



Photo: Dahlia Katz

PROGRAM

THE NEW ORFORD STRING QUARTET

Friday, April 10 2026 - 7:30 PM

Gilles-Lefebvre Concert Hall

Andrew Wan, violin
Jonathan Crow, violin
Sharon Wei, viola
Joseph Johnson, cello

CONCERT

The New Orford String Quartet returns to where it all began! Formed 16 years ago by four outstanding musicians, the ensemble quickly established itself as one of the country's most remarkable quartets. United by their shared passion for chamber music, Jonathan Crow, Andrew Wan, Sharon Wei, and Joseph Johnson are celebrated for their rich sound, musical chemistry, and deeply expressive interpretations.

Their approach—at once disciplined and spontaneous—reveals the very essence of the string quartet. Their return to Orford promises an evening where excellence meets sensitivity, imbued with the spirit of a place that holds special meaning in their story.

The quartet presents three masterworks by Beethoven, Janáček, and Mendelssohn, offering a captivating journey through the depth and diversity of the string quartet repertoire.

REPERTOIRE (FRENCH ONLY)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Quatuor à cordes en sol majeur, op. 18 n° 2

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Adagio cantabile*
- III. *Scherzo. Allegro*
- IV. *Allegro molto, quasi presto*

LEOŠ JANÁČEK (1854–1928)

Quatuor à cordes n° 1, « Sonate à Kreutzer »

- I. *Adagio – Con moto*
- II. *Con moto*
- III. *Con moto – Vivo – Andante*
- IV. *Con moto – Adagio - Più mosso*

CECILIA LIVINGSTON (née en 1984)

After the Wind (2025)

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

Quatuor à cordes n° 6 en fa mineur, op. 18 n° 2

- I. Allegro vivace assai
- II. Allegro assai
- III. Adagio
- IV. Finale. Allegro molto

Please note that the repertoire may change without prior notice.

ARTISTS



THE NEW ORFORD STRING QUARTET

Four musicians with equally stellar pedigrees formed the New Orford String Quartet with the goal of developing a new model for a touring string quartet. Their concept – to bring four elite orchestral leaders and soloists together on a regular basis over many years to perform chamber music at the highest level – has resulted in a quartet that maintains a remarkably fresh perspective while bringing a palpable sense of joy to each performance. The Toronto Star has described this outcome as “nothing short of electrifying.”

[Full biography](#)

PROGRAM NOTES

By Wonny Song, Director of Artistic Innovation and Strategic Initiatives

The New Orford String Quartet was born here, at Orford Music, out of shared artistic vision, deep listening, and the rare chemistry that transforms four musicians into a single, breathing organism. This concert is more than a program: it is a journey through the emotional extremes of the string quartet repertoire—from sparkling elegance and wit, through obsession and rupture, to profound catharsis and renewal.

Ludwig van Beethoven — *String Quartet in G major, Op. 18 No. 2*

Every great tradition begins with a voice that is bold enough to reshape it. When Beethoven composed his Op. 18 quartets, he stepped into the towering legacy of Haydn and Mozart—yet already quietly redefined the rules.

This G major quartet sparkles with charm and brilliance. Its opening feels playful, almost flirtatious—music that smiles. But listen closely: Beethoven subtly bends expectation, stretches phrases beyond comfort, and injects sudden surprises into what seems like polite conversation. What begins as elegance becomes electricity.

The slow movement suspends time in lyrical serenity. The scherzo crackles with rhythmic wit. The finale bursts forward with irrepressible energy. Here, the string quartet becomes a living dialogue—refined, daring, and unmistakably alive.

Leoš Janáček — *String Quartet No. 1, "Kreutzer Sonata"*

If Beethoven shows balance and brilliance, Janáček plunges into psychological fire. Inspired by Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*—a story of jealousy, possession, and emotional turmoil—this quartet is raw, urgent, and utterly gripping. Written in 1923, it still feels shockingly modern: fragmented gestures, sharp contrasts, whispered confessions erupting into outbursts.

Janáček was fascinated by human speech—by how emotion shapes rhythm and inflection. In this work, the instruments seem to speak, argue, plead, and accuse. The music trembles with tension. Moments of fragile intimacy shatter under sudden violence. This is not background music; it is theatre, and intensity at its most distilled.

PROGRAM NOTES

Cecilia Livingston — *After the Wind* (2025)

Between passion and grief, a different space opens—one of listening, breath, and transformation.

Cecilia Livingston's *After the Wind* invites reflection on the silence that follows upheaval. What remains when the storm has passed? What has changed? What endures?

Livingston's writing shimmers with subtle textures and suspended sonorities. Sound emerges delicately, as if carried on air. Time stretches. The quartet becomes landscape—fragile, luminous, and deeply human.

Written especially for and premiered by the New Orford String Quartet in 2025, this compact yet evocative work has since traveled widely across Canada and beyond. Placed at the heart of tonight's program, it reminds us that chamber music is not a museum tradition—it is evolving, responsive, and profoundly of our time. Orford Music has always been a place where artistic creation flourishes, and this performance continues that living lineage, honoring the quartet's roots here while welcoming fresh voices into the shared conversation.

Felix Mendelssohn — *String Quartet in F minor, Op. 8*

The journey culminates in one of the most emotionally charged works in the quartet repertoire. Mendelssohn composed his final quartet in the shadow of devastating loss—the sudden death of his beloved sister Fanny. Gone is the lightness and fairy-like brilliance often associated with him. In its place: urgency, turbulence, and searing intensity.

The opening surges forward with restless energy. The music does not weep quietly—it burns. The scherzo, tense and driven, feels haunted rather than playful. The slow movement offers an intimate song of aching beauty—one of the most personal utterances in all of chamber music. The finale presses forward with relentless force, as though searching for resolution beyond grief.

This is music that does not hide emotion—it transforms it. Across this program, the string quartet reveals its most powerful essence: conversation becomes confrontation, whisper becomes cry, silence becomes renewal.

PROGRAM NOTES

For the New Orford String Quartet—an ensemble forged here, shaped here, and returning home—this concert is both a celebration and a statement: the quartet tradition is not only preserved at Orford Music; it is reborn on our stage.

Join us for an evening of brilliance, intensity, and profound human expression.



VISION

Orford Music aspires to be an internationally recognized artistic incubator, placing culture at the heart of collective development.

Building on an exceptional site, a unique artistic ecosystem, and 75 years of history, Orford Music seeks to establish itself as a leading hub for artistic creation, training, and presentation—grounded in excellence, innovation, and collaboration.

MISSION

To train, support, and propel today's and tomorrow's artists by offering a high-level environment that fosters creation, meaningful exchange, and the emergence of innovative artistic projects.

VALUES

Inclusion : Placing people at the core of our mission by cultivating a welcoming and inclusive environment, where artistic passion can be shared and nurtured with respect, openness, and sensitivity to diverse backgrounds

Excellence : Fostering continuous personal and artistic growth within a demanding yet inspiring setting, where rigor, integrity, and passion guide every action

Creativity : Fostering exploration, boldness, and imagination, grounded in the conviction that artistic evolution emerges when we dare to venture beyond established paths

Perseverance : Pursuing our mission with resilience, rising to challenges, and making ambitious decisions—even when the path forward is uncertain

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