

THE SAINT MARK'S  
**MUSIC**  

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**SERIES**  
**2025-2026**



# *Peace & Thanksgiving*

The Skyros Quartet

Sarah Pizzichemi & Brandon Vance, violins,  
Justin Kurys, viola, & Timothy Pizzichemi, cello

Sunday, November 23, 3:00 pm

In-person and livestreamed from  
Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*Saint Mark's Cathedral acknowledges that we gather on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, who are still here, and we honor with gratitude the land itself and the life of all the Coast Salish tribes.*

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## PROGRAM

*String Quartet No. 15, Op. 132*

Ludvig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Assai sostenuto - Allegro
- II. Allegro ma non tanto
- III. Molto adagio
- IV. Alla marcia, assai vivace
- V. Allegro appassionato

*The Fruit of Silence* (1946)

Pēteris Vasks (b. 1946)

## PROGRAM NOTES

### ***String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132*** **by Ludwig van Beethoven**

Beethoven's late string quartets, composed in the final years of his life, reflect a composer confronting both personal suffering and the transcendent possibilities of music. Op. 132, written after a serious illness, moves from shadow and tension in the opening *Allegro* through lyrical and sometimes anxious interludes, creating a journey that mirrors the struggle and renewal of life itself.

The second movement may be inspired by Mozart's *A Major Quartet*, K. 464. It opens with a unison figure joined by a tender melody, its quirky rhythms lending an uncertain, dance-like character. The trio evokes bagpipes and childlike play, briefly interrupted by a dark gesture in the viola and cello. The dance returns, but a subtle unease lingers through the movement's close.

At the heart of the quartet is the third movement, *Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart* (Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Deity from a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode). Alternating slow, hymn-like passages with brighter sections marked *Neue Kraft fühlend* (Feeling New Strength), Beethoven transforms his personal recovery from illness into a musical act of gratitude. The sustained, luminous harmonies and the slow weaving of voices evoke timelessness, vulnerability, and divine reassurance. Each return of the hymn becomes more intimate, building toward a climax of profound intensity before descending into a still, almost meditative peace.

After the brief fourth movement interlude and violin recitativo, the final fifth movement *Allegro* returns to the earthly plane, balancing struggle and resolution. Rhythmic unrest and impassioned recitative give way to lyrical, soaring passages, ultimately affirming human endurance and the triumph of the spirit. In Op. 132, Beethoven grapples with suffering and uncertainty yet offers a vision of hope, faith, and the redemptive power of art.

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770–1827) was a German composer and pianist whose music bridged the Classical and Romantic eras. Renowned for his symphonies, sonatas, and string quartets, he transformed the expressive possibilities of music, creating works of profound emotional depth. Despite progressive hearing loss, Beethoven continued to compose, producing some of his most innovative and intimate works in the final decade of his life, like the Op. 132 string quartet.

### ***The Fruit of Silence*** **by Pēteris Vasks**

Mother Teresa often surprised people by offering, instead of a business card, a small card inscribed with a simple, contemplative meditation:

*The fruit of silence is prayer.*

*The fruit of prayer is faith.*

*The fruit of faith is love.*

*The fruit of love is service.*

*The fruit of service is peace.*

In 2013, composer Pēteris Vasks set this peace prayer for mixed choir a cappella in a luminous, elegiac sound world commissioned by the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival. Vasks describes the piece as “a very silent meditation,” a characterization that carries into his later versions for piano quintet and string quartet. This particular copy of ***The Fruit of Silence*** was personally gifted to the Skyros Quartet by the composer, further deepening the ensemble's connection to the work. Through these instrumental arrangements, the spiritual depth of Mother Teresa's words continues to resonate without text.

**Pēteris Vasks** (b. 1946) is one of Latvia's most celebrated composers, known for music that blends spiritual reflection with a profound connection to nature and the human condition. His works often balance fragility and intensity, shaped by his experiences living under Soviet rule and his deep commitment to peace, compassion, and ecological awareness. Vasks' signature sound world, lyrical, meditative, and emotionally direct, has made him a powerful and distinctive voice in contemporary music.

Program notes by Dr. Sarah Pizzichemi

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



**The Skyros Quartet** brings a bright and inventive style to the performance stage, with their playing noted as “[taking] to each piece with a ravishing, articulate, sonically appealing approach that has passion more than sentiment, [with] fully coherent phrasing” - *GappleGate Classical-Modern Music Review* and “The quartet plays with enthusiasm and precision” - *audiophile audition*.

The members of Skyros Quartet are Sarah Pizzichemi, Brandon Vance, Justin Kurys, and Tim Pizzichemi. Established in 2010, they have been heard at the Aspen Music Festival and School, Seattle Chamber Music Society, Deer Valley Music Festival, Sunflower Music Festival, QuartetFest at Sir Wilfrid Laurier University and Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society, the Common-Tone Arts Music Festival, and at the University of British Columbia concert series. Skyros has also performed on tour in Xi'an and Hangzhou, China. Skyros had the honor of giving the West Coast premiere of the newly composed *Piano Quintet* by Philip Glass with acclaimed concert pianist Paul Barnes who commissioned the work. Along with celebrated cellist Eric Wilson (Emerson String Quartet emeritus), the quartet gave the Canadian premiere of Mikołaj Górecki *Elegy for Cello and String Quartet* at the University of British Columbia.

Skyros released their debut album, *INTROSPECTIVE ODYSSEY*, to great acclaim in August 2015. It can be heard on the Navona label of Parma Recordings, and includes works by Sibelius, Turina and Britten. In 2023, they released an EP recording of the string quintet *My Lai* with composer and pianist Peter Colclasure. As a quartet, Skyros has collaborated with many composers in the performance of new music. Performing with the internationally celebrated percussion group arxduo, they gave the west coast premier of works for percussion duo and string quartet by Michael Laurello and Christopher Dietz. Skyros worked with Latvian composer Pēteris Vasks presenting many of his works for string quartet. The quartet recorded and performed the world premier of the 2017 ballet *Approaching Ecstasy* with contemporary dance company Whim W'him, vocal ensemble The

Esoterics, and composer Eric Banks. They have commissioned and premiered string quartets by Kate Skinner (*Wounded Bird, She Dances*, 2021), Sabrina Clarke (*On Whale Beach*, 2021), Liza Sobel (*Prayer*, 2011), and Devin Maxwell (*Bouquet Canyon*, CA, 2013). They have also worked with Tonia Ko (Aspen Music Festival), Charlie Leftridge (in collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Chamber Singers and the Esoterics), and Stephanie Martin (Sound in the Land conference, University of Waterloo). In 2014, Skyros was featured at Fast Forward Austin, a new music festival in Texas. Skyros performed string trios and quartets by the four composers of the New York City W4 New Music Collective: Ruben Naeff, Molly Herron, Matt Frey, and Tim Hansen.

Skyros is passionate about educating audiences to the wonders of the string quartet. Currently they serve as Ensemble-In-Residence at Cornish School of the Arts at Seattle University for the 2025-2026 season. In 2015, the members of Skyros developed an in-school chamber music coaching program from the educational non-profit organization Chamber Music Guild. It provides weekly coachings to young string quartets using a curriculum designed by Skyros. The members of Skyros Quartet became artistic directors of CMG in 2016. During the pandemic, Skyros Quartet and CMG developed a chamber music podcast to stay connected called *The Counterpoint Club*. Members of Skyros have also served as faculty at Seattle University, Edmonds Community College, Union College, and the University of Texas at Austin String Project. At UNL, they were Graduate Teaching Assistants for chamber music outreach and a teaching-artist class that works with students to develop interactive presentations for children.

Skyros earned Masters in Chamber Music Performance from the University of Texas at Austin Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music, mentored by the Miró Quartet and Sandy Yamamoto. From 2012-2015, they served as the Graduate Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Glenn Korff School of Music, where they completed Doctorates in Chamber Music Performance under the guidance of the Chiara String Quartet. Skyros was also mentored by Earl Carlyss, James Dunham, Sylvia Rosenberg, and members of the Takacs, American, Jupiter, and Pacifica String Quartets at Aspen Music Festival and School Center for Advanced Quartet Studies. Skyros has also been coached extensively by the Penderecki and Muir String Quartets.

In February 2020, Skyros Quartet formed Constellation Creatives, their own non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Constellation Creatives champions innovative experiences of storytelling through the lens of chamber music with a vision to forge an interactive cultural institution embedded in the Puget Sound community.



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*Organ by Night* is presented at Saint Mark's Cathedral on the third Sunday of each month following the Compline service, about 10:00 pm. Informal mini-concerts will introduce you to the power and beauty of a real pipe organ. All are welcome in-person in the nave or join the organist in the loft to get a feel for what playing an instrument of this size is like. Ask questions and learn more about the Flentrop organ after the concert.

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### **Christopher Stroh** performing:

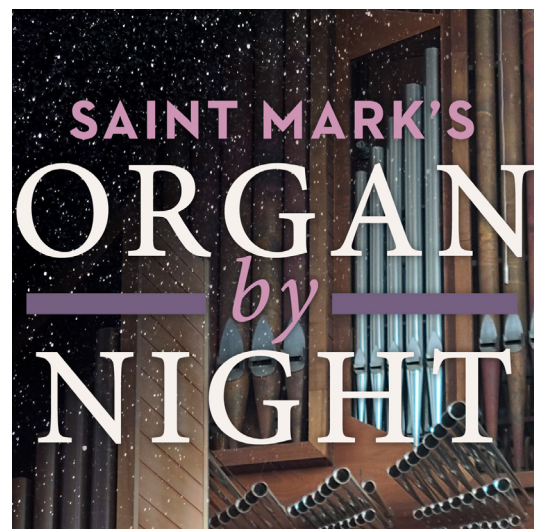
Prelude on 'Conditor alme siderum' by Marilyn Biery  
Partita on 'Freu dich sehr, O Meine seele' by Anton Heiller  
Chorale Prelude: *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* by J. S. Bach  
Organ Motet on 'Veni Emmanuel' by John Hebden Schaffner  
Toccata on 'Veni Emmanuel' by Adolphus Hailstork

**Christopher Stroh** serves as Assistant Director of Music and Organist at St. James Cathedral, Seattle. Chris served previously at The Basilica of Saint Mary, Co-Cathedral, Minneapolis, as Organist and Liturgical Music Associate from September 2006 until July 2021 and as Organ Scholar at the Cathedral of Saint Paul, Saint Paul, Minnesota, from 2005 until 2006. Christopher attained Baccalaureate and Master's Degrees in organ performance, with emphases in sacred music, choral conducting, and theology at Saint John's University and Graduate School of Theology, Collegeville, Minnesota. Teachers include Joanne Pearson, Kim Kasling, James Biery, Marilyn Biery, David Jenkins, Don Saliers, Axel Theimer, and Leo Nestor.

### **MORE UPCOMING *Organ by Night* CONCERTS:**

JANUARY 18 - Wyatt Smith

FEBRUARY 15 - Michael Kleinschmidt



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