CONSTELLATIONS
CHAMBERCONCERTS

Pacifica Quartet

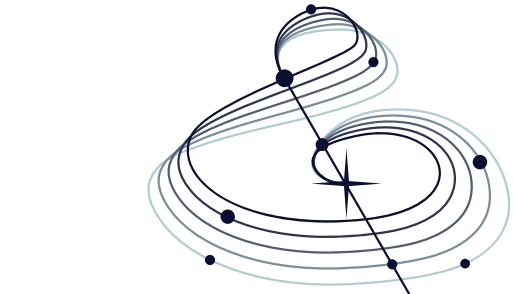
with Ellen Hwangbo



Sunday November 8, 2026, 3 PM

The Constellations Music Salon

8817 Belmart Road, Potomac, Maryland



Welcome to Constellations Chamber Concerts!

We are delighted to welcome you to the Constellations Music Salon for our third season of live concerts in Potomac! Thank you for being part of our musical community and for your continued support in making this intimate space a home for extraordinary chamber music. We look forward to another season of sharing the joy of music with you, where every performance brings us all a little closer together.

Program

Sunday, November 8th, 2026, 3 PM

String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 13 (1827) — Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

I. Adagio – Allegro vivace
II. Adagio non lento
III. Intermezzo: Allegretto con moto – Allegro di molto
IV. Presto – Adagio non lento

String Quartet No. 1, "Métamorphoses nocturnes" (1953-54) — György Ligeti (1923-2006)

Pacifica Quartet

intermission

Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44 (1842) — Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

I. Allegro brillante
II. In modo d'una marcia. Un poco largamente
III. Scherzo: Molto vivace
IV. Allegro ma non troppo

Pacifica Quartet
Ellen Hwangbo, piano

Pacifica Quartet

Simin Ganatra, violin
Austin Hartman, violin
Mark Holloway, viola
Brandon Vamos, cello

Program Note

The three works on today's program reveal just how differently composers can explore reinvention through chamber music: through repetition of an intimate question, a restless sequence of transformations, or the addition of a single instrument.

Mendelssohn wrote his passionate **String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 13** in 1827, at just eighteen, shortly after Beethoven's death. While many contemporary listeners still found Beethoven's late quartets baffling, the young Mendelssohn embraced their daring structures and emotional intensity. He also borrowed from himself: the opening asks a musical question drawn from his song *Ist es wahr?* ("Is it true?"), a query associated with the uncertainties of young love. Its little three-note idea returns throughout the work, helping bind together moods ranging from tender reflection to near-desperate urgency. Despite its designation as Quartet No. 2, this piece actually predates Mendelssohn's "Quartet No. 1" by two years.

György Ligeti's String Quartet No. 1, "Métamorphoses nocturnes" was composed in Budapest in 1953–54, before Ligeti fled Communist Hungary. The quartet bears the unmistakable influence of his fellow Hungarian Béla Bartók, yet its imagination is all Ligeti's. Rather than offering four separate movements, he unfolds a continuous chain of miniature episodes: whispers, frantic scurrying, sudden jokes, eerie stillness, and ferocious outbursts. The title means "nocturnal transformations," and transformation is the governing principle: a tiny musical idea keeps changing shape, character, and identity. Although completed in 1954, the quartet did not receive its premiere until 1958 in Vienna, after Ligeti had emigrated to the West.

Robert Schumann's Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44 emerged from the composer's remarkable "chamber music year" of 1842, when he turned from songs and symphonies to write three string quartets, a piano quartet, and this exuberant masterpiece. Dedicated to his wife Clara, a celebrated pianist, it gives the keyboard a brilliant role without reducing the strings to accompaniment. When Clara was ill before an early private performance, Felix Mendelssohn stepped in and reportedly sight-read the formidable piano part; he even suggested revisions that Schumann adopted – perhaps reinforcing Schumann's prior description of Mendelssohn as "the Mozart of the nineteenth century." The music moves from a triumphant opening through a haunting, funeral-march-like slow movement and sparkling scherzo to an exhilarating finale, where earlier musical ideas return in a dazzling conclusion.

Meet the Artists

With a career spanning three decades, the multiple Grammy Award-winning **Pacifica Quartet** has achieved international recognition as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. Known for delivering performances that are "engrossing, characterful…with a luminescent tranquillity [and] spine-tingling intensity" (The New York Times), the Quartet is celebrated for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and fearless repertory choices. Its sound, distinguished by "warmth of phrasing, dynamic control and superbly coordinated ensemble balance" (Gramophone Magazine), has solidified the ensemble as one of the most essential voices in American chamber music.



The Pacifica Quartet appears this season throughout the United States, with engagements in Detroit, Indianapolis, and Salt Lake City, as well as appearances at Duke University, the University of Notre Dame, and the UCLA Clark Library. In the 2026-27 season, the Quartet also returns to Centrum in Port Townsend, Washington, for a week-long residency of performances, teaching, and community engagement.

Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly rose to prominence, winning chamber music's top competitions, including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002, the ensemble received Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and was named to Lincoln Center's Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). Four years later, it received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, affirming its position among the foremost American quartets. With its powerful energy and captivating, cohesive sound, the Pacifica has established itself as the embodiment of the contemporary American string quartet sound. In 2026, the Pacifica received the Ruth Bader Ginsburg award

from Washington Performing Arts.

An ardent advocate for living composers, the Pacifica Quartet has commissioned and premiered works by Keeril Makan, Julia Wolfe, and Shulamit Ran. Ran's Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory – commissioned in partnership with the Music Accord consortium, Wigmore Hall, and Tokyo's Suntory Hall – received its New York premiere with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. In 2024, the Quartet premiered James Lee III's Double Standard – commissioned by Carnegie Hall and Shriver Hall Concert Series – with soprano Karen Slack. Based on a poem by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, the work was widely acclaimed for its vivid narrative power, with one critic describing the performance's "spine-tingling intensity" (New York Times).

The Pacifica Quartet has proven itself to be the preeminent interpreter of string quartet cycles, harnessing the group's singular focus and incredible stamina to portray each composer's evolution, often over the course of just a few days. Its acclaimed presentations have included highly praised performances of the complete Carter cycle in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and Houston; the Mendelssohn cycle in Napa, Australia, New York, and Pittsburgh; the monumental Shostakovich cycle in Chicago, New York, Montreal, and London; and the Beethoven cycle in New York, Denver, St. Paul, Chicago, Napa, and Tokyo, where the Quartet gave an unprecedented presentation of five concerts in three days at Suntory Hall.

The ensemble's acclaimed discography reflects its adventurous spirit. Its Grammy Award-winning recordings of Elliott Carter's Quartets Nos. 1-5 on Naxos and the complete Shostakovich cycle on Cedille Records – praised by The Telegraph as "nothing short of phenomenal" – are now reference points for those repertoires. Other notable collaborations include Leo Ornstein's Piano Quintet with Marc-André Hamelin, the Brahms Piano Quintet with Menahem Pressler, and the Brahms and Mozart Clarinet Quintets with Anthony McGill. Their most recent Grammy-winning album, Contemporary Voices (Cedille Records), showcases works by Shulamit Ran, Jennifer Higdon, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich; the Chicago Tribune named it among the "Best Classical Recordings of 2020," praising the Quartet's "unmistakable and apt ferocity." A second recording with Anthony McGill, American Stories, featured world premiere recordings by Richard Danielpour, James Lee III, and Ben Shirley, as well as a piece by Valerie Coleman, and was nominated for a 2024 Grammy Award.

Based in Bloomington, Indiana, the Pacifica Quartet has served as full-time faculty and Quartet-in-Residence at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music since 2012. They previously held residencies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2003-2012), the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (2009-2012), and the University of Chicago, where they served as resident performing artists for 17 years. For more information, please visit www.pacificaquartet.com.



Pianist **Ellen Hwangbo** has forged an international career as a soloist, chamber musician, and artistic leader. She has been lauded for her performances of "harmony, energy and elegance" and her ability to create "truly potent and dramatic" concert experiences. Her recent appearances include the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Merkin Hall, as well as with orchestras in Europe and North America, including the Timisoara Philharmonic in Romania. A top-prize winner of the Music Teachers National Association's National Young Artist Competition, she has performed widely across the globe.

As an innovator in the world of chamber music, Ellen is admired for her dynamic and wide-ranging collaborations and the expressive range she brings to ensemble playing. She curates her own series of distinctive chamber programs as founder and Artistic Director of Constellations Chamber Concerts, described by Washington Classical Review as a "feisty" new series "with an independent streak." She performs regularly with world-renowned musicians and ensembles, such as Chee-Yun, Anthony Marwood, Benjamin Beilman, Aaron Berofsky, Soovin Kim, Colin Carr, Lucy Shelton, Sandbox Percussion, and the icarus Quartet, and was a member of the award-winning Saguaro Piano Trio based in Los Angeles. Her performances have been broadcast on several radio stations including WETA Classical, VPR Classical and WRCJ Detroit. She has appeared at many of the world's most prestigious music festivals, including Chamber Music Northwest, Music@Menlo, Yellow Barn, Lake Champlain, Peasmarsh, Chautauqua, Sarasota, and Aspen.

Ellen began her piano studies with Peter Cooper and continued with Logan Skelton at the University of Michigan, graduating summa cum laude. She received her Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from SUNY Stony Brook, where she studied under luminary pedagogue Gilbert Kalish.

In addition to her work as Artistic Director of Constellations, Ellen also held leadership roles at the Mighty Young Composers program, Yellow Barn Festival and Amalfi Coast Music & Arts Festival. She has given recent masterclasses at the University of Michigan, UNC Chapel Hill, University of Central Florida, Davidson College, Covenant College, Washington & Lee University, Universidade de São Paulo, Universidad Nacional Costa Rica, the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival, and the Amalfi Coast Music & Arts Festival. Ellen currently teaches privately in the Washington, D.C. area.

Join us for the rest of our season!

Enjoyed today's concert? Come join us again for the rest of our eclectic season, ranging from Baroque masterworks to world premieres and fascinating interdisciplinary events that explore the interconnections between music and other elements of the human experience.
We hope to see you again very soon!

get tickets at constellationsmusic.org/upcoming
or just scan the QR code below:



Citations: Voices Across Time

Sunday, January 17, 2027, 3 PM at the Constellations Music Salon

Four extraordinary musicians - Toyin Spellman-Diaz (oboe), Anthony Manzo (double bass), Ian Rosenbaum (percussion) and Andrew Rosenblum (harpsichord) - explore musical memory and reinvention in selections from the Baroque and beyond, Henri Dutilleux's remarkable Les Citations, and a world premiere by Constellations composer Nick Morandi.



INTERWOVEN: A Lunar New Year Celebration

Sunday, February 7, 2027, 3 PM at the Constellations Music Salon

Celebrate Lunar New Year with INTERWOVEN as the koto, shamisen, and erhu meet the Western string quartet in a vibrant musical journey across cultures, traditions, and generations.

Music & Diplomacy with Pauline Yang

Sunday, March 21, 2027, 3 PM at the Constellations Music Salon



Pianist and U.S. Arts Envoy Pauline Yang brings music and diplomacy together in a unique afternoon of chamber performance, storytelling, and firsthand reflections from a musical life lived across borders.



ARTEMIS: icarus Quartet Premieres Akiho

Sunday, May 16, 2027, 3 PM at the Robert E. Parilla Performing Arts Center

Our season grand finale! Take an inspiring journey from ancient mythology to humanity's return to the Moon as two-piano, two-percussion icarus Quartet gives the world premiere of an electrifying new evening-length work by Grammy-nominated composer Andy Akiho, with Constellations as lead commissioner. Held at the Parilla Performing Arts Center in Rockville.

Constellations Chamber Music Parties



Come have a blast with the Constellations crew in a "judgment-free zone" for music-making! Launched in December 2024, we are continuing this new Constellations community initiative with monthly Chamber Music Parties during our regular concert season, open to everyone with a love for chamber music!

Here at Constellations, we're all about the magical ability of chamber music to bring people together. And while our main series concerts at the Constellations Music Salon bring the artistry of world-class musicians to Potomac, chamber music isn't just something you witness—it's something that musicians of all levels can partake in! Join the many Constellations staff, supporters, and friends who have kept their instruments close at hand as passionate amateurs as we make our way through readings of two (or more) masterworks every month with guided warm-ups and gentle coaching from Constellations chamber music experts.

Thanks to generous support from the **Associated Chamber Music Players** (acmp.net), all Constellations Chamber Music Parties are FREE, but registration is requested in advance for headcount purposes. Not a string player? We'll be hosting these parties regularly and will be mixing up the repertoire each time - so let us know what you play if you'd be interested in joining for future events!

No preparation is necessary and parts (and refreshments!) will be provided, but we will provide links to public-domain parts each month if you want to take a peek in advance.



NEXT EVENT:
Sun. Nov. 15, 2026, 1 PM

Register online at
constellationsmusic.org

Thank you to our generous supporters!

(list reflects donations since September 1, 2024)

$5,000 or more

Ann Franke & Dan Alpert
Hae-Soon Hahn & Steve Rosenbaum
Karen Kotulis-Carter
Korean Concert Society (Jungnim & Joung Cook)
Carl & Beryl Tretter
Hyunah Yu & William Brody

$1,000 or more

Thomas Carter
Dan Fenstermacher
Alan Michaels
Joel & Nancy Poznansky
Aron & Karen Primack
Andrea Ricka
Joshua & Sheryl Yu
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$500 or more

Colin Carr
Joy Chang & Christopher Sanchez
Mitchell Dolin
Leslie Hsu & Rick Lenon
Eliza Jarvinen
Erica Kane
Judith Kotulis
Bruce & Lori Rosenblum
Astrid Weigert
Anonymous

$200 or more

John Carter
Penny Carter-Lockert
Steven Chanock
Jan Chong & Glenn Donnellan
Rosalyn Doggett
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Matthew Gillman
Ralph Hecht
Michael Hodgson
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Gilbert Kalish
Lee Rucker Keiser
Cynthia Keith
Theodora Klayman
Bunny McDonough
Adrienne & Steve Nassau
Nancy Riker
Elizabeth Rossman
Judith & Paul Silverman
Lisa & Ken Sperka
Bill Weaver
Robert Weinstock

$100 or more

James & Louise Bugg
Klaus Enders
Allen Grunes
Albert Hunt
Richard James Price
Barry Rosenbaum
Jeff Stern
Kathe & Edwin Williamson
Elizabeth York

Constellations is grateful for further support of this season's programming from the Maryland State Arts Council and the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE MSAC maryland state arts council

arts & humanities council of montgomery county

See Upcoming Events

Donate Online

Save the dates!

* Next Constellations Chamber Music Parties:
  Sunday, Nov. 15 at 1 PM
  Sunday, Dec. 13 at 1 PM
  Sunday, Jan. 10 at 1 PM
* Sunday, Jan. 17 at 3 PM- Citations: Voices Across Time
* Sunday, Feb. 7 at 3 PM- INTERWOVEN: A Lunar New Year Celebration

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