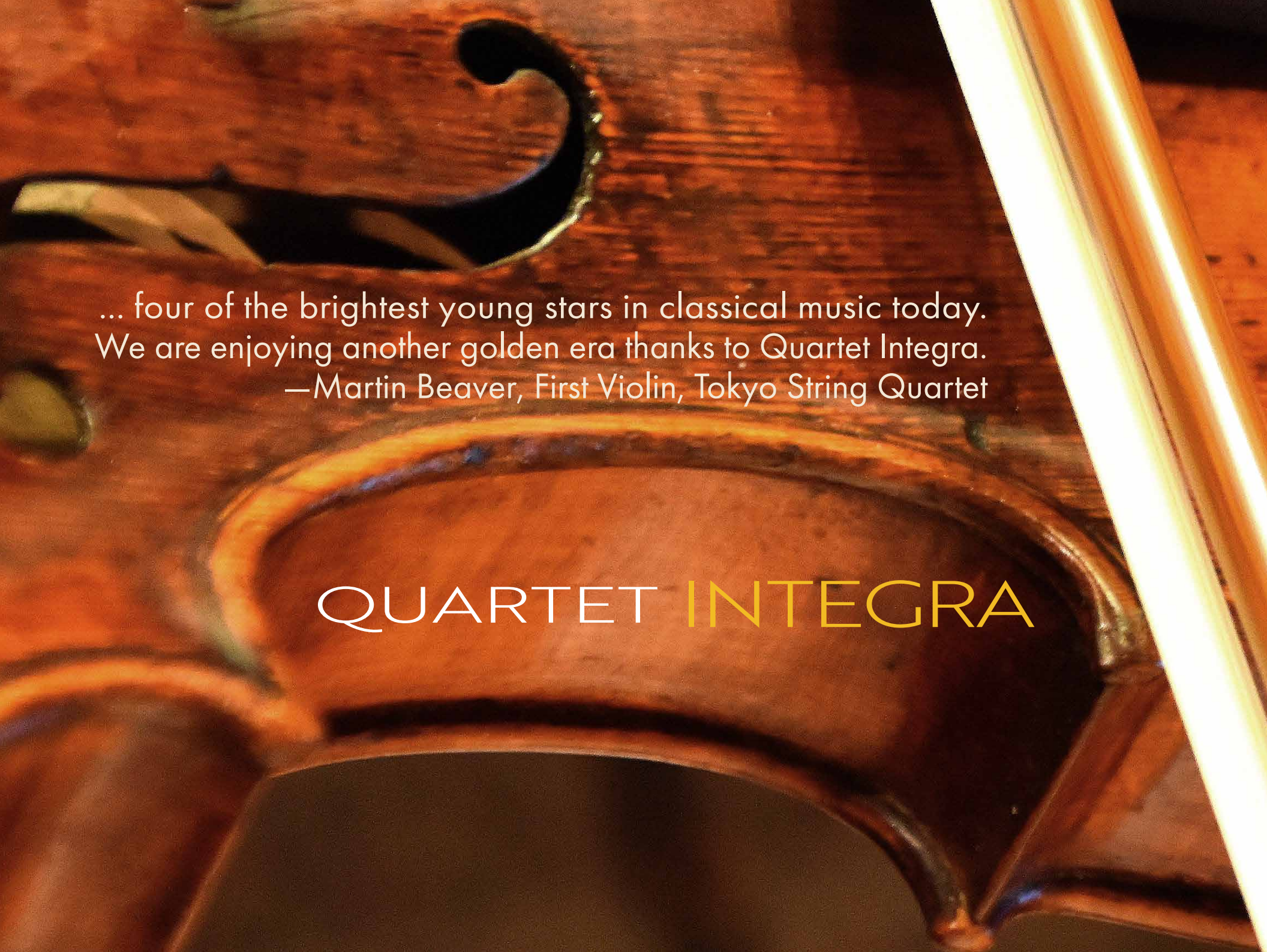
クアルテット・インテグラ
Quartet Integra
Beethoven・Ligeti・Lefkowitz
YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIYEH, PRODUCER
Russell Ward, executive producer


... four of the brightest young stars in classical music today.
We are enjoying another golden era thanks to Quartet Integra.
—Martin Beaver, First Violin, Tokyo String Quartet
QUARTET INTEGRA

QUARTET INTEGRA

Beethoven • Ligeti • Lefkowitz

Ludwig van Beethoven

	String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Op. 135	24:24
1.	I Allegretto	6:51
2.	II Vivace	3:24
3.	III Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo	7:03
4.	IV Der schwer gefaßte Entschluß	7:05
	(Grave - Allegro - Grave ma non troppo tanto – Allegro)	

György Ligeti

	String Quartet No. 2	20:20
5.	I Allegretto	4:46
6.	II Sostenuto, molto calmo	4:03
7.	III Come un meccanismo di precisione	3:30
8.	IV Presto furioso, brutale, tumultuoso	1:57
9.	V Allegro con delicatezza	6:07

David S. Lefkowitz

10.	***Green Mountains, Now Black***	15:05

Recording session Zipper Hall, Colburn School　l to r: Kyoka Misawa, Rintaro Kikuno, Ye Un Park, Itsuki Yamamoto

Producer's notes:

Yarlung Records returned to Zipper Hall at Colburn School in April, 2025 to record the debut album for **Quartet Integra** toward the end of the quartet's 3-year residency in Los Angeles. They had just returned from acclaimed performances in Wigmore Hall in London. The quartet left again after our recording for summer concerts (and a little bit of family time) in Asia before moving to Paris and Hannover in the autumn. Quartet Integra begins a two year residency in Paris at the Centre Européen de Musique de Chambre and will continue study with Oliver Wille at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater, und Medien in Hannover. We will miss the Quartet badly in Los Angeles and hope they return soon.

l to r: Ye Un Park, Rintaro Kikuno, Kyoka Misawa, Itsuki Yamamoto photo: Rintaro Kanemoto

This extraordinary young ensemble, Kyoka Misawa and Rintaro Kikuno on violins, Itsuki Yamamoto on viola, and cellist Ye Un Park play Classical, Romantic, Contemporary and Renaissance music equally well. In fact, we explore all four eras in this recording.

We begin with Beethoven's last published work, String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Opus 135, written in 1826. Beethoven wrote this quartet at the height of his Romantic powers, but the piece looks back with irony and nostalgia to his classical period.

Next, Quartet Integra tackles Ligeti's 1968 ground-breaking Sonata No. 2, which they played for me at their audition and which won me over immediately. Kyoka, Rintaro, Itsuki and Ye Un find beauty and repose in this seat-belts-required 20-minute work full of extended techniques and mid-20th-Century sound world while communicating humor and transcendent energy. Kyoka said "When people hear the name Ligeti, many tend to associate it with contemporary music and assume it will be difficult to listen to. But in reality, that's not the case. Especially the String Quartet No. 2, which we're performing this time — it's wild and destructive, yet it holds a kind of breathtaking beauty. It feels almost like watching a movie." Mike Wechsberg, an audience member at our special live concert recording session, commented heartily how "Ligeti is not the sort of music I normally like, but THIS was magnificent! Bravo Quartet Integra!"

We ended the concert with *Green Mountains, Now Black,* a new piece by David S. Lefkowitz which he completed in the spring of 2025. Donna Morton commissioned David's piece for Yarlung Artists and Quartet Integra through Yarlung's sister organization Coretet. Donna and her group have steadfastly

Kyoka Misawa

supported new chamber music including from composers Caroline Shaw, Diego Schissi (who won a Latin GRAMMY® nomination for *Nene*, which he wrote for Yarlung's Sibelius Piano Trio), Jamie Thierman, Eric Nathan and Benjamin Taylor among others. Donna serves on the boards of both Yarlung Artists and Coretet, and we relished the opportunity to collaborate again as Coretet celebrates its 10th Anniversary and Yarlung celebrates its 20th.

Colburn's President Sel Kardan, Director of Artistic Administration Nick Gianopoulos and Yarlung Special Advisor and Colburn Professor Martin Beaver[1] rolled out the red carpet for Yarlung's return to Zipper Hall. Working in this magnificent acoustic space with Colburn's friendly and supportive staff is always a treat, as twelve or fifteen earlier successes with Yarlung musicians in Zipper Hall attest. These recordings include David Fung's *Evening Conversations*, Janaki String Trio, *Orion*, Sasha Cooke's *If You Love for Beauty*, albums with Smoke & Mirrors percussion ensemble, and others.

Russell Ward joined Yarlung for the fourth time as underwriter and executive producer for Quartet Integra. Russell spends his leisure time chomping at the bit for fabulous new projects and opportunities to explore the richness of music and his perception of music as an expression of the cosmos at atomic and quantum levels. Yarlung fans will remember *Symmetria Pario: Creation* with Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto and Vienna-based pianist Joonas Ahonen for whom Russell commissioned six new works from composers including Clarice Assad, Yuko Mabuchi and Hannah Kendall that explored similar themes.

[1] Martin Beaver joined the faculty at Colburn School a month after the final summer concert of Tokyo String Quartet in 2013. Martin served as Tokyo Quartet's First Violin for eleven years.

Russell Ward

Ludwig van Beethoven, as he was nearing his death, left to us a last piece of music - his opus 135 - referencing past and future in the unfolding of a dense, complex, multilayered potential, and his own imminent return to the cosmos from which he came: what must be.

György Ligeti, in his second string quartet, seems to reference the cosmos itself: its beginning in minute fluctuations of energy; the symmetry-breaking emergence of distinct particles, spun into atoms, stars, galaxies, and clusters; the accelerating expansion of space against the deceleration due to gravity.

David Lefkowitz's *Green Mountains, Now Black* depicts in music the forming and breaking of human relationships, and the tragic burning of neighborhoods in Los Angeles during the fires of early 2025. The beauty of the music, interleaved with sometimes disturbing tones, communicates the depth of bonds that could not be broken, and may become the impetus for rebuilding. Human beings are neighbors on a single planet that formed from the debris - gas and dust - of exploding stars. The bond that connects us is the DNA of our single species. This is analogous to the connection that occurs between particles in an entangled ensemble, possibly including parts of the DNA molecule itself. Such particles share the same underlying state; a change in the state of one changes the state of the others accordingly, like musical notes referenced to the same tonic. Our planet, indeed our galaxy, is a tiny ensemble of particle-waves in the vastness of the cosmos. Its nature - and ours - is such that we as humans cannot live in isolation. We are connected, among other ways, by music.

Beethoven wrote his last major composition, String Quartet No. 16 Opus 135, in 1826. This was his final statement in his groundbreaking series. Opus 135 premiered in 1828, performed by Ignaz Schuppanzigh and his famous ensemble, a year after Beethoven died. When the members of Quartet Integra suggested we record this work on their debut album instead of Schubert's "Rosamunde" Quartet written only two years earlier, I initially demurred. Who needs yet another superb performance of Beethoven's final masterpiece?" I complained. "Who needs yet another Rosamunde?" Quartet Integra cellist Ye Un Park responded within milliseconds. She had a point, and I'm glad we recorded the Beethoven instead, at least on Quartet Integra's first Yarlung album. The ensemble had just performed Beethoven's first string

Ye Un Park

quartet in London's Wigmore Hall, as well as "Rosamunde," and they were game to expand their horizons and capitalize on their "Beethoven High." They also wanted to utilize the superb acoustics at Colburn School while the quartet was still living in Los Angeles, and we knew Zipper Hall would do the Beethoven special justice.

Our recording concludes with David S. Lefkowitz' *Green Mountains, Now Black*. David's piece offers quotations from Monteverdi's earliest extant opera *Orfeo* (one of my favorites in operatic literature) and additional quotations from Monteverdi's final opera *The Coronation of Poppea*, including its magical and ever-so recognizable love duet between Poppea and the emperor Nero at the end of the opera.[2]

Rintaro Kikuno

[2] Which may not actually have been written by Monteverdi given that he had died at the time, but let's not quibble.

Instead of merely transposing my favorite arias, choral passages and this famous duet for string quartet, David wrote a work that explores the very nature of what it means to be a string quartet. And he experiments with the genre, pushes boundaries, and incorporates his own despair witnessing the burning of much of Los Angeles in the spring of 2025. David and his wife Laurie could see flames and smoke not too far away from their home as he composed this work. Nero himself famously allowed a good chunk of downtown Rome to burn, exercising (and bragging about) his dubious leadership in the process. David layers Octavia's farewell to her beloved city with the giddy love duet between Octavia's husband, the emperor, and his mistress Poppea, to tell the story of David's own distress while writing the piece. *Green Mountains, Now Black* not only refers to Monteverdi himself (Green Mountain) but the fire which turned so many of our spring green mountains to char in Los Angeles.

Despite David's gloom and worry during our fires, his iridescent string writing shows itself proudly and his many glorious and lyrical passages outnumber the darker ones.

As musicians, the members of Quartet Integra communicate superbly with audiences and with each other as they explore the depths and details[3] of these musical scores.

[3] After attending a rehearsal, Russell related his conversation with Kyoka to me and elaborated that rather than using music simply to mimic the sounds of nature, Ligeti applied his musical craft as a part of nature, with rhythms, harmonics, and melodic contours suggestive of the behavior of natural systems and even as a model for these natural systems. Quartet Integra embodies this connection and dissolution as they continue to thrive in Asia and Europe after their residency in California.

With generous support from Sel, Nick and Martin at Colburn School, we worked with Quartet Integra on April 13-15, 2025 and ended our recording session with a live concert for invited guests from the Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society on April 15th. You can enjoy videos of this concert on YouTube's YarlungChannel.

Itsuki Yamamoto

Fellow recording engineer and equipment designer Arian Jansen and I used SonoruS Holographic Imaging technology in the analog domain to refine the stereo image, Yarlung's SonoruS ATR12 to record Agfa-formula 468 analog tape, the Merging Technologies HAPI to record 256fs DSD in stereo and surround sound and the SonoruS ADC to record PCM. We used our friend Ted Ancona's AKG C24 microphone previously owned by Frank Sinatra, and Yarlung Audio vacuum tube microphone amplification designed and built by Elliot Midwood.

Arian Jansen and Bob Attiyeh

Quartet Integra
at Colburn School

photo: Abby Mahler

In closing, it was Donna Morton and Martin Beaver who suggested Yarlung support Quartet Integra, and Martin coordinated their audition. The Quartet has been lauded as the most exciting ensemble to emerge from Japan (and Ye Un from Korea) since the famous Tokyo String Quartet formed in 1969 at Juilliard. I love a certain symmetry here: two of the non-Japanese-born musicians playing as members of Tokyo String Quartet were Yarlung Special Advisor Martin Beaver, who became principal violin in 2002, and Clive Greensmith, who joined Tokyo as cellist in 1999. Both Martin and Clive performed with Tokyo Quartet until the ensemble gave their final concerts in 2013, and now Martin and Clive co-direct Chamber Music at Colburn School and have mentored the four members of Quartet Integra. Before their Colburn residency, Quartet Integra won a four-year fellowship with Suntory Hall's Chamber Music Academy where they were coached by Tokyo Quartet members Koichiro Harada, Kikuei Ikeda and Kazuhide Isomura. This is generational integrity and communication worthy of Kyoka, Rintaro, Itsuki and Ye Un.

l to r: Kyoka Misawa, Itsuki Yamamoto photo: Rintaro Kanemoto

As we celebrate Yarlung's 20th Anniversary, we are enjoying thinking back to our original inspiration. We began working with young musicians starting international concert careers and sharing their transformative performances with the world. Yarlung Records takes its name from the Yarlung Valley in Central Tibet, which legend holds as a meeting place between heaven and earth. It is in this valley, at the site of Yambulakhang Castle in our Yarlung Records logo, where Heaven and Earth touched in order to transform humanity. What could be a better metaphor for the transformative power of great music? I feel a deep connection between this mythical name for our record label and Quartet Integra. Hearing them play and working with these four good-natured and talented people reminded me why we created Yarlung Records in the first place.

l to r: Ye Un Park, Rintaro Kikuno photo: Rintaro Kanemoto

Despite my earlier comment, Quartet Integra is not a Japanese ensemble. Three of their members come from Japan and one from Korea, but they are inherently international. Quartet Integra lived in California these past years, and as indicated will spend the next several years in France and Germany. Their ties to the famous Tokyo String Quartet increase the Japanese-ness of Quartet Integra, but Tokyo String Quartet was actually founded in 1969 at Juilliard in New York City, not Japan. In planning their album cover, an image of the Toyosaki Kompira Shrine Torii Gate[4] on the west coast of Hokkaido jumped out at us, and reflected Quartet Integra's refreshing vitality. As does the inspiration for the name of Yarlung Records, a Torii gate symbolizes a portal to the sacred in Shintoism connecting everyday reality with transcendence.

—Bob Attiyeh, producer

Quartet Integra at Colburn School photo: Abby Mahler

[4] Phil Evenden uploaded this photograph on January 10th, 2025 and generously made it available for public use. Thank you Phil. The photograph of the vermillion Fushimi Inari Shrine from Kyoto on our last page comes courtesy of Vincent M A Janssen.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:
Russell Ward

RECORDING ENGINEERS:
Bob Attiyeh and Arian Jansen

MASTERING ENGINEERS:
Steve Hoffman, Arian Jansen, Bob Attiyeh

DSD MASTERING ENGINEER:
Tom Caulfield

Yarlung server technician: Jami Francis

Additional album photography: Rintaro Kanemoto, Abby Mahler, Phil Evenden, Vincent M A Janssen

Graphics and Layout: MikeDesign

QUARTET INTEGRA

Beethoven · Ligeti · Lefkowitz

YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIYEH, PRODUCER

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Executive Producer
Russell Ward