

THALEA STRING QUARTET

SHORT BIO

The Thalea String Quartet brings their signature vibrancy and emotional commitment to dynamic performances that reflect the past, present, and the future of the string quartet repertoire while celebrating diverse musical traditions from around the world. Fueled by the belief that chamber music is a powerful force for building community and human connection, the Thalea String Quartet has performed across North America, Europe, and China, and has appeared at the Kennedy Center, Massey Hall, and Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall. They have shared the stage with luminaries of the chamber music world, including members of the Emerson, Brentano, and St. Lawrence String Quartets, and they have performed alongside celebrated artists including Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw, violist Lawrence Power, acclaimed Canadian band BADBADNOTGOOD and visionary R+B artist Charlotte Day Wilson.

Committed to shaping and contributing to the future of the string quartet repertoire, the Thalea String Quartet has premiered dozens of new works and has collaborated on new commissions with composers including Osvaldo Golijov, Paola Prestini, Anthony R. Green, Akshaya Avril Tucker, and Tanner Porter.

Winners of the 2021 Ann Divine Educator Award from the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the members of the Thalea String Quartet have been celebrated for their innovative approach to education and community engagement.

Christopher Whitley (violin) is from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Kumiko Sakamoto (violin) is from Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada; Lauren Spaulding (viola) is from San Antonio, Texas; and Alex Cox (cello) is from South Palm Beach, Florida.

LONG BIO

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

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Winners of the 2021 Ann Divine Educator Award from the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the members of the Thalea String Quartet have been celebrated for their innovative approach to education and community engagement. The Thalea String Quartet has presented masterclasses and workshops at institutions across North America, including the Berkeley College of Music, the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, and San Francisco State University. They have presented lectures and led discussions at institutions including the University of Maryland, Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, and Wayne State Medical School in Detroit, where they presented a workshop on non-verbal communication to first year medical students alongside the Emerson String Quartet. Committed to youth mentorship and community music education, the Thalea String Quartet served as teaching artists for Washington Performing Arts from 2022-2024. The ensemble served as faculty and artistic advisors for the inaugural 2023 Fischhoff Summer Chamber Music Intensive.

The Thalea String Quartet served as the Stewart String Quartet in Residence at the University of Toronto for the 2024-2025 academic year. They were the Doctoral Fellowship String Quartet at the University of Maryland from 2020-2023 and have held fellowship positions at the University of Texas at Austin and the San Francisco Conservatory. They served as Associated Artists at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Waterloo, Belgium for the 2019-20 season and were the 2019-20 Ernst Stiefel Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts. They are the resident ensemble at the Lakes Area Music Festival and were visiting artists at the Garth Newel Music Center in 2023. The Thalea String Quartet were top prize winners at the 2018 Fischhoff Competition and 2018 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition.

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Christopher and Kumiko perform on instruments generously on loan from the Canada Council for the Arts Musical Instrument Bank. Christopher performs on a 1900 Stefano Scarampella violin and Kumiko performs on an 1820 Joannes Franciscus Pressenda violin.