dissatisfied with the piece, however, and put it aside. Fifteen years later, he was in a very different place in his life and decided to revisit it, although he had to borrow a copy of the score. After having caught up on a number of major commissions - including a second set of Slavonic Dances for Simrock - he retreated for the summer to his country cottage, a surrounding he loved, and returned to the Quintet. Still unhappy with the revision, he finally gave up to start afresh. In less than seven weeks in

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1887, he composed a new Piano Quintet, Op. 81 was premiered in Prague in January the following year.

Dvořák was an ardent Czech nationalist; the brew created by his love for his native folk music and dances, combined with his innate brilliance as a melodist and his mastery of musical form is heady indeed. In the first movement, in classical sonata allegro form, Dvořák plays with shifting moods by using abrupt major/minor contrasts. His intent is immediately obvious in the exposition of the first theme, which begins in A Major but quickly shifts into A Minor.

Dvořák labeled the second movement "*Dumka*," a melancholy folk ballad type from Ukraine that he had adopted and "classicized" in several of his early works, including the Slavonic Dances, and later in the famous Piano Trio Op. 90. Traditionally characterized by mood shifts, the *dumka* in this instance is characterized by contrasting tempos. The piano opens with a sad melody, taken up by the viola. In this simple ABA form the B section is a more lilting melody in the relative major mode. A sudden tempo change to Vivace transforms motivic elements from the main theme, but the change is short-lived, and melancholy again takes over.

The Scherzo abruptly clears the air of any wistful traces. Also based on a folk model, it is a *furiant*, a fast Bohemian dance that alternates between 3/4 and 2/4. Dvořák maintains a triple time in the Scherzo, but the Trio, based on motivic material from the Scherzo, creates the effect of a toggle in meter.

Dvořák does not specifically associate the Finale to a folk model, but it is clearly a *polka*. He also shows his more formal side with a fugue based on the dance theme.

In the coda of the last movement Dvořák uses a pentatonic scale, the same device he used 10 years later in his "American" works, the String Quartet Op. 96 and the Symphony No. 9. Although the inspiration for the use of these scales in this work, composed before his sojourn in the United States, clearly came from his Bohemian background, he found and capitalized on their prevalence in Native American and African American sources.

Program notes by:
Joseph & Elizabeth Kahn
Wordpros@mindspring.com
www.wordprosmusic.com

The Calidore String Quartet

Jeffrey Myers, violin
Ryan Meehan, violin
Jeremy Berry, viola
Estelle Choi, cello

The Calidore String Quartet is recognized as one of the world's foremost interpreters of a vast chamber music repertory, from the cycles of quartets by Beethoven and Mendelssohn to works of celebrated contemporary voices like György Kurtág, Jörg Widmann, and Caroline Shaw. The *Los Angeles Times* described the musicians as "astonishing," and the *Washington Post* wrote that "four more individual musicians are unimaginable, yet these speak, breathe, think and feel as one."

The Calidore has appeared in venues throughout North America, Europe, and Asia including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, London's Wigmore Hall, Berlin's Konzerthaus, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Brussels' BOZAR, and at major festivals such as the BBC Proms, Verbier, Ravinia and Music@Menlo. The Quartet has given world premieres of works by Caroline Shaw, Anna Clyne, and Mark-Anthony Turnage and collaborated with artists such as Anne-Sophie Mutter, Anthony McGill, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Marc-André Hamelin, Joshua Bell, Emerson String Quartet, David Finckel and Wu Han.

Throughout the 24/25 season, the Calidore performs the complete String Quartets of Beethoven at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the University of Delaware. They also return to their alma mater, the Colburn School, to play the complete cycle of Korngold String Quartets. Other season highlights include concerts with San Francisco Performances, the Celebrity Series of Boston, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Warsaw Philharmonic and BBC Radio; and premieres and performances of works by Han Lash, Sebastian Currier, Xavier Foley, and Gabriela Montero.

The Calidore released in 2024 the second volume of Beethoven's complete string quartets for Signum Records. Volume I (The Late Quartets) was released in 2023 and earned the quartet *BBC Music Magazine's* 2024 Chamber Award. Previous Signum releases include albums *Babel and Resilience*.

Founded at the Colburn School in Los Angeles in 2010, the Calidore has won top prizes at major US chamber music competitions, including the Fischhoff, Coleman, Chesapeake, and Yellow Springs. The quartet won the \$100,000 Grand Prize of the 2016 M-Prize International Chamber Music Competition as well as the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship. The

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The Calidore String Quartet serves as the University of Delaware's Distinguished String Quartet in Residence. They have also served as artist-in-residence at the University of Toronto, University of Michigan and Stony Brook University. The Calidore is grateful to have been mentored by the Emerson Quartet, Quatuor Ébène, Andre Roy, Arnold Steinhardt, David Finckel, Günter Pichler, Guillaume Sutre, Paul Coletti, and Ronald Leonard.

The Calidore String Quartet plays the following instruments:

Jeffrey Myers plays on a violin by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini c. 1775 "Eisenberg," owned by a private benefactor and bows by Dominique Peccatte and Francois Tourte.

Ryan Meehan plays a violin by Vincenzo Panormo c.1775 and a bow by Joseph Henry.

Jeremy Berry plays a viola by Umberto Muschietti c.1903 and a bow by Pierre Simon.

Estelle Choi plays a cello by Charles Jacquot c.1830

Gabriela Montero, piano

Gabriela Montero's visionary interpretations and unique compositional gifts have garnered her critical acclaim and a devoted following on the world stage. Anthony Tommasini remarked in *The New York Times*, "Montero's playing had everything: crackling rhythmic brio, subtle shadings, steely power...soulful lyricism...unsentimental expressivity."

Montero's recent and forthcoming highlights feature performances of her own *Latin Concerto* with the San Francisco Symphony (Marin Alsop), New World Symphony (Stéphane Denève), Vienna and Polish National Radio Symphonies (Marin Alsop), BBC Scottish and Antwerp Symphonies (Elim Chan), Swedish Radio Symphony (Marta Gardolińska), and National Arts Centre Orchestra (Alexander Shelley), with which she concludes a four-year Creative Partnership at the end of 2025. In May 2024, Montero also made her long-awaited return to Los Angeles, where she worked with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and Jaime Martín, as well as performing an adapted version of *Westward*, a special program themed around immigration and Charlie Chaplin's *The Immigrant*, at the Academy

of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Hollywood. She also gave the world premiere performance of her latest commissioned composition, a piano quintet entitled *Canaima*, with the Calidore String Quartet at the celebrated Gilmore Piano Festival.

Other highlights include an extensive European tour with the City of Birmingham Symphony and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, a UK tour with the Prague Symphony, and debut appearances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, and the Minnesota Orchestra, where "Montero's gripping performance...made a case that she might become the classical scene's next great composer/pianist" (*Minnesota Star Tribune*).

A graduate and Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in London, Montero is also a frequent recitalist and chamber musician, performing at such distinguished venues as the Wigmore Hall, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Vienna Konzerthaus, and many more.

An award-winning and bestselling recording artist, her most recent album, released in autumn 2019 on the Orchid Classics label, features her own *Latin Concerto* and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major, recorded with the Orchestra of the Americas in Frutillar, Chile.

Montero made her formal debut as a composer with *Ex Patria*, a tone poem designed to illustrate and protest Venezuela's descent into lawlessness, corruption, and violence. The piece was premiered in 2011 by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Montero's first full-length composition, Piano Concerto No. 1, the *Latin Concerto*, was first performed in 2016 at the Leipzig Gewandhaus with the MDR Sinfonieorchester and Kristjan Järvi, and subsequently recorded and filmed with the Orchestra of the Americas and Carlos Miguel Prieto for the ARTE Konzert channel.

Winner of the 4th International Beethoven Award, Montero is a committed human rights advocate whose voice regularly reaches beyond the concert platform. In 2024, she was named a recipient of the Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent by the Oslo Freedom Forum.

Born in Venezuela, Montero started her piano studies at age four, making her concerto debut at age eight in her hometown of Caracas. This led to a scholarship from the government to study privately in the USA and then at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Hamish Milne. Starting September 2024, Montero will be the Jonathan and Linn Epstein Artist in Residence, and piano faculty member, at the Cleveland Institute of Music.



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