



FORMOSA
QUARTET

Jasmine Lin, violin **Wayne Lee**, violin
Matthew Cohen, viola **Deborah Pae**, cello



Winners of the First Prize and Amadeus Prize at the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, the **FORMOSA QUARTET** has been hailed as **“spellbinding” (The Strad)** and **“remarkably fine” (Gramophone)**, and has given critically acclaimed performances at the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, the Da Camera Society of Los Angeles, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, the National Concert Hall in Taipei, Wigmore Hall in London, die Glocke Bremen, and the Kammermusiksaal at the Berliner Philharmonie.

For two decades and counting, the Formosa Quartet has forged uncharted musical terrain in performances that go **“beyond the beautiful and into the territory of unexpectedly thrilling... like shots of pure espresso” (MUSO Magazine)**. The founding members’ interest in championing Taiwanese music and Indigenous cultures has since expanded to include the exploration of the rich folk traditions and heritages found in America today. Whether in its uncompromisingly exploratory approach to the standard quartet literature; its socioculturally probing American Mirror program concept; or its unique Sets curated from its collection of folk, pop, jazz, and poetry arrangements, the Formosa Quartet is committed to an insatiable search for the fresh and new in string quartet expression.

The Formosa Quartet undertakes a variety of residencies at organizations and institutions across North America and Asia. In Fall 2023, they begin their appointment as **Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Houston’s Moores School of Music**. They have also been appointed the **M. Thelma McAndless Distinguished Professorship in the Humanities** by Eastern Michigan University during the 2023-2024 season. The ensemble serves as Faculty Quartet-in-Residence at the National Youth Orchestra of Canada (NYOC) and has enjoyed residencies at Art of Élan; Rice University, University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, San Diego; San Diego State University, and Heidelberg University.

formosaquartet.com

The Formosa Quartet has played a leading role in actively commissioning new works, contributing significantly to the modern string quartet repertory. FQ's 2019 milestone album *From Hungary to Taiwan* includes premiere recordings of three Formosa commissions: Lei Liang's *Song Recollections*, Dana Wilson's *Hungarian Folk Songs*, and Wei-Chieh Lin's *Five Taiwanese Folk Songs*. Other works composed for the quartet include pieces by Dana Wilson, Wei-Chieh Lin, Shih-Hui Chen, and Clancy Newman.

The members of the Formosa Quartet - **Jasmine Lin, Wayne Lee, Matthew Cohen, and Deborah Pae** - have established themselves as leading solo, chamber, and orchestral musicians. With degrees from the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute of Music, New England Conservatory, Colburn Conservatory, and the Cleveland Institute of Music, they have performed in major venues throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe and have been top prizewinners in prestigious competitions such as the Paganini, Primrose, Fischhoff, and Naumburg competitions. As chamber musicians, they have appeared regularly at the Marlboro, Kingston, Santa Fe, and Ravinia festivals, as well as at Lincoln Center, La Jolla Summerfest, Caramoor, and Chamber Music Northwest. The members of the Formosa Quartet currently serve on faculty at Eastern Michigan University, Roosevelt University, and Heifetz International Music Institute. They have previously taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Taos School of Music, and the Juilliard School.

Formed in 2002 when the four Taiwanese-descended founders came together for a concert tour of Taiwan, the Formosa Quartet's cultural identity has since expanded to include broader American, pan-Asian, and Eastern European roots. **Their name "Formosa" is taken in its most basic sense: Portuguese for "beautiful."**

The Formosa Quartet forms an octet with violins Andrea Guarneri (1662) and Joseph Curtin (2001), a Peter Westerlund viola (2014), and a Vincenzo Postiglione cello (1885).

PRESS

"I was *not* astonished at the Formosa Quartet's commanding performance of Skye's quartet: from first violinist Jasmine Lin's bravura flourishes to second violinist Wayne Lee's lithe cantabile lines, to Cohen's bold solos and cellist Deborah Pae's burnished, inviting bass lines. Their performances with Art of Elan in 2015 and 2016 were most impressive, and their return is truly welcome."

-Ken Herman, *San Diego Story*

"Bold and intense, like shots of pure espresso...the performances go beyond the beautiful and into the territory of unexpectedly thrilling."

-MUSO Magazine

"The Formosa Quartet plays with exquisite definition... A glistening, vivacious, witty, encore-like performance."

-Classic FM

"They deliver almost technically flawless performances, taking particular care to ensure that textures are as crystal-clear as possible throughout each work. This approach is particularly effective in the Mozart K. 387, which is given a marvelously elegant performance full of youthful freshness and exuberance in the outer movements with a naturally warm lyricism in the Andante Cantabile. It also illuminates the rhythmic complexities of the Scherzo of Debussy's Quartet presented here with spellbinding virtuosity."

-BBC Music Magazine

"They also convey with seasoned skill the drama, poetry and lyricism of Schubert's *Quartettsatz* and inject Wolf's *Italian Serenade* not only with breathtaking vitality and athleticism but also with a true joie de vivre."

-Strad Magazine

PROJECTS

AMERICAN MIRROR



FQ's *American Mirror*

program encourages our audience to examine common and sometimes narrow assumptions about American music. What defines music as “American”? What does American music sound like? What do American composers look like? This program is colored by the vivid sounds of disparate American eras and landscapes, and by the peoples who are integral to but often overlooked in American society. Some of the pieces will be drawn from well-known repertoire while others will likely be unfamiliar. Inspired by Derrick Skye's *American Mirror* – a piece that represents the ongoing amalgamation of cultures in the U.S., including refugees, immigrants, enslaved peoples, and Indigenous peoples who have always called this place their home – our program takes our audience on a journey through the complex, rich history of American music, thus holding a mirror to the sound of America today.

SAMPLE PROGRAM 1

Derrick Skye: American Mirror Part I
Dana Wilson: Mirror for String Quartet and Narration
–
American Roadmap*
Derrick Skye: American Mirror Part II

SAMPLE PROGRAM 2

Caroline Shaw: Valencia
Barber: String Quartet Op. 11
Gershwin: Lullaby
–
Gershwin: It Ain't Necessarily So
George Walker: Lyric for Strings
Gabriella Smith: Carrot Revolution

**A selection of iconic songs that shaped American popular music and culture arranged by some of today's most celebrated composers. Selections do not appear on printed program and will be announced from the stage.*

FORMOSA QUARTET SET



SAMPLE PROGRAM

Haydn: String Quartet in C, Op. 33, No. 3 ("The Bird")
A Formosa Quartet Set*

- o Minor Swing (arr. Grappelli/Jasmine Lin)
- o Autumn in New York (arr. Wei-Chieh Lin)
- o Dana Wilson: Shakatong
- o Nunca es Suficiente (arr. Clancy Newman)
- o Dana Wilson: Apart
- o Shine (arr. Grappelli/Jasmine Lin)

–

Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110

The Formosa Quartet Set is an assortment of shorts from the FQ's collection of folk, pop, jazz, and poetry arrangements. Curated especially for each concert, our Set is like a flight of desserts after a main course, offering a chance for audiences to "let their hair down", tap their toes, and enjoy the string quartet medium in somewhat less- conventional contexts. Poetry inspired by a French grammar book? A #1 pop song from Mexico, Turkey, Nigeria, or Ukraine, translated into quartet-speak? That 40's tune your grandparents danced to? A musical salute to jazz bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen? Join us for this ride through nostalgia, groove, and whimsy!

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UNPOPPED



SAMPLE PROGRAM

Mozart: String Quartet No. 14 in G major, K. 387
Clancy Newman: Pop-Unpopped: #1 Songs from Around the World

–

Brahms: String Quartet No.1 in C minor Op.51

This program revolves around a new work commissioned by the Formosa Quartet from cellist and composer extraordinaire Clancy Newman. Mr. Newman's work will comprise a set of six pieces inspired by these hit tunes from around the world:

1. Ariana Grande: 7 Rings (USA)
2. Davido: Assurance (Nigeria)
3. Melek Mosso: Keklik Gibi (Turkey)
4. Natalia Lafourcade: Nunca Es Suficiente (Mexico)
5. Kazka: Plakala (Ukraine)
6. Jolin Tsai: Ugly Beauty (Taiwan)

STRING QUINTETS WITH VIOLIST HSIN-YUN HUANG



SAMPLE PROGRAM

Mendelssohn: String Quintet in B-flat major, Op. 87
Britten: Phantasy in F minor for string quintet
–
Brahms: String Quintet in F major, Op. 88

Two glorious and widely beloved works, composed at the pinnacle of Mendelssohn's and Brahms' compositional maturity, bookend the program. Sandwiched in between is a subtle, taut, lyrical work by the 19-year-old Britten. The program achieves an exquisite balance between fiery vitality and reflective revelation, while illuminating the rich beauty of the viola string quintet.

STRING QUINTETS WITH CELLIST PETER WILEY



SAMPLE PROGRAM

Schubert: Quartettsatz, D. 703
–
Schubert: String Quintet in C major, D. 956

After rewarding past collaborations at the Smithsonian and at Columbia University, we are once again joined by legendary cellist Peter Wiley in a program of introspective masterpieces, both in the key of C, that flanked the last decade of Schubert's tragically short but astonishingly fruitful compositional life.

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