

## Mivos Quartet to play at Transformer Station on March 28

By Mike Telin



Since its formation in 2008, the Mivos Quartet has amassed an impressive list of accomplishments in the world of contemporary classical music. In addition to an active touring schedule, the Quartet regularly commissions new music for string quartet and works in close collaboration with composers for extended time periods. The group is dedicated to advancing

careers of emerging composers through their Mivos/Kanter String Quartet Composition Prize and their I Creation/Mivos Quartet Prize, a competition designed to promote works by emerging composers of Chinese descent worldwide.

On Saturday, March 28 at 7:30 pm at Transformer Station, the CMA Performing Arts Series will present the [Mivos Quartet](#), Olivia de Prato and Joshua Modney, violins, Victor Lowrie, viola and Mariel Roberts, cello. The program will feature works by Alex Mincek, Martin Stauning and Helmut Lachenmann. The concert is the first in an eight-concert tour of the Midwest.

“We’ve been working hard, but it seems to be paying off, which is gratifying,” violist Victor Lowrie said during a telephone conversation just prior to leaving for a week-long tour of Germany. “We’re fortunate that most of the time we get to curate our programs, and I think the pieces on Saturday’s program are a nice representation of what we do.”

The Mivos will open Saturday’s concert with Alex Mincek’s [String Quartet #3](#). “This is a piece we’ve performed quite a bit, so it has become a staple of our repertoire. It has a unique palette of sounds, which, on the face of it, is kind of progressive. Whenever we

play it, we get a great response from the audiences, whether they are novices to new music or very seasoned audiences. The piece just seems to be one that people respond to.”

Alex Mincek is a New York-based composer and saxophone player as well as the director of the Wet Ink Ensemble. “He’s someone we know well and really love working with,” Lowrie said. “He’s one of a large group of young, emerging composers who are based in New York that we’ve developed professional relationships with over the years. We love this quartet, and we put it on our programs whenever we can.”

The concert will continue with Danish composer Martin Stauning’s *Atmende Steine*, a work the quartet was introduced to last year while performing at the KLANG Festival in Copenhagen. “The Festival requested that we perform a couple of works, and this was one of them,” Lowrie recalled. “It turned us on to his music. It is a beautiful example of what I would call Nordic Minimalism — that certain style of intimate, quiet, meditative, but also haunting pieces that come from many Scandinavian composers. But we think this is a standout in that style.”

Lowrie added that their introduction to the piece exemplifies something that happens a lot to them. “When we go on tour we meet new composers and musicians, or like this, we’re asked to add a piece to our concert. It’s great because we meet composers from all over the world that way.”

The final work will be Helmut Lachenmann’s *String Quartet #3*, ‘Grido.’ “Lachenmann is an established composer who is well known throughout the world. I think this piece is a modern masterwork,” Lowrie said. “All of the extended techniques that he pioneered are incorporated throughout the piece, but there is also a distinct underlayer of harmonies and melodies going on, too. It’s a pretty extraordinary work, and we love performing it.”

Lachenmann’s Quartet played an important role in the education of the Mivos Quartet. “We’ve been lucky to be able to work with Lachenmann on a few occasions, both on this piece and his 2nd string quartet, and that has been a highlight for us,” Lowrie said.

Mivos has also had the good fortune to be coached on the piece by Arditti Quartet, the group for whom it was written. “We’ve done several residencies at the Aldeburgh Music Festival, but the first was to study this piece with the Arditti. That experience was really intense. It’s a very complicated and difficult piece, and the Arditti know it backwards and forwards. It was really great to get to work with them because they’re so knowledgeable from all of the experiences they’ve had performing contemporary music. The experience was tremendously helpful and it was really fun to work with them. They’re such nice people.”

The members of the Mivos Quartet are all graduates of the innovative Master's in Contemporary Performance degree program at the Manhattan School of Music. What did they focus on every day? "That's a good question because we were all in the first class of the program back in 2007, and I'm sure it has evolved since then. But speaking for myself, I had a really good time and received as broad an education as possible in all of the different elements of contemporary music."

Lowrie said the program included in-depth studies of 20th and 21st century harmony and history, classes in composition and improvisation, electronic music and its history, and the basics of sound amplification and recording. "We also were coached on and performed a lot of repertoire for mixed ensembles as well as string quartets. Of course, we also had private lessons."

Does Lowrie think the program has played a role in the Quartet's success? "I think it really has," he answered quickly. "Our class was a very diverse group of motivated people who took everything we could from the program, and it did really help us. A lot of people from that year are doing very well."

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