

CECILIA STRING QUARTET

Min-Jeong Koh, violin
Sarah Nematallah, violin
Caitlin Boyle, viola
Rachel Desoer, cello

Hailed for its “powerful” (Chicago Sun-Times) and “dauntingly perfect” (Berliner Zeitung) performances, the Cecilia String Quartet performed from 2004 to 2018 for leading presenters around the world as one of Canada’s most celebrated classical ensembles. Engagements included performances at such renowned venues as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Berlin Konzerthaus, Beethoven-Haus in Bonn Germany, Prague’s Rudolfinum, the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., Bing Concert Hall at Stanford University, and London’s Wigmore Hall. CSQ’s live concert recordings have been broadcast on more than a dozen international public radio networks, including Australia (ABC Classical FM), Canada (CBC/SRC), the United States (WQXR), Germany (DeutschlandRadio), and England (BBC Radio 3).

The CSQ has recorded four albums for ANALEKTA. The group’s debut album of music by Dvořák in 2012 was acclaimed for its “deeply felt imperativeness” (The Strad), and its 2013 recording featuring music by Janáček, Berg, and Webern, was applauded for “unleashing the ecstasy and angst of the music” (Gramophone Magazine). The Quartet’s 2016 recording of string quartets by Felix Mendelssohn was nominated for a JUNO Award, and was named as one of Gramophone Magazine’s 10 Best Mendelssohn Recordings.

Prize-winners at several international competitions, including Osaka (2008) and Bordeaux (2010), the Cecilians were awarded First Prize at the 2010 Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC), where they also won the prize for the best performance of the commissioned work. Their commitment to new works can be seen through their project Celebrating Canadian Women in Music, a spotlight on a ‘quartet’ of immensely talented female Canadian composers that involved four new commissions that the CSQ premiered and performed across Canada, the United States, and Europe.

Enthusiastic educators and mentors to the next generation of chamber musicians, the CSQ members have individually held teaching posts at festivals, conservatories, and universities across Canada and the United States. As the James D. Steward Ensemble-in-Residence at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music from 2016 to 2018, the CSQ members were each adjunct professors who worked with music performance majors. The group also engaged in collaborative projects with the Composition Department and Department of Humanities. Initiatives developed by the CSQ at the University of Toronto include the Music Mentorship Program, and the String Quartet Composition Competition.

Deeply committed to outreach, the CSQ began developing educational presentations on classical music and the string quartet while it served as String-Quartet-in-Residence at San Diego State

University from 2007 to 2009. Over the course of their 14 year career the group conducted hundreds of educational presentations across Canada, the United States, Italy, and France. The Quartet presented for a wide variety of organizations, such as the Monarch School for Homeless Youth, Veteran's Village for Homeless Veterans, Learning Through the Arts at the RCM, and the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory. The CSQ also developed a series of concerts called Xenia Concerts that were customized to appeal to, and be welcoming of, children on the autism spectrum and their families. This organization is now a registered charity under the direction of CSQ violinist Sarah Nematallah. More information can be found at www.xeniaconcerts.com.

Min-Jeong Koh plays on a ca. 1767 Joannes Baptista Guadagnini violin, and Rachel Desoer performs on a 1929 Carlo Giuseppe Oddone cello, both on loan from an anonymous donor.

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