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When Four String Players Sing – The Juilliard String Quartet Performs Beethoven at the Musikverein

The current lineup—Areta Zhulla (Violin I), Leonard Zu (Violin II), Molly Carr (Viola), and Astrid Schween (Cello)—is utterly convincing in every respect. Their interpretation is remarkably mature, profound, and balanced in tempo and phrasing, with an extraordinarily wide dynamic range. The four musicians play with immense tonal beauty, noble and clear in sound, which also becomes powerfully dramatic when required. The performance of this magnificent work is expressive and moving; the colossal fourth movement, "Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit", flows wonderfully, making one almost believe they can hear the four string players singing. This top-tier ensemble impresses and captivates with musicality of the highest intensity: their precision in playing is never an end in itself but rather reflects a deeply considered, work-immanent approach. The audience's enthusiastic applause at the end is fully justified.

Simply Classic (Blog) | Musikverein Wien | Thomas Rauchenwald | April 22nd, 2026

The Juilliard String Quartet Comes to Berlin

Yet when you experience the quartet on stage, Leonard Fu's energetic and expressive playing merges seamlessly with the sound of his colleagues. The musicians say they felt this intuitive connection from their very first rehearsals. "It was pure chemistry," Carr recalls. "Our voices just instantly made sense together." The spirit of the quartet's early days continues to resonate today. "It's about the principle behind the sound—the question of how you create it," says Schween. Curiosity, energy, a sense of adventure, and gripping emotionality still guide their playing, and Fu notes that they are all united by a hunger to express something through the music.

Portrait in Tagesspiegel | Berlin | Dorothea Walchshäusl | April 16th, 2026

The Juilliard Quartet plays Beethoven and Widmann: lyrical exuberance and wild attack

Zhulla leads with a mixture of discretion and conciseness, the glimmer of her first violin repeatedly shining brightly over the tutti, only to merge with it in the next moment. Her fellow musicians tease out the distinct colors of the voices, guessing, sensing the others, it is pure listening pleasure. Beethoven, not aggressively modern, but played almost romantically. Breathless, with shimmering concentration and full of attacca, the Juilliard Quartet crowns a most interesting evening.

Tagesspiegel | Boulez Saal Berlin | Udo Badelt | January 23rd, 2025

Incredibly fresh, passionate and with moments for all time, the US quartet presented an evening that will be long remembered, beginning with Dvořák and Schubert. After the intermission, those works were overshadowed by Schubert's brilliant late G major quartet. 50 minutes of music from another world, the harshest contrast of sweet pain, the hottest longing and the darkest rebellion. A rollercoaster of emotions through the ups and downs of human existence. The Juilliards had a searing intensity and existential immediacy coupled with spirit of chamber music. That's how Schubert is meant to be.

Hamburger Abendblatt | Elbphilharmonie | Elisabeth Richter | November 23rd, 2023

Juilliard String Quartet

Press reviews | September 2026

The Scherzo combines elegance with energy. In the rhythmically intricate finale, in which first violinist Areta Zhulla moves confidently and somnambulistically to the highest heights, the heavenly Schubertian lengths are filled with life. Bravos for an intense quartet evening.

Badische Zeitung | Freiburg | Georg Rudiger | November 13th, 2023

To anticipate, both the claim and the interpretative quality were unreservedly fulfilled, and the "institution" Juilliard was honoured in every way.

Tiroler Tageszeitung | Hauser | March 25th, 2023

Their programme is, so to speak, a "backwards-knitted" one. After Jörg Widmann's 20-minute work, which, unlike its beginning, ends in a mesmerisingly vocal brightness, the programme returns to Ravel's popular string quartet. At this moment, there is no better way of realising that its sounds are already 120 years old. The Juilliards play the French composer's [Ravel] composition with a keen sense of its then new colours and in an exciting dramaturgy. Unlike other string quartets, they do not go to extremes in a pleasant way. Nevertheless, their interpretation is convincingly vivid and dynamic - a great evening for which there was long applause.

Süddeutsche Zeitung | Ulrich Möller-Arnsberg | March 20th, 2023

*It's obvious, and not only based on this recording but previous ones as well, that regardless of their members at any given time, the **Juilliard String Quartet** which celebrates the 75th anniversary of its founding with this release, are magicians as well as great musicians. Their playing here, as a group, is precisely uniform and yet the individuality of each part is striking. Nuances are highly shaded and gradual, accents are incisive, expressive rubato is uncannily well balanced, ... Everything sounds intuitively natural. Music first and foremost like the composers intended.*

Classical Music Sentinel | CD Beethoven-Bartók-Dvořák | Jean-Yves Duperron | April 2021

... and here is the first recording with its most recent recruit, first violin Areta Zhulla. ... and its trademark tonal beauty, sensitively attuned ensemble and technical splendour is amply on show in this recording.

...with crisp rhythms ideally coordinated to perfection, airy textures, gorgeously vocal phrasing and a splendid pizzazz ...

...The recording is suitably intimate while giving room for the tone to breathe and glow...

Classical Music | CD Beethoven-Bartók-Dvořák | Jessica Duchon | May 13, 2021

The Juilliard Quartet's exemplary stylistic differentiation, their superb attention to detail, and a sensitivity to the balance, truly shone.

The Boston Musical Intelligencer | Carl Straussner | January 14, 2020

Together they created music both timeless and magnificent. It was a true chamber music masterclass for those listening in awe. [...] We can't take for granted the artistry required to move the audience as these four did. It is one thing to hear a phrase, another to be pulled along as if the music were a cord tied to your heart being tugged just so. [...] This was classical music, chamber music, at its pinnacle. It just can't get better than this, can it?

Juilliard String Quartet

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Herald-Tribune | Gayle Williams | December 3, 2019

Zhulla has clearly settled in nicely, and played in absolute empathy with her colleagues... In the opening Allegro [of Beethoven's Op. 18, No. 3] the players were robust and vigorous, with some sinuous legato, and the Andante con moto had many colours and moods, sometimes jaunty, sometimes rich, with some good spiky staccato.

The Strad | April 2019