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2020•2021 SEASON



## Dudok Quartet

**Saturday, April 17, 2021 · 7:30 pm ET**

**The Jacob and Naomi Stucki Memorial Concert**



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**BÉLA BARTÓK**  
(1881–1945)

String Quartet No. 5

**JOHANNES BRAHMS**  
(1833–1897)

String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat Major, Op. 67

**BÉLA BARTÓK**  
(1881–1945)

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## String Quartet No. 5

Composed 1934

Béla Bartók had a strong passion for ethnomusicology. He began collecting and analyzing folk music after graduating in 1903 from the Budapest Academy of Music. Over the next fifteen years he surveyed the everyday music of people in his native Hungary and parts of Romania, Transylvania, and North Africa. This pursuit had a great deal of influence on the music he composed. Following the first world war, Bartók began a series of concert tours that brought him to international prominence. In 1931 he became a member of the Permanent Committee for Literature and the Arts of the League of Nations' Commission for Intellectual Cooperation. In a letter from that year he wrote that he believed in "the brotherhood of peoples, brotherhood in spite of all wars and conflicts. I try—to the best of my ability—to serve this idea in my music; therefore I don't reject any influence, be it Slovak, Romanian, Arabic, or from any other source. The source must only be clean, fresh, and healthy!" He composed his String Quartet No. 5 in 1934 and dedicated it to "Mrs. Sprague Coolidge," who had commissioned the work.

Chicago-born heiress Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864–1953) was an influential patron of chamber music whose efforts still resonate today. Her collaboration with the Library of Congress led her to fund the construction of the Coolidge Auditorium, which opened with the first Coolidge Festival in 1925. She commissioned many pieces that became important milestones of twentieth-century music, including Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and Igor Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète*. In a speech to the National Federation of Music Clubs she explained her motivation for supporting music by saying, "My desire is to serve Art, and through Art, to serve humanity, for I feel that the survival of the human spirit largely depends upon its artistic freedom: to lose the privilege of self expression by which through his Art man has recorded Truth and Beauty would be to limit spiritual nourishment." Her commission for Bartók was the result of a suggestion by the Pro Arte quartet, to whom the composer had dedicated his String Quartet No. 4. The Kolisch Quartet gave the premiere of the String Quartet No. 5 on April 8, 1935, in the Coolidge Auditorium.

Bartók's String Quartet No. 5 is in five movements that give an overall symmetry to the piece. The first movement, an "Allegro" in sonata form, opens with a B-flat-centered motive in unison/octaves that Bartók termed a "framing motive" because it will return to signal important structural points. The second movement, "Adagio Molto," opens and closes with expressive trills. The spare texture allows the individual voices of all four instruments to be heard. The center of the piece is the third movement, a scherzo and trio labeled "Alla Bulgarese." The Bulgarian influence is heard immediately in the meter that divides the eighth notes into groups of four plus two plus three. The energetic melodies draw on Bulgarian folk music for inspiration. A strong pizzicato note in the cello signals the end of the piece,

with the other three instruments providing a brief final commentary. The framing motive of the first movement returns with only a slight rhythmic variation to open the fourth movement. The “Andante” seems especially somber after the scherzo. Listen for the unusual strummed glissandi in the cello that bring the movement to a close. The finale in rondo form, “Allegro Vivace,” opens with a compact framing motive that incorporates rests to great effect. Each episode provides exciting surprises. A sweet melody in the second violin seems to take us into an entirely different piece of music before the frenetic pace of the movement resumes. The complex harmony of the String Quartet No. 5 resolves neatly at the end into an octave B-flat.

## JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1833–1897)

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### String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat Major, Op. 67

(1876)

As the U.S. was preparing to celebrate its centennial in 1876, Johannes Brahms was putting the finishing touches on what would be his final string quartet. He finished it just three years after completing his Opus 51 string quartets. In between he had written primarily vocal music including two sets of *Liebeslieder Waltzes*, the *Alto Rhapsody*, and the *Schicksalslied*. Brahms shared the quartet music with his close friends composer/pianist Clara Schumann and violinist Joseph Joachim, who shared their admiration for the piece with Brahms. Joachim wrote, “You have never written better chamber music than the D minor movement and the finale, the former full of enchantment and romance, the latter full of grace and sincerity of feeling. But the original first movement and the compact sweet-sounding andante must not be forgotten!” Schumann commented, “I am especially pleased with the third and fourth movements and I cannot decide which delights me more, the melodious viola solo in the third, or the charming theme with its delicate tracery in the fourth. The theme with its playful ending is a pure joy.” Brahms dedicated the quartet to Theodor Wilhelm Engelmann, a professor of physiology at the University of Utrecht who was also an amateur cellist. In notifying Engelmann of the dedication Brahms said, “This quartet resembles your wife somewhat—it is dainty and original!” Engelmann replied, “If it resembles my wife it will be all the dearer to me. Many thanks for your kind intentions—I need not now worry so much about immortality!”

Like Bartók’s quartet, Brahms’s String Quartet No. 3 pours innovative rhythms and textures into well-established formal structures. The second violin and viola lead us into the opening movement. Brahms characteristically contrasts duple and triple meter, moving from 6/8 to 2/4 and playing with 3/4 as a written analogue to 6/8. The coda includes two rhythmically complex measures that have the effect of being simultaneously in 3/4, 6/8, and 2/4. The second movement, “Andante,” is pastoral and introspective with an unusual plagal cadence or “amen” ending. The third movement scherzo in D minor opens with a lyrical melody that gives the viola a chance to shine. The scherzo moves beyond the boundaries of its 3/4 meter, while the graceful trio is a bit more metrically straightforward. The coda shifts to D major for a tranquil resolution. The stately theme of the finale, “Poco Allegretto con Variazioni,” experiences a delightful series of transformations. Listen for the surprise return of the first movement before the final variations develop. A triumphant B-flat cadence brings the piece, and our season, to a satisfying close.

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# Dudok Quartet

**Judith Van Driel**, violin  
**Marleen Wester**, violin  
**Marie-Louise de Jong**, viola  
**David Faber**, cello

**"...stylish, open-minded and adventurous..."**

—*The Guardian*

The Dudok Quartet Amsterdam is forging a reputation as one of the most creative and versatile young quartets of its generation. With its ethos of "sharing the heart of music," the Quartet is committed to crafting unique and eclectic programs in order to engage with its audiences in new and imaginative ways, constantly striving to forge and explore new pathways and connections in music. Their intelligent approach and flair for programming also sees them regularly perform their own arrangements of pieces.

The Dudok Quartet has performed at many of the major European venues and festivals, as well as appearing regularly at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Amsterdam Muziekgebouw. Their US debut in January 2018 at the Northwestern University Winter Chamber Music Festival resulted in an immediate re-invitation for the 2019–2020 season.

In 2015 the Dudok Quartet released its first recording on the Resonus Classics label: *Métamorphoses* explores the theme of musical innovation through works by Ligeti, Haydn, and Brahms and was awarded Editor's Choice in *Gramophone*. Their 2018 disc *Solitude* features works by Mendelssohn, Weinberg, and Shostakovich curated around the theme of loss and loneliness, with *The Strad* praising the disc as "an intense listening experience that will have you on the edge of your seat." The Dudok's most recent recordings of the complete Haydn Opus 20 Quartets were released in 2019–2020 to critical acclaim.

Other recent projects have included the world premiere of Kaija Saariaho's opera *Only the Sound Remains* with Philippe Jaroussky and Dutch National Opera and a collaboration with director Rosabel Huguet re-imagining Beethoven's Opus 132 String Quartet for children. Titled *Quartet! A card game with Beethoven*, the project is part of the Dudok's ongoing commitment to education and outreach.

Having first met as members of the Ricciotti Ensemble, a Dutch street symphony orchestra, the Dudok Quartet studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne with the Alban Berg Quartet and later at the Dutch String Quartet Academy with Marc Danel. Winner of a 2018 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, other awards include prizes at the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition and the Joseph Joachim International Chamber Music Competition Weimar, as well as the prestigious Dutch Kersjes Prize (2014).

The Quartet performs on instruments generously on loan from the Dutch Musical Instrument Foundation (NMF). It takes its name from renowned Dutch architect Willem Marinus Dudok (1884–1974). A great lover of music, Dudok came from a musical family and composed in his spare time, saying, "I feel deeply the common core of music and architecture: after all, they both derive their value from the right proportions."



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