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# BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

OCTOBER 28, 2026



Photo: Jürgen Frank

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# FROM THE BOARD

Dear Lovers of Chamber Music,

Welcome! Tonight we open the Evening Series of AFCM's 79th season with the Borromeo String Quartet, an ensemble that has spent more than thirty-five years earning its place among the most searching and adventurous quartets of our time. The Boston Globe has praised its "edge-of-the-seat performances," and the honors have followed: the Cleveland Quartet Award, Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and a prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The quartet has been ensemble-in-residence at the New England Conservatory for over three decades, and serves in that role as well at the Taos School of Music and the Heifetz International Music Institute. From Carnegie Hall and Wigmore Hall to the Berlin Philharmonie and Suntory Hall, the Borromeo performs on the world's greatest stages. Tonight, that stage is ours.

Also of note, the Borromeo was the first string quartet to bring laptop computers into performance, leading the way for the now widespread practice of playing from the composer's full four-part score. Far from a novelty, it puts these musicians in direct contact with the composer's own hand, and you can hear it in how completely they listen to one another.

Tonight's program reflects that same spirit, pairing two works from our own century with Beethoven and Dvořák. This is precisely AFCM's mission: to keep Tucson an international destination for such artistry, and to ensure that new music is heard here alongside the masterworks. Few audiences anywhere have the privilege we do of hearing ensembles of this caliber season after season, along with premieres of works we commission.

Your presence, spirit, and generous support, as audience members, donors, and volunteers, ensure that superb chamber music continues to flourish in Southern Arizona.

On behalf of the Board, thank you.

**LARRY HERRON**
*President*



# BORROMEO STRING QUARTET
# OCTOBER 28, 2026 | 7:30 PM


Photo: Jürgen Frank

**Borromeo String Quartet**
Nicholas Kitchen, *violin*
Kristopher Tong, *violin*
Melissa Reardon, *viola*
Yeesun Kim, *cello*

The Borromeo String Quartet appears by arrangement with Dinin Arts. www.dininarts.com

## BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

Each performance of the award-winning Borromeo String Quartet strengthens its reputation as one of the most important ensembles of our time. Admired and sought after for both its fresh interpretations of the classical music canon and its championing of works by 20th and 21st century composers, the ensemble has been hailed for its "edge-of-the-seat performances," by the Boston Globe, which called it "simply the best."

Inspiring audiences for 35 years, the Borromeo has been the ensemble-in-residence at New England Conservatory for over three decades, and at the Taos School of Music since 2005. The Borromeo also serves as quartet-in-residence at the Heifetz International Music Institute, where first violinist Nicholas Kitchen is Artistic Director. The Quartet has performed on major concert stages across the globe, including appearances at Carnegie Hall, the Berlin Philharmonie, Wigmore Hall, Suntory Hall, the Concertgebouw, Seoul Arts Center, and the Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, and performed for many years with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Highlights of the 2026-27 season include performing half of the Beethoven cycle on the venerated Slee Series at the University of Buffalo and performances at series including Arizona Friends of Chamber Music, Artist Series of Sarasota, Chamber Music Society of Logan (UT), Concerts at the Point, Gretna Music, Chicago's Novo Linea Music, Santa Fe ProMusica, Plymouth's Spire Center, Summerstar Wildlife, and Vivo Performing Arts' (formerly Celebrity Series of Boston's) Neighborhood Concerts. In recent seasons, the Quartet has performed on series including Ashland Chamber Music Concerts, Auburn University's Gogue Performing Arts Center, Bowdoin Music Festival, Chamber Music Raleigh, Chamber Music Society of Troy, Clemson University's Utsey Chamber Music Series, Dumbarton Concerts, Eureka Chamber Music Series, Feldman Chamber Music Society, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Music at Kohl Mansion, Music Mondays (NYC), Palm Beach's Flagler Museum, Shelter Island Friends of Music, and Summit Chamber Music, UCLA's Clark Library, among others.

The Borromeo regularly engages in residencies with universities, conservatories, and educational institutions all over the world.

The Quartet has also collaborated with some of this generation's most important composers, including Gunther Schuller, John Cage, György Ligeti, Steve Reich, Aaron Jay Kernis, Osvaldo Golijov, Jennifer Higdon, Steve Mackey, John Harbison, Sebastian Currier, Pierre Jalbert, and Leon Kirchner, among many others. The Quartet regularly premieres new works, including the Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol quartet commissioned by the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery of Art for the 2024-25 season, which it performs tonight.

The Borromeo continues to be a pioneer in its use of technology, and has the trailblazing distinction of being the first string quartet to utilize laptop computers on the concert stage, leading the way for the widespread use of iPads to perform from four-part scores. The Quartet often leads discussions enhanced by projections of handwritten manuscripts, investigating with the audience the creative process of the composer as highlighted in a 2024 feature in *The Atlantic*.

This evening's concert is sponsored through the generous support of Todd Horst.

## PROGRAM

### MEHMET ALİ SANLIKOL (B. 1974)

*The Demons and Humans of Siyah-Kalem (2024)*

I. Fasl-ı İblis / Feast of the Demons
II. Bir Ailenin Hikayesi / The Story of a Family
III. Sitemkar İblis / A Reproachful Demon
IV. Sohbet-i Sefil / Conversation of the Miserable

### CAROLINE SHAW (B. 1982)

*Entr'acte (2011)*

### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

*String Quartet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2*

I. Allegro
II. Adagio cantabile – Allegro – Tempo I
III. Scherzo: Allegro
IV. Allegro molto, quasi presto

## INTERMISSION

### ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

*String Quartet No. 14 in A-flat Major, Op. 105*

I. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro appassionato
II. Molto vivace
III. Lento e molto cantabile
IV. Allegro non tanto

**Sanlıkol: The Demons and Humans of Siyah-Kalem, 2024**

Born in Istanbul in 1974, the Grammy-nominated, Turkish-American composer Mehmet Ali Sanlikol is currently based in Boston, where he serves on the faculty of the New England Conservatory and directs its Intercultural Institute. An ethnomusicologist known for his versatility, Sanlikol is a performer of numerous Middle Eastern instruments, a jazz artist, singer, and inventor of the Sanlikol Renaissance 17, a digital microtonal keyboard with seventeen keys per octave. Described by the Boston Globe as "colorful, fanciful, full of rhythmic life," his compositions blend Ottoman and Turkish thematic elements, often based on microtonal modes, with Western classical structures and jazz. The Demons and Humans of Siyah-Kalem, completed in 2024, was commissioned for the Borromeo at the instigation of violinist Kristopher Tong. With the composer proudly proclaiming "They got it!" the quartet gave its premiere at the New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall that November.

The title invokes four ink drawings that conjure the intersection of the grotesquely demonic supernatural world with Central Asian nomadic life. Attributed to Mehmed Siyah Kalem, an enigmatic late fourteenth century artist known as the Black Pen, and long preserved in Istanbul's Topkapı Palace, the images distinctively blend shamanistic, pagan, and Islamic elements. Mesmerized by their unsettling atmosphere, Sanlikol resolved to create their musical world in his string quartet. Each of the quartet's four movements interprets a specific drawing. The opening "Feast of the Demons" suggests the frenetic gathering of chattering monsters. The reflective "Story of a Family" depicts the steady tread of a nomadic family with its donkey. "A Reproachful Demon" expresses the melancholy of a solitary monster. The closing "Conversation of the Miserable" is a somber soliloquy led by the cello.

**Shaw: Entr'acte, 2011**

Violinist, singer, and composer Caroline Shaw is the winner of multiple Grammy Awards, a Pulitzer Prize (Partita for Eight Voices), and most recently a 2026 Tony Award nomination (Death of a Salesman) for her atmospheric works that conjure vivid narrative. Shaw composed Entr'acte in 2011 after hearing the Brentano Quartet play Haydn's String Quartet in F major, Op. 77 No. 2. Captivated by the spare, soulful shift into the D-flat major trio of its minuet — a sudden turn to a distant key that seems to slip briefly through the looking glass — Shaw explores its possibilities as a unique journey. Cast in the shape of a classical minuet and trio like Haydn's model, Entr'acte riffs on that form and on that single, quietly absurd modulation. Shaw treats the four instruments less as separate melodic voices than as one breathing body, moving through a sequence of finely observed textures — hushed, carefully voiced chords, passages played without vibrato for a pale, glassy tone, and delicate pizzicato and harmonic effects. Near the end the cello withdraws into a long, freely notated solo. Shaw removes the bar lines, leaving the player to shape it like a half-remembered tune, over which the music gradually dissolves. Originally written for string quartet (Shaw arranged it for string orchestra in 2014), Entr'acte has become one of her most widely performed works.

**Beethoven: String Quartet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 18 No. 2**

Before Beethoven left Bonn for Vienna in 1792 his friend Count Waldstein told him that there "he would receive the spirit of Mozart from Haydn's hands." Beethoven had hoped to study with Mozart in Vienna, but because of his recent death Beethoven somewhat reluctantly took instruction from Haydn. However Beethoven, whom Haydn called "the Great Mogul," was too impatient to appreciate the master's lessons, and studies soon ended because of temperamental differences. But when Beethoven began to write his Opus 18 Quartets in 1798, he closely examined the mature quartets of Mozart and especially Haydn for guiding principles. A high point of his "first style period," the Opus 18 set reveals the pervasive influence of Haydn and Mozart but hints at the imminent expansion of classicism's boundaries. Beethoven's originality is evident in all six Opus 18 Quartets, each of which opens with a small generative idea that gradually expands to form a large and uniquely detailed design.

The G Major Quartet (1798), the second quartet of the set, conjures a graceful mood that is close in spirit to the Rococo style of the earlier eighteenth century. Its subtitle "Compliments" was bestowed a century after its composition by a critic who heard in its elegant opening phrases the suggestion of "an eighteenth-century salon, with all the ceremonious display and flourish of courtesy typical of the period—bows and gracious words of greeting." Although this tightly unified quartet appears to have been effortlessly composed, Beethoven's sketchbooks reveal the intensive labor of its creation. His thirty-two pages of drafts demonstrate that the quartet began as many disparate elements that only gradually merged into a coherent whole. Strongly influenced by Haydn's practice of expanding small motifs into a large design, Beethoven also sought to exploit the interrelationships among them. For example, in the luminous C major Adagio movement the exuberant middle section (F major) is based on a short motif derived from the closing material of the first section. Yet what the listener apprehends, especially in the final two movements, is an overall mood of good humor and high spirits. Beethoven described the finale as aufgeknöpft (unbuttoned), suggesting a free and informal character.

**Dvořák: String Quartet No. 14 in A-flat Major, Op. 105**

In early 1895 Dvořák had completed his three-year directorship of the National Conservatory in New York City and was eager to return to Prague. Although he had composed productively during his American sojourn, Dvořák never overcame intense homesickness for his native Bohemia. Shortly before his departure he began his Opus 105 quartet, which was intended as a statement of his Bohemian nationalism. Because of various distractions he was able to complete only 70 measures, and once back in Prague other matters consumed his time. He wrote to a friend: "My muse is now quite silent. For four whole months I have not even taken up my pen." When he did resume composing, he chose to make a fresh start on another quartet, Opus 106. Only when that work was completed did he return to Opus 105, which he finished within three weeks. It was to be the last of his fourteen quartets. Dvořák requested that the premiere of Opus 105 be given by his own Prague Conservatory students on the anniversary of his return to Bohemia, April 16, 1896. Although infrequently programmed, the Opus 105 Quartet is considered to be one of Dvořák's finest compositions. Hauntingly beautiful Slavic folk songs and dance themes pervade the work's essentially classical structure. After a somber introduction led by the solo cello (A flat minor) and a subtle modulation to the major key, the opening movement develops two closely related themes in sonata form. The energetic F minor scherzo movement, Molto vivace, is based on the furiant, a "furious" Bohemian dance in which duple rhythmic patterns intrude into the established triple meter. The F major slow movement (marked "very singing") unfolds with hints of the plantation songs that Dvořák admired during his American sojourn. Homage to his friend Brahms, this Lento movement's warm and broad themes are varied by subtle changes of scoring. After an introductory statement in the solo cello, the extensive rondo finale explores an array of exuberant motifs. Dvořák admired the brilliant orchestrations of his French contemporary Georges Bizet, and some listeners hear in the quartet's substantial and jubilant coda an echo of Bizet's popular Farandole from the second L'Arlésienne Suite.

Notes by Nancy Monsman

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Wednesday, November 11, 2026
7:30 p.m.

**Han–Setzer–Finckel Trio**
Wednesday, December 9, 2026
7:30 p.m.

**Espressivo! Piano Quartet**
Wednesday, January 13, 2027
7:30 p.m.

**Manhattan Chamber Players**
Wednesday, February 3, 2027
7:30 p.m.

**Calder String Quartet with Dashon Burton, *bass-baritone***
Wednesday, March 24, 2027
7:30 p.m.

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**Ziggy & Miles, *guitar duo***
Sunday, November 22, 2026
3:00 p.m.

**Clayton Stephenson, *piano***
Sunday, January 24, 2027
3:00 p.m.

**Eric Lu, *piano***
Sunday, March 28, 2027
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**NOV 11**
**Trio con Brio Copenhagen**
WEDNESDAY · 7:30 PM · EVENING SERIES



**NOV 22**
**Ziggy & Miles**
SUNDAY · 3:00 PM · PIANO & FRIENDS



**DEC 9**
**Wu Han, Philip Setzer, David Finckel**
WEDNESDAY · 7:30 PM · EVENING SERIES



**JAN 13**
**Espressivo! Piano Quartet**
WEDNESDAY · 7:30 PM · EVENING SERIES

**JAN 24**
**Clayton Stephenson**
SUNDAY · 3:00 PM · PIANO & FRIENDS

**FEB 3**
**Manhattan Chamber Players**
WEDNESDAY · 7:30 PM · EVENING SERIES

**FEB 21–28**
**Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival**
FIVE CONCERTS · 3:00 & 7:30 PM · WINTER FESTIVAL

**MAR 9–12** — JUST ANNOUNCED
**The Beethoven Cycle**
TUE · WED · FRI · 7:00 PM · SPECIAL SERIES



**MAR 24**
**Calder String Quartet**
WEDNESDAY · 7:30 PM · EVENING SERIES

**MAR 28**
**Eric Lu**
SUNDAY · 3:00 PM · PIANO & FRIENDS

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