

# *American String Quartet & Ariel Quartet - BIOS*

## **American String Quartet**

Internationally recognized as one of the world's finest quartets, the American String Quartet has spent decades honing the luxurious sound for which it is famous. The Quartet is celebrating its 35th anniversary in the 2010-2011 season, and, in its years of touring, has performed in all fifty states and has appeared in the most important concert halls worldwide. Their presentations of the complete quartets of Beethoven, Schubert, Schoenberg, Bartók, and Mozart have won widespread critical acclaim, and their MusicMasters Complete Mozart String Quartets, performed on a matched quartet set of instruments by Stradivarius, are widely considered to have set the standard for this repertoire.



Resident quartet at the Aspen Music Festival since 1974 and at the Manhattan School of Music in New York since 1984, the American has also served as resident quartet at the Taos School of Music, the Peabody Conservatory, and the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The Quartet's diverse activities have also included numerous international radio and television broadcasts, tours of Asia, and performances with the New York City Ballet, the Montreal Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra. The 2009-2010 season featured the Quartet's debut at the prestigious Casals Festival, and in the summer of 2010 the Quartet returned to Beijing for its fifth residency at the Great Wall International Music Academy. The 2010-2011 season features a reprise of the Quartet's debut tour of Israel in 2009; after their inaugural visit the Americans were immediately reengaged for concerts in Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv. Additionally, in Fall 2010 the Quartet will embark on its 40th European tour, with appearances in Germany, Switzerland, Spain, and Italy.

The centerpiece of the Quartet's 35th-anniversary celebrations will be the Summer 2010 release of the group's first new CD in several years; entitled "Schubert's Echo," it pairs Schubert's monumental last quartet with works bearing its influence from Second Viennese masters Alban Berg and Anton Webern. Itself a reprise of the Quartet's acclaimed Merkin Concert Hall performance last January, this repertoire posits that the creative line from the First to the Second Viennese Schools is continuous - and evident when these works are heard in the context of each other. The CD is on the NSS Music label, a new enterprise by Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg devoted to riskier, intellectual projects that are frequently overlooked by major labels. The American's additional extensive discography can be heard on the Albany, CRI, MusicMasters, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, and RCA labels.

The American's innovative approach to concert programming has won them a number of notable residencies in recent years, including "Beethoven the Contemporary" at the University of Michigan, "The Six Mozart Viola Quintets" at the Aspen Music Festival with Guarneri Quartet violist Michael Tree (broadcast live nationally via Chicago superstation WFMT), and a four-year cycle entitled "4-5-6..." at Princeton University, where the Quartet performed the complete quintets and sextets of Mozart and Brahms, joined in each concert by renowned guest artists.

As champions of new music, the American has given numerous premières, including Richard Danielpour's Quartet No. 4, commissioned by Kansas City Friends of Chamber Music, and Curt Cacioppo's "a distant voice calling," commissioned by Arizona Friends of Chamber Music. In January 2009, the Quartet premiered Tobias Picker's String Quartet No. 2 in New York City in celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Manhattan School of Music, and in May 2011 the Americans will premiere Glen Cortese's Four Dances for String Quartet and String Orchestra, a work commissioned by the Oregon Mozart Players.

Formed when its original members were students at The Juilliard School, the American String Quartet's career began with the group winning both the Coleman Competition and the Naumburg Award in the same year. Individually, the members devote additional time outside the Quartet's active performance and teaching schedule to solo appearances, recitals, and master classes.

## Ariel Quartet

Characterized by its youth, brilliant playing, and soulful interpretations, the Ariel Quartet has quickly earned a glowing international reputation. Previously the resident ensemble in the New England Conservatory's prestigious Professional String Quartet Training Program, the Quartet recently celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Formed in Israel, the Quartet moved to the United States in 2004 to continue its professional studies. The Grand Prize winners of the 2006 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, they have also been awarded First Prize at the international competition "Franz Schubert and The Music Of Modernity" in Graz, Austria (2003). After winning the Székely Prize for their performance of Bartók, as well as the overall Third Prize at the Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2007, the *American Record Guide* described the Quartet as "a consummate ensemble gifted with utter musicality and remarkable interpretive power" and called their performance of Beethoven's *Quartet Op. 132* "the pinnacle of the competition".



The Ariel Quartet has performed extensively in Israel, Europe, and North America, including such venues as the Louvre in Paris, Kaisersaal in Frankfurt ("...a tour de force," said *Frankfurter Allgemeine*), Jordan Hall in Boston, and the Washington Performing Arts Society, the Corcoran Gallery, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In the 2010-2011 season, the Quartet participated in a Beethoven cycle at the National Gallery, and joined the competitors of the 13th Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition for the Chamber Music round in May 2011. The quartet spent most of the 2010-2011 season in Basel, Switzerland, where they had the opportunity to work with Walter Levin, the founding first violinist of the famous LaSalle Quartet.

Highlights of the 2011-2012 season include residencies for the Perlman Music Program and El Paso Pro Musica, and performances in Europe and throughout North America including concerts in New York, Washington, D.C., and Gainesville, FL. The Ariel has remained committed to performing extensively in Israel, and returns home frequently to appear in concert.

In addition to performing the traditional quartet repertoire, the Ariel Quartet regularly collaborates with many Israeli and non-Israeli musicians and composers, including pianists Roman Rabinovich, Alexander Gavrylyuk and Yaron Kohlberg; the Jerusalem String Quartet; composers Matan Porat, Matti Kovler, and Menachem Wiesenberg; clarinetist Moran Katz; violist Roger Tapping; and the Zukerman Chamber Players. Additionally, the Ariel was quartet-in-residence in the Steans Music Institute at the Ravinia Festival for two consecutive years.

The Quartet received extensive scholarship support for the members' studies in the United States from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, Dov and Rachel Gottesman, and the Legacy Heritage Fund. Most recently, they were awarded a substantial grant from The A. N. and Pearl G. Barnett Family Foundation, and were named the 2011 Barnett Fellows.