



20²⁵₂₆
SEASON

LEONKORO QUARTET
Sunday, March 8, 2026
VANCOUVER PLAYHOUSE

From the Artistic Director

Dear Friends,

It is our great pleasure to welcome the Leonkoro Quartet to the VRS for their long-awaited Vancouver debut.

I say “long-awaited” because the Leonkoro Quartet is a *very* hot commodity. In just a few short years, this extraordinary and in-demand young ensemble has a list of major awards and international competitions under its belt, including first prize – alongside nine additional special prizes – at the Wigmore Hall International String Competition. But it is their distinctive voice, and the intensity, refinement, and emotional honesty of their performances, that have made audiences across Europe take notice.

With playing described by The Guardian as “vivid, intoxicating and polished”, the quartet comes to our stage hot on the heels of a performance at Wigmore Hall *and* their Carnegie Hall debut.

Today’s program, titled “Role Models”, offers a wonderful opportunity to experience the full expressive range of the string quartet repertoire. We’ll hear Mendelssohn’s Beethoven-inspired String Quartet in A minor and Schubert’s profoundly emotional “Death and the Maiden”. We will also hear a string quartet by the 20th-century Dutch composer Henriëtte Bosmans, whose work has never been played on the VRS stage before.

Chamber music at this level reminds us why the string quartet remains one of the most profound and intimate forms of musical conversation.

We are deeply grateful to our Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, the John C. Kerr Family Foundation, and the RBC Foundation for their generous support of our Next Generation Artists. We’d also like to thank I Vivaci, a wonderful group of friends and chamber music enthusiasts, for helping to make this debut possible. This group of friends first heard the quartet at the Banff International String Quartet Festival in 2023 and we could not be more grateful for their support of today’s concert.

As always, our sincere thanks to the City of Vancouver for its continued support.

Enjoy the concert.

Sincerely,



Leila Getz



CELLPHONES

The use of cellphones and recording devices is prohibited in the concert hall. Please take this opportunity to turn off all electronic devices.

音乐厅内禁止使用手机，禁止拍照，录音，录像。请观众关闭所有电子器材，感谢您的合作。

Program

Leonkoro Quartet

Jonathan Schwarz, first violin

Emiri Kakiuchi, second violin

Mayu Konoe, viola

Lukas Schwarz, cello

Sunday, March 8, 2026

Vancouver Playhouse

HENRIËTTE BOSMANS (1895-1952)

String Quartet (1927)

Allegro molto moderato

Lento

Allegro molto

(approx. 13 minutes)

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

String Quartet No. 2 in A minor Op. 13

Adagio - Allegro vivace

Adagio non lento

Intermezzo.

Allegretto con moto - Allegro di molto

Presto

(approx. 32 minutes)

INTERMISSION

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

String Quartet in D minor D. 810
("Death and the Maiden")

Allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo. Allegro molto

Presto

(approx. 40 minutes)

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Leonkoro Quartet

The ensemble is framed by brothers Jonathan and Lukas Schwarz on first violin and cello, while Emiri Kakiuchi on second violin and Mayu Konoe on viola form the inner voices. Leonkoro – from Esperanto: “lionheart” – is no accidental reference to Astrid Lindgren’s children’s book about two brothers, a story that sets a heartfelt sense of comfort against the weighty reality of death – a sentiment that string quartet repertoire addresses in several instances.

In the years 2022–2025, the Leonkoro Quartet received numerous prestigious awards and prizes, cementing its position among the most sought-after ensembles of its generation. In March 2022, it was honoured with the prestigious Jürgen Ponto Foundation Music Prize. Shortly after, the quartet went on to win first prize and nine special prizes at the International Competition at London’s Wigmore Hall, including awards for interpretation, residencies and concerts. In May, they followed this by winning first prize at the Concours International de Quatuors à Bordeaux as well as the Audience Prize and the Young Listener’s Prize. Soon after, the quartet was selected for the prestigious BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists programme (2022–2024) as well as the Merito String Quartet Award in November 2022.



Photo credit: Co Metz

In March 2024, the Leonkoro Quartet received the Young Talent Award of the Concertgebouw Amsterdam – marking the beginning of a promising collaboration. This was followed by the prestigious Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award and the Tiemann Ensemble Prize of the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern at the beginning of the 2024–25 season. In July 2025, the quartet received the Lotto Sponsorship Prize of the Rheingau Music Festival.

From the 2025–26 season, the Leonkoro Quartet and the Simply Quartet will present their joint cycle called string. at the Wiener Konzerthaus – a significant artistic honour.

In addition to studying chamber music with Heime Müller (Artemis Quartet) at the Musikhochschule Lübeck, the quartet studied from 2020 to 2025 with Günter Pichler (Primarius Alban Berg Quartet) at the Chamber Music Institute of the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía Madrid. The ensemble also received guidance from esteemed mentors including Eckart Runge and Gregor Sigl (Artemis Quartet), as well as pianist Alfred Brendel.

The quartet’s debut album, featuring Maurice Ravel’s String Quartet and Robert Schumann’s String Quartet Op. 41 No. 3, was released by Mirare in autumn 2023. Just a few weeks later, it was awarded the Choc de Classica de l’année 2023. Since spring 2024, the quartet has been signed with the renowned record label Alpha Classics. In January 2026, the album *Out of Vienna* featuring works by Berg, Schulhoff and Webern was released there.

After a season of highly successful debuts at major international concert series and festivals, the ensemble continues its global rise this season, with appearances in the Black Diamond in Copenhagen, the House of Nobility in Helsinki, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., Carnegie Hall in New York City, UKARIA in Adelaide, Melbourne Recital Centre and Toppan Hall in Tokyo.

The Leonkoro Quartet is a Pirastro Artist and Henle App Ambassador.

Jonathan Schwarz plays a violin by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (1759/60) on generous loan through a trust.

Emiri Kakiuchi plays a privately owned violin made by Santo Serafin (1725).

Mayu Konoe plays a viola by Lorenzo Storioni, kindly provided by a private sponsor.

Lukas Schwarz plays a cello by Carlo Tononi, Venice (c. 1720) loaned by the Beare’s International Violin Society.

Leonkoro Quartet is represented by Arts Management Group, New York, USA.

Program Notes

Henriëtte Bosmans String Quartet (1927)

The artistic life of Dutch pianist-composer Henriëtte Bosmans is a remarkable story of courage, determination and endurance in the turbulent first half of 20th century Europe. As a half-Jewish, bisexual woman composer she faced down a host of prejudices to eventually become recognized as a figure of national importance in the musical life of her country.

Born into a musical family, she received her first lessons from her mother, a professor of piano at the Amsterdam Conservatory who had played piano duets with Brahms. Her father, who died while she was still an infant, had been principal cellist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the same orchestra where, as the leading Dutch pianist of her generation, Bosmans would later perform the concertos of Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Rachmaninoff and Grieg under such celebrated conductors as Willem Mengelberg, Pierre Monteux and Ernest Ansermet.

She began composing small works in her teen years but soon progressed to writing chamber and orchestral works, which attracted notable attention, with Ravel himself helping to present her Concertino for Piano and Orchestra at the Geneva Festival in 1929.

But the German occupation of World War II was an especially difficult time for her, as she refused to register with the Kultuurkamer, the institution used by the Nazis to regulate musical life in Holland. As a result, she was banned from performing in 1942, forcing her to earn a living by appearing at clandestine private concerts for the remainder of the war. But nevertheless, by using her connections with Mengelberg, she was able to get her Jewish mother released from a detention facility before she could be deported to the death camps.

In June 1945 she wrote *Daar komen de Canadezen* ("Here come the Canadians"), which rose to the status of a national "anthem of liberation" at the close of the war. And in 1951, just a year before her death, she was awarded the Royal Order of Orange Nassau, the Dutch equivalent of a knighthood. Today, streets in Amsterdam and Haarlem are named in her honour.

* * *

The String Quartet (1927) is an early work, composed under the influence of her new composition teacher and the work's dedicatee, composer Willem Pijper (1894-1947), who encouraged her to set aside the Romantic style in which she had been writing and adopt a more "modern" sound.

Accordingly, this work, while still motivically concentrated in the Classical tradition, bears the stylistic imprint of Impressionism, with the parallel chord streams of Debussy a particularly noticeable feature.

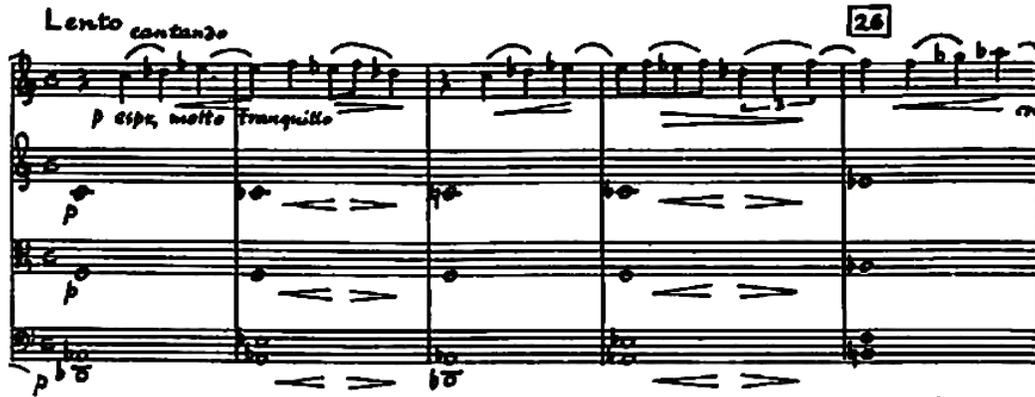
There is also a hint of Ravel in the way the work opens, with a viola solo in a modal-sounding "gapped" melody, as if some far away, exotic place were being summoned up for the listener.

Allegro molto moderato

This “call” is then given an eerie “answer” by the full quartet in octaves. The Ravel Quartet in F major (1905) is a clear influence in the movement’s “glassy” transparent texture and the many unison doublings in its scoring.

There is much lively discussion of the movement’s thematic elements in what follows, but with the haunting reprise of the opening material in the final bars the overall impression is one of austere lyricism and a slightly “distant” emotional stance.

This emotional restraint is evident as well in the *Lento* second movement that features a nostalgic lament, shared between the instruments as the movement proceeds, supported by slowly shifting harmonies.



The *Allegro molto* finale is characterized by relentless rhythmic drive, dominated by the spiffy repeated-note patterns of its brisk opening, that can be heard pulsing through even its slower, more restful sections.



* * *

Henriëtte Bosmans’ star gradually faded as other musical trends took over the attention of the European musical world after World War II. But in 1994, recognition began to arrive with the establishment of the Henriëtte Bosmans Prize for new works by young Dutch composers. And then, in 2018, the Concertgebouw Orchestra began to program her works once again, signalling a renewal of interest in this courageous composer, one that continues with this afternoon’s performance by the Leonkoro Quartet.

Felix Mendelssohn String Quartet No. 2 in A minor Op. 13

Mendelssohn was not your typical Romantic-era composer. The polished grace of his melodies and clear formal outlines of his musical structures show him to have had one foot in the Classical era of Mozart and Haydn, while his penchant for imitative counterpoint and fugal writing shows that even that foot had at least a big toe in the Baroque era of Bach and Handel, as well.

As a child, while his classmates were gainfully employed in pulling young girls' pigtails and kicking over garbage cans, young Felix, at the age of 11, was writing fugues, eagerly striving to become the most learned teenage composer in Berlin – admittedly not a crowded field. And if his tastes in music were perhaps acquired under the influence of his arch-conservative music teacher, Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832), his championing of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach remained nevertheless a lifelong endeavour.

Indeed, the performance of Bach's St. Matthew Passion at the Singakademie in Berlin in 1829, which Mendelssohn conducted at the age of 20, is credited with initiating the revival of 19th-century interest in Bach's music.

* * *

The String Quartet in A minor Op. 13 was composed in 1827 when Mendelssohn was only 17 years of age. Its frequent use of fugal textures attests to the young composer's admiration for Bach, while numerous formal features, especially its cyclical design and recall of themes from earlier movements, point to the influence of Beethoven – the late string quartets and Ninth Symphony in particular.

The first movement opens with an endearing *Adagio* full of short coy phrases



that lead to a repeated three-note motive (C# B D) derived from one of Mendelssohn's own songs (Frage Op. 9 No. 1). This motive will recur throughout the entire quartet, either in its dotted rhythm or in its melodic contour stretching over a minor 3rd.

Lyrical repose, however, is in short supply in the remainder of the first movement. The *Allegro vivace* section that follows the introductory *Adagio* is a restless affair, one that offers up two anxious little themes, both set in a minor key.



But “anxiety” is a relative term. In Beethoven it summons up the panicky feeling that you’re swimming just slightly ahead of a shark, and one that’s gaining on you. Mendelssohnian anxiety, by contrast, is more like not knowing where you put the car keys.

Imitative counterpoint is pervasive in this movement, not just as a “spot technique” to add intensity to the development section à la Mozart and Haydn, but even in the initial presentation of the movement’s themes.

Fireside coziness arrives in the *Adagio non lento* with its serene and elegiac melody in the first violin, drenched in tearful sigh motives.

Adagio non lento
cantabile

mf cantabile

mf cantabile

mf cantabile

mf

sf

f

pp

p

pp

p

These sigh motives, chromatically inflected, then become the basis for the full-on fugue that follows.

15

sf

dim.

pp

sf

dim.

pp

sf

dim.

pp

pp

p <>

espress.

f

dim.

This is an obvious homage to a similar fugue in the second movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet in F minor Op. 95. Clever lad that he is, young Felix even inverts his fugue subject before returning to the poised serenity of the opening.

In place of a scherzo, Mendelssohn gives us a relaxed and unbuttoned *Intermezzo*. The tune that begins the movement is of the utmost simplicity, one that uses the same catchy rhythm four times in a row, without somehow becoming tiresome.

Intermezzo
Allegretto con moto

p

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

In the *Allegro di molto* trio section, however, Mendelssohn returns to type with a fleet and light-footed romp of detached 16ths lightly peppered with repeated notes.

And who could resist combining these two contrasting sections in the movement's final bars? Certainly not Mendelssohn.

High drama marks the opening to the *Presto* finale, with a flamboyant and wide-ranging recitative in the first violin holding forth over melodramatic tremolos below.

The reference to the finale of the Ninth Symphony is obvious, but this opening is even more closely patterned on the last movement of Beethoven's A minor Quartet Op. 132.

The troubled theme that then emerges in the first violin

is also similar in mood to the rocking main theme of Beethoven's Op. 132 finale.

Pacing back and forth in tonal space over a harmonically restless cello line, it eventually issues into a cross-country horse-gallop before "remembering" the fugue subject from the second movement in a series of flashbacks.

The work closes with the same lyrical *Adagio* with which it opened, framing the quartet's inner drama as a gently fading memory.

Franz Schubert String Quartet in D minor D. 810 (“Death and the Maiden”)

Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden” string quartet is a sombre work, with all four of its movements set in a minor key. It takes its name from the composer’s lied *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (1817) that provides the theme for the quartet’s slow movement, a set of variations. The poem’s depiction of Death coming to claim a young life may well have had personal resonance for the 27-year-old Schubert, since in 1824, when this quartet was written, symptoms of the disease that would end his life four years later had already begun to appear.

Despite the despairing backstory, or perhaps because of it, the first movement of this quartet is unusually muscular in its scoring, thick with double-stop accompaniment patterns and punchy triple- and quadruple-stop chords at important cadences.

This orchestral quality is evident from the startling salvo of string sound that opens the work, comparable in its dramatic abruptness to the opening of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony.

Allegro.



This fanfare-like call to attention announces the serious tone of the movement while at the same time introducing the descending triplet figure that will be the principal motive of its first theme, presented immediately following.



The other important motive dominating the movement arrives in the work’s second theme: a small grouping of notes ending in a lilting dotted rhythm, lovingly offered up in thirds, Viennese-style.



Schubert’s treatment of these two motives in this movement displays his more “relaxed” notion of the structural principles underlying classical sonata form.

While composers in the era of Mozart and Haydn considered their key choices and modulation patterns to be the harmonic pillars and load-bearing walls of a sonata-form movement's musical architecture, Schubert, by contrast, was more interested in interior decorating than structural engineering.

Rejecting the sonata form's traditional concentration on just two tonal centres – the home key presented at the outset and its alternate, presented in the second theme – he preferred to spin his tonal colour wheel more freely so as to choose just the right tonal accent for this little motive here, and the right tonal shade to paint that broad thematic space there.

While not ignoring the form's three-part division into exposition, development and recapitulation, Schubert lets this pattern out at the seams to create a more vibrant palette of harmonic possibilities. The tonal drama that interests him happens at a moment-by-moment pace, riding forward on waves of harmonic colour.

The triplets that appear so portentous as the movement opens suddenly become a daisy-sniffing, walk-in-the-park hummable tune when cast in different tonal colours. And the lilting dotted-rhythm motive, so gracious at its first appearance, becomes worrisome when constantly repeated in the minor mode.

Schubert's treatment of his musical material in the following *Andante con moto* slow movement is much more regular and formally proportioned. The theme for this movement's set of variations is in two parts, each repeated.



The first is a direct quotation of the piano introduction to the *Death and the Maiden* lied, with its plodding funeral-march rhythm and mournful repetition of melody notes evoking the sorrow that death brings.

The second part maintains the processional rhythm but is more hopeful, ending in the major mode to reflect the lied text's depiction of death as the Great Comforter. Most of the variations decorate the theme with an elegant application of melodic embroidery in the first violin.

But the third variation breaks this pattern



with its frightening acceleration of the theme's processional rhythm, a pacing that some have compared to the galloping of Death's horse.

The *Allegro molto* scherzo is of a rough Beethovenian stamp, predicated on the play of small repeated motives, frequent syncopations and sudden contrasts between piano and forte.

SCHERZO.
Allegro molto.

The musical score for the Scherzo movement is presented in four staves. The first two staves are for the upper voices, and the last two are for the lower voices. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto'. The score includes various dynamic markings: 'f' (forte) at the beginning, 'p' (piano) in several places, and 'fz' (forzando) in the lower voices. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

Its Trio middle section is a gently swaying Ländler that counts as one of the few moments of sustained lyrical repose in this quartet.

Trio.

The musical score for the Trio section is presented in four staves. The tempo is marked 'Trio'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'ritard.' (ritardando). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is characterized by a gentle, swaying quality.

The rondo finale, marked *Presto*, is a kaleidoscope of seemingly contradictory emotional states.

Presto.

The musical score for the Presto section is presented in four staves. The tempo is marked 'Presto'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'p.' (piano). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/8. The music is characterized by a driving, energetic quality.

Alternating between the driving vehemence of its tarantella refrain in the minor mode and the almost celebratory spirit of its major-mode episodes, this movement is tied together by its boundless energy alone, an energy that seems to transcend major-minor distinctions.

Prestissimo.

The musical score for the Prestissimo section is presented in four staves. The tempo is marked 'Prestissimo'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'pp' (pianissimo), 'p' (piano), and 'cresc.' (crescendo). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/8. The music is characterized by a whirlwind, breathless energy.

Witness its whirlwind coda, marked *Prestissimo*, that clearly signals an intention to end the work in the major mode only to switch back to the minor for its last hurrah, yet with no loss of breathless exuberance.

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This list was created on Friday, February 27, 2026, and includes bequests, gifts of cash, donations of securities, sponsorships and ticket donations dating back to January 31, 2025. Should you discover any errors or omissions, please accept our sincere apologies and contact D'Arcy Blunston, Development & Outreach Coordinator, by email to darcy@vanrecital.com or by phone at 604.602.0363, so that any necessary corrections can be made.

There are many ways to support the VRS including making a philanthropic gift, sponsoring a concert and/or including us in your estate plans. If you would like more information, please contact us at 604.602.0363.

103 - 119 West Pender Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1S5

Telephone: 604.602.0363

Email: info@vanrecital.com

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