

Meet the String Quartet

featuring



THALEA STRING QUARTET

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Meet the Thalea String Quartet

“Thalea never failed to deliver a stirring performance” - Calgary Herald

Recently named the Doctoral Fellowship String Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Maryland, the Thalea String Quartet is dedicated to bringing timeless music to audiences from all walks of life. From living rooms to concert stages worldwide, Thalea aims to connect with audiences on a musical, emotional, and personal level, from first-time listeners to string quartet aficionados. Top prize-winners at both the 2018 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and the 2018 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition, Thalea was chosen as the Ernst Stiefel Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts for the 2019/20 season.

Visit www.thaleastringquartet.com to read up on all things Thalea!



Learn about the string quartet!

A string quartet is a group of four musicians who play together. The instruments in a string quartet are two violins, one viola, and one cello. The reason that a double bass is not used is that it would sound too loud and heavy.

String Quartet Fun Facts

- String quartets are the most popular form of chamber music.
- Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) wrote many string quartets, making it a very popular form; all four parts were very clear and individual.
- Mozart also wrote lots of string quartets and dedicated some of them to Haydn! Three of Mozart’s later ones were written for the King of Prussia who played the cello well, so Mozart gave the cello lots of difficult music to play.
- By the time Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was growing up string quartets treated each of the four instruments as important. Beethoven wrote 16 string quartets.
- By Beethoven’s time – most composers were writing string quartets!

Now it’s time to learn about melody and harmony!

MELODY

Do you ever wonder why there are certain songs that just keep running through your mind? The **melody** of a song is what you keep hearing over and over again.

A melody in music is a group of notes of various pitches (how high or low a note sounds) which are played one after another. Together they make a tune in the same way that a group of words make a sentence.

Some music has more than one melody happening at the same time. If the other melody only happens sometimes, then the second melody is called a **countermelody**.

HARMONY

In music, melody contrasts with **harmony**. Composers often think of a melody and then add harmony to it.

Harmony is when you have multiple pitches being played at the same time. If you think about a rock band, the guitar is typically providing the harmony.

When we talk about harmony, we're generally talking about chords, which occur any time you have three or more notes played at the same time. You can also think of this as an **accompaniment**.

Listening

Pick a piece of music to closely listen to. Listen online, CBC radio, or from a CD. Find the melody - write about what you heard!

What piece/song did you choose? Who was the composer/artist? _____

How long is the melody? Can you sing it? _____

Imagine a story or movie, now imagine the melody starts playing, draw a picture of what is happening:



Meet the instruments:

THE VIOLINS

The violin is the smallest member of the string family, which means it has the highest pitch. There are two violins in a string quartet, but they each play a different part.

First Violin

If you think of a string quartet like a choir, the violin would be the soprano voice.

The violins often carry the melody, particularly the first violin.

Fun fact: Back in the day, string quartets were named after the first violinist!



Second Violin

Second violins are also a soprano voice, but will often support the first violin harmony by playing it in a lower pitch.

Another name for this is **accompaniment** and counter melody.

To sum up: the second violin provides a rhythmic or harmonic support, but can also be the star of the show!

RECORDING PROJECT

Find a song or piece of music that you love and “accompany” it in a creative way, either on your instrument, with your voice, or on a found object.

Share your video with your teacher!

THE VIOLA



Violas, slightly larger instruments than violins, put out a slightly deeper pitch and tone than the violin. As such, they're perfect foils to play rhythmic or harmonic accompaniments to the violins, leaving the second violins free to contribute to the melody. It is considered an 'inner voice'.

Yet that doesn't mean the viola never gets to shine!

The shape of the violin and viola is basically the same—what's the big difference between them? How does that difference (size) affect the sound?

THE CELLO

Lower in pitch and capable of deeper, warmer tones, the cello is a melodic force that rivals the violin.

Due to its richer tones, the cellos often provide counterpoint melodies to the violins. Yet the cello's versatility also means it can be used to perform harmonic accompaniment to the violins. It also carries the 'bass line'.

The cello has the same shape as the violin and viola, but it is too big to hold under your chin, so the player must rest it on the floor on an end pin.

Fun fact: the cello's sound is considered to most closely resemble the human voice!



Felix Mendelssohn



Mendelssohn was a child prodigy. He was already composing great music when he was a teenager. He wrote music for orchestra, piano, organ as well as chamber music and music for singing.

Also, He was a good friend of Queen Victoria! Queen Victoria chose Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' for her daughter's wedding. This is why the 'Wedding March' is so popular at weddings today!



Watch [Thalea's recording of Mendelssohn's String Quartet in F minor, op. 80, 1st mvt. on Youtube](#), or listen to the media files from the Debut Atlantic website, from CBC radio, or from a CD. Close your eyes and listen actively with your imagination.

Describe characteristics of the music (was it loud? soft? fast? slow?).

Describe the mood/character of what you listened to (was it happy? sad? scary? angry?).

How does listening to this music make you feel? Describe the particular sounds that the instruments make.
