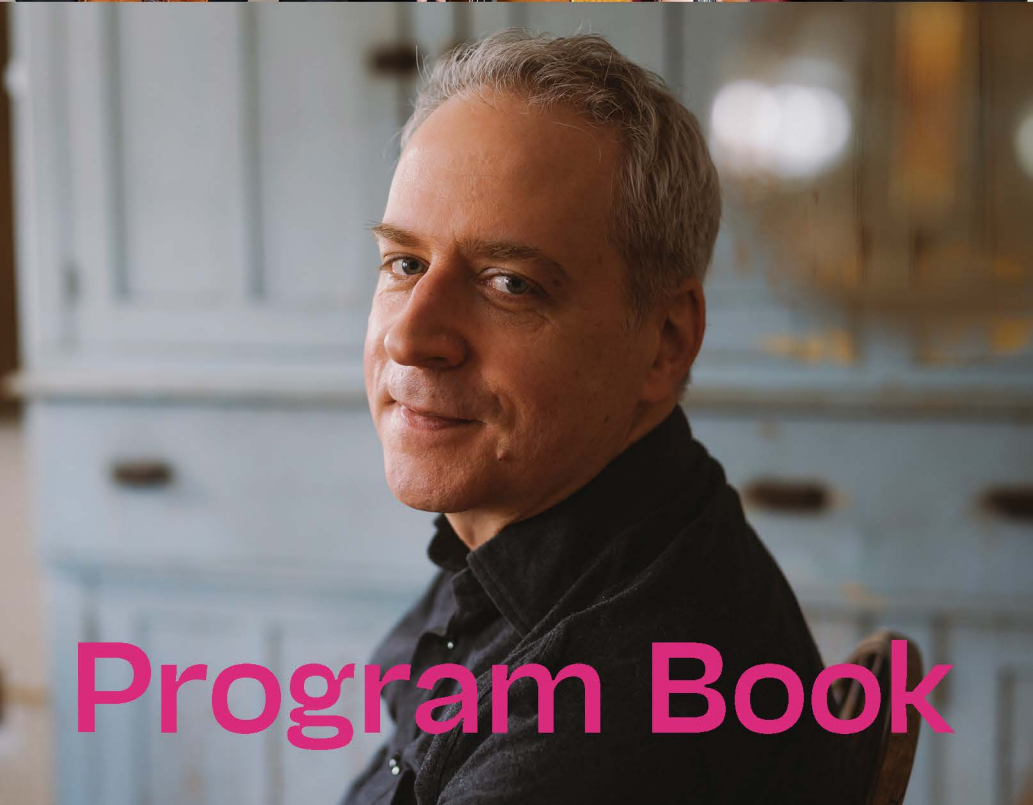




Program Book

Sunday, October 11, 2026, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Takács Quartet Jeremy Denk, *piano*

THE TAKÁCS QUARTET

Edward Dusingberre, *violin*
Harumi Rhodes, *violin*
Richard O'Neill, *viola*
Mihai Marica, *cello*

PROGRAM

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847) String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80 (1847)
Allegro vivace assai
Allegro assai
Adagio
Finale: Allegro molto

Gabriela Lena FRANK (b. 1972) *Quijotadas* (2007)
Alborada
Seguidilla
Moto Perpetuo: La Locura de Quijote
Asturianada: La Cueva
La Danza de los Arrieros

INTERMISSION

César FRANCK (1822–1890) Piano Quintet in F minor (1879)
Molto moderato quasi lento
Lento, con molto sentimento
Allegro non troppo, ma con fuoco

*The Takács Quartet appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists,
and records for Hyperion and Decca/London Records.*

*The Takács Quartet is Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Colorado in Boulder;
the members are Associate Artists at Wigmore Hall, London.*

www.takacsquartet.com

Jeremy Denk appears by arrangement with Opus 3 Artists.

This performance is made possible in part by Carol T. Christ.

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Above: Takács Quartet. Photo by Amanda-Tipton.
Below: Jeremy Denk. Photo by Josh Goleman.



FELIX MENDELSSOHN**String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80**

Felix Mendelssohn's String Quartet in F minor, the last work he completed before his premature death at age 38 in November 1847, is unlike any work he'd previously written. Gone is the radiant melodiousness of his previous five quartets and the sparkling merriment of his fairy scherzos. Instead, raw emotional pain springs from nearly every page of this work. Mendelssohn's typically pellucid harmonies are now riven by dissonance and unpredictable in their trajectories. His rhythms battle fiercely against each other. And the key of F minor casts its somber shadow over everything—this from a composer who earlier could make a minor mode shimmer with joy, as in his Violin Concerto.

As the year 1847 began, Mendelssohn was already weighed down by the pressures of his performing and creative life and began cancelling some of the invitations that poured in. Then on May 14, tragedy struck: the composer learned that his beloved older sister Fanny had suddenly died of a stroke, as had their father and mother. As musically gifted as her brother, Fanny was his alter ego, his muse, his most trusted advisor.

Mendelssohn was devastated. His pain was so great that for a time he found it impossible to compose. Hoping to provide solace, his wife, Cécile, urged him to retreat that summer with their family to Interlaken, Switzerland, a beautiful region he'd always loved. Gradually, the ability to compose returned and produced this superb quartet, a cry from his deepest self.

When a friend, the English music critic Henry Chorley, arrived for a visit in late August, he was shocked at how much the composer had altered: Chorley found him "aged and sad" and noted how "stooped" his posture was. As they discussed his plans for future works, Mendelssohn abruptly cried out, "But what is the use of planning anything? I shall not live." A little more than two months

later after a series of strokes, he died on November 4, another victim of his family's vascular curse.

The String Quartet in F minor's first movement bursts on us with a turbulence that seems to combine both terror and rage as Mendelssohn confronts his own fear of mortality as well as his grief for Fanny. Tremolos issue from the cello and viola and migrate to the violins in racing scales. Above this, the first violin shrieks the tormented principal motive, quickly echoed by the others. Finally, the furor quiets for a would-be lyrical second theme of gently descending scales, marred immediately by dissonance. This expansive section seems to be taking hold but ultimately cadences twice on a dramatic and harmonically destabilizing diminished dominant seventh chord, which ushers back the wild tremolos. A long development section of terrifying fury follows. James Keller writes: "Furious as this movement is, its sense of desperate rage increases a degree when, at the very end, Mendelssohn injects an explosive crescendo and a coda marked Presto, replete with brash octaves writing, sharp dotted rhythms, and biting staccato attacks."

Still in F minor, the second movement is a weirdly dramatic scherzo, light-years away from the effervescent dancing scherzos Mendelssohn specialized in. First violin and the other three instruments are linked inescapably together in conflicting syncopated rhythms and grinding dissonances. Heavy accents intensify the clashes. The trio section is stranger still: the cello and viola launch a macabre little march, to which the violins respond with a vague, rhythmically wayward melody. Any humor that exists in this movement is "informed by sarcasm, a sort of bitter laughter" (Keller again).

The third-movement Adagio leaves behind the anger and bitterness of the preceding movements and, moving to A-flat major, at last mostly sheds the shadow of F minor.

It is a deeply felt elegy with a sublimely beautiful, floating theme. Launched by the cello and first violin, it draws the other instruments into a tapestry of superb counterpoint by this master of contrapuntal writing. Little needs to be said about the details of this glorious music; it only requires the listener to surrender completely to this song from the heart.

The finale returns to the frenzied mood of the opening movement. A frantic, syncopated theme—like a soul trying to find its way out of eternal torment—appears in the first violin, accompanied again by tremolos. It will dominate this sonata form. Alternate lyrical themes keep appearing in the first violin but are quickly dismissed. The development section is the most savage and unorthodox in its methods as anything Mendelssohn ever wrote. Rejecting a final harmonic movement to the major mode, the last pages are brutal and implacable. One is left to wonder what his future music might have been like had this most classical of the Romantic composer been granted more years to live.

GABRIELA LENA FRANK

Quijotades

Gabriela Lena Frank's stature as one of America's most outstanding composers has recently been ratified by her being awarded the 2026 Pulitzer Prize for Music for her *Picaflor* (*Hummingbird*): *A Future Myth*, written for the Philadelphia Orchestra. Her first opera, *El último sueño de Frida y Diego* (2022)—based on the legendary romance between Mexican artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera—received high critical praise at its premieres by the San Francisco and San Diego operas, as well as more recently at its Metropolitan Opera premiere this past May.

Born here in Berkeley, in 1972 Frank draws on her mixed ethnic heritage in her music: her mother is Peruvian/Chinese, and her father is Lithuanian/Jewish. Inspired by Bartók and Alberto Ginastera, she travels throughout South America to explore indige-

nous traditions not only in music but also in folklore, mythology, and poetry and then combines them within a Western classical framework. With degrees from Houston's Rice University and the University of Michigan, she is also an accomplished pianist specializing in contemporary music. In addition to her composing and performing careers, in 2017 Frank founded her own acclaimed school, the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music, for emerging composers to work with renowned performers.

"There is usually a story line behind my music; a scenario or character," says Frank. In *Quijotades*, that character is the most famous one in Spanish literature: Miguel de Cervantes' "Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance," Don Quixote. Here is Frank's illuminating commentary on *Quijotades*:

Quijotadas (2007) for string quartet is inspired by *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616). Widely considered the first modern novel, this tale satirizes post-Conquest Spain by relating the tale of a middle-aged lesser nobleman who undertakes absurd adventures in pursuit of romantic—and seriously outdated—knightly ideals. Cervantes' brilliant and colorful resulting social commentary still reverberates for us today in the arts and popular culture at large. *Quijotadas*, which is the Spanish word for extravagant delusions wrought in the Quixotic spirit, is in five movements. They are:

I. Alborada: Traditionally a Spanish song of welcome or beginnings, this is in the style of music for the *chifra*, a small high-pitched wooden panpipe played with one hand. It is often employed by a traveling guild worker to announce his services as he walks through the streets of town.

II. Seguidilla: This free interpretation of the spirited dance rhythms of Don Quixote's homeland of La Mancha also evokes two typical instruments—the six-stringed guitar, and its older cousin, the bandurria, which finds its origins in Renaissance Spain.

III. *Moto Perpetuo*: *La Locura de Quijote*: This movement is inspired by an early chapter in the novel that describes Don Quijote sequestering himself in his hacienda, reading nothing but novels of chivalry, the pulp fiction of his time. The teasing promises of grandeur make him dizzy, and he eventually goes mad.

IV. *Asturianada*: *La Cueva*: The style of this traditional mountain song (whereby a young male singer issues forth calls that rise and fall with great emotion and strength) is used to paint a portrait of the Cave of Montesinos. In an important episode of the novel, Don Quijote fantasizes about the legendary hero Montesinos trapped under enchantment in a highland cave.

V. *La Danza de los Arrieros*: Throughout the tale, Don Quijote is constantly rubbing up against *arrieros* (muleteers) who, for Cervantes, are the embodiment of reality (in contrast to Don Quijote's fantasy world). The encounters with these roughnecks are always abrupt and physical, usually resulting in a sound thrashing for Quijote. Each beating brings him closer to reality, and in the end, he must poignantly reconcile himself to the fact that his noble ideals do not find a hospitable home in the contemporary world.

CÉSAR FRANCK

Piano Quintet in F minor

Though he enjoyed a long career as an influential teacher at the Paris Conservatory as well as one of the city's pre-eminent organists, César Franck was largely ignored by the French musical establishment during his lifetime. His Belgian birth contributed to his outsider status; in order to become the Conservatory's professor of organ in 1871, he had to take out French citizenship. Moreover, Franck was a gentle, unworldly man—serious, sincere, and a fervent Catholic—and thus poorly equipped to deal with the highly politicized Parisian musical scene during the 19th century. But if he was unable or unwilling to fight for recognition, his devoted pupils—among them men soon to become famous

themselves, such as Vincent d'Indy, Henri Duparc, Paul Dukas, and Ernest Chausson—were eager to proclaim his greatness. To them, he was almost a living saint—"Pater seraphicus," they called him—and Beethoven's true heir. Their proselytizing and the strength of his late works made him famous within a few years of his death in 1890.

A late bloomer as a composer, Franck created all the works for which he is remembered today during the last decade and a half of his life. One of the earliest of these is the Piano Quintet in F minor, a huge work in both its formal dimensions and its emotional impact, composed in 1879. So passionate and turbulent is this music that many listeners have thought it must be inspired by some powerful emotional experience in the composer's life. Franck was legendary among his supporters for his serene countenance and air of imperturbability, but clearly fierce fires burned within.

Epitomizing the late Romantic style, Franck's language here runs counter to the traditional ideals of clarity and balance that most French composers favored. The ensemble scoring is rather Germanic in its massiveness, at times sounding almost orchestral. Both melodies and harmonies tend toward an opulent, feverish chromaticism that recalls Liszt, one of Franck's favorite composers. These traits ratchet the quintet's emotional temperature well above the cool refinement we usually associate with French chamber music.

The prominent use of cyclical form—using themes in new transformations from movement to movement—is another technique Franck adopted from Liszt for this work. Here, among other recurring musical ideas, a delicate, swaying theme heard very early in the piece becomes the work's focal point and its soul.

In the first movement's provocative slow introduction, the music opens with the grandest of gestures: the first violin boldly descending the scale on a series of dramatic

dotted rhythms. This is the movement's principal theme in its first manifestation. The piano answers with something quite different: rocking music in a different meter that sways upward from middle-register pitches. This dreamy, almost casual response is not only the second theme in embryo, but also the first manifestation of the work's great cyclical theme. Eventually, the piano propels the music into the main *Allegro* section. Here the strings propose a new form for the descending scale theme: a shorthand version that emphasizes its dotted rhythms. Soon the first violin discovers the cyclical theme in its essential form: swinging upward from its core pitch by intervals growing by chromatic half steps. Franck marks it "sweetly but with passion."

Using a dark, moody version of the descending-scale theme, the piano launches a big, turbulent development section, feverish in its harmonic and emotional intensity. The recapitulation is largely subsumed in its impassioned flow, and we only become fully conscious of it when the swaying cyclical theme reappears. A faster coda drives the intensity to an almost unbearable extreme until Franck allows the tension to drain away and the movement to end quietly.

The second movement is a haunting Romantic reverie that has its own gentler outbursts of passion. Over the piano's pulsating

chords, the first violin sings the main theme: a series of poignant melodic fragments separated by pauses. The melody is repeated, and this time the other strings add a little repeated-note rhythmic motive below, another cyclical idea that Franck will bring back in the finale. A development section carries this material into harmonically distant and ethereally lovely regions; toward its end, listen for the piano's reminiscence of the swaying cyclical theme.

The opening of the finale (now in F major rather than the original F minor) is arresting. The second violin, soon joined by the first, begins a soft but very agitated whirling motion above solemnly striding octaves in the piano. Belatedly, the principal theme emerges in a proud unison. And the little repeated-note motive from the second movement also returns as the finale's second theme. The development section unfurls elaborate contrapuntal treatment of both themes. After the recapitulation, the cyclical theme reappears for the final time, sung sweetly in high register by the first violin.

— © Janet E. Bedell

Janet E. Bedell is a program annotator and feature writer who writes for Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Caramoor Festival of the Arts, and other musical organizations.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

During the 2026-2027 season, the world-renowned **Takács Quartet** welcomes new cellist Mihai Marica. The ensemble, which also includes Edward Dusingher and Harumi Rhodes on violin and Richard O'Neill on viola, is excited about varied projects that include a recording works by Gabriela Lena Frank and a tour of César Franck's Piano Quintet in F minor with Jeremy Denk. For Hyperion Records, the Takács will release an album of two Mozart viola quintets with violist Timothy Ridout.

The Takács maintains a busy international touring schedule. As Associate Artists at London's Wigmore Hall, the group will play four concerts that include performances with pianist Steven Osbourne and works by Haydn, Schubert, Carlos Simon, Gabriela Lena Frank, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. During the season, the ensemble will play at other prestigious European centers including the Konzerthaus Vienna, Vilnius, Bergen, and Utrecht.

The group's North American engagements include concerts in New York at Carnegie Hall and for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; University of Chicago, Pittsburgh, Santa Monica, Vancouver, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Ann Arbor, Portland, and at the University of Maryland, where the quartet continues its position as Visiting Artists. The Takács will also become Official Chamber Music Ensemble at the Segerstrom Center.

The members of the Takács are Artists in Residence at the University of Colorado and during the summer months join the faculty at the Music Academy of the West, running an intensive quartet seminar there.

The Takács has recorded for Hyperion since 2005 and all its other recordings are available to stream at <https://www.hyperion-streaming.co.uk>. In 2021, the ensemble won a Presto Music Recording of the Year Award for its recordings of string quartets by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, and a *Gramophone* Award with pianist Garrick Ohlsson for piano quintets by Beach and Elgar. Other releases for Hyperion feature music by Haydn, Schubert, Janáček, Smetana, Debussy, and Britten, as well as piano quintets by César Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-André Hamelin) and viola quintets by Brahms and Dvořák (with Lawrence Power). For its CDs on the Decca/London label, the quartet has won three *Gramophone* Awards, a Grammy Award, three Japanese Record Academy Awards, Disc of the Year at the inaugural *BBC Music Magazine* Awards, and Ensemble Album of the Year at the Classical Brits. Full details of all recordings can be found in the recordings section of the quartet's website.

The Takács Quartet is known for its innovative programming. In July 2024, the ensemble gave the premiere of *Kachkaniraqmi* by Gabriela Lena Frank, a concerto for solo quartet and string orchestra. Since 2021–2022, the ensemble has partnered regularly with bandoneon virtuoso Julien Labro in a program featuring new works by Clarice

Assad and Bryce Dessner, commissioned by Music Accord. In 2014, the Takács performed a program inspired by Philip Roth's novel *Everyman* with Meryl Streep at Princeton, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. The group first performed *Everyman* at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman. The Takács has toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, and played regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikás.

In 2014, the Takács became the first string quartet to be awarded the Wigmore Hall Medal. In 2012, *Gramophone* announced that the Takács was the first string quartet to be inducted into its Hall of Fame. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.

The Takács Quartet was formed in 1975 at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest by Gabor Takács-Nagy, Károly Schranz, Gabor Ormai, and András Fejér, while all four were students. The group received international attention in 1977, winning First Prize and the Critics' Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The quartet also won the Gold Medal at the 1978 Portsmouth and Bordeaux competitions and First Prizes at the Budapest International String Quartet Competition in 1978 and the Bratislava Competition in 1981. The quartet made its North American debut tour in 1982.

Members of the Takács Quartet are the grateful beneficiaries of an instrument loan by the Drake Foundation. The members of the ensemble are grateful to be Thomastik-Infeld Artists.

Jeremy Denk is one of America's foremost pianists, hailed by the *New York Times* as "a pianist you want to hear no matter what he performs," and celebrated for performances of vast imagination, beauty, profundity, and wit. Also a *New York Times* bestselling author, Denk is the recipient of both the MacArthur

“Genius” Fellowship and the Avery Fisher Prize and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

During the 2026–27 season, Denk tours widely across North America as both a soloist and recitalist, with performances alongside frequent collaborators the Isidore Quartet and the Takács Quartet. Commemorating the bicentennial of Beethoven’s death, he performs the composer’s Piano Concerto No. 4 at Carnegie Hall with the New York String Orchestra, led by Michael Stern, and presents recitals at Vivo Performing Arts and Philadelphia Chamber Music Society centered around a selection of Beethoven’s piano sonatas. He also continues his longstanding relationship with Scotland’s Lammermuir Festival, where he performs Mozart’s second and third piano concertos, and collaborates with tenor Joshua Ellicott on Janáček’s *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* and Schubert’s *Winterreise*.

Last season, Denk’s recital programs explored the works of female composers from the past to the present, as well as the complete Bach partitas. He also returned to New York’s 92nd Street Y to perform Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and reunited with a long-time collaborator, Joshua Bell, for performances at the Hollywood Bowl and the Ravinia Festival. Later in the season, he embarked on a tour of South Korea with violist Richard O’Neill and performed in multiple concerts at the Adam Chamber Music Festival in New Zealand, including a performance of Schubert’s *Die Schöne Müllerin* with tenor Colin Ainsworth.

Denk appears frequently at Carnegie Hall and, in recent years, has worked with such orchestras as the Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and San Francisco Symphony, and at such halls

as the Köln Philharmonie, Concertgebouw, Wigmore Hall, and Boulez Saal. Denk has also performed extensively across the UK, appearing with the Bournemouth Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Britten Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and the Northern Sinfonia.

Denk is also celebrated for his original and insightful writings on music, which *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross praised for its “arresting sensitivity and wit.” His *New York Times* bestselling memoir *Every Good Boy Does Fine* was published to universal acclaim by Random House in 2022 and was featured on *CBS Sunday Morning* and NPR’s *Fresh Air* and in the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*. He also wrote the libretto for a comic opera presented by Carnegie Hall, the Aspen Festival, and here at Cal Performances, and his writing has appeared in the *New Yorker*, *New Republic*, *Guardian*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*.

Denk is known for his interpretations of the music of American visionary Charles Ives, and in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the composer’s birth, Nonesuch Records released a collection of his Ives recordings in 2024. His album of Mozart piano concertos, released in 2021 on Nonesuch Records, was deemed “urgent and essential” by BBC Radio 3. His recording of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* for Nonesuch Records reached No. 1 on the *Billboard* classical chart, and his recording of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Op. 111 paired with Ligeti’s *Études* was named one of the best discs of the year by the *New Yorker*, NPR, and the *Washington Post*, while his account of the Beethoven sonata was selected by BBC Radio 3’s *Building a Library* as the best available version recorded on modern piano.