



CIOMPIQUARTET

Since its founding in 1965 by the renowned Italian violinist Giorgio Ciompi, the Ciompi Quartet of Duke University has delighted audiences and impressed critics around the world.



In a career that spans five continents and includes many hundreds of concerts, the Ciompi Quartet has developed a reputation for performances of real intelligence and musical sophistication, with a warm, unified sound that allows each player's individual voice to emerge.

In recent years, the Ciompi Quartet has performed across the U.S. from Washington State to California, Texas, New York, Washington DC and New England, and abroad from China and Taiwan to France, Italy, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Serbia and Albania. In June 2024 the Quartet performed in Vienna at a celebration of that composer's 150th anniversary sponsored by the Arnold Schoenberg Center. The Quartet has performed at the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Detroit, North Carolina's Eastern Music Festival and Highlands Chamber Music Festival, and at Monadnock Music in New Hampshire.

The Ciompi Quartet's commitment to creative programming often mixes the old and the brand new in exciting ways. Most recently, the quartet engaged composers Alan Chan and Andrew Waggoner to

write new works for string quartet and pipa, in a collaboration with pipa player Min Xiao-Fen called "An American in Shanghai: Forgotten Stories."

Its extensive catalog of commissions includes many that the group continues to perform on tour. Close ties to composers such as Paul Schoenfield, Stephen Jaffe, Scott Lindroth, and Melinda Wagner have produced important contributions to the repertoire; the quartet recently premiered Stephen Jaffe's Third String Quartet and two new quintets by Lindroth: "Schley Road" for quartet and saxophone, and his Cello Quintet. A recording of recent commissions will appear on the New Focus label in 2025. Other recent recordings are on Toccata Classics (a quartet by 19th century violin virtuoso Heinrich Ernst), and Naxos, which released "Journey to the West" by Chiayu Hsu; also on Naxos online is a recording of the quartets of Paul Schoenfield, including the popular "Tales from Chelm." Numerous other discs are on the CRI, Arabesque, Albany, Gasparo, and Sheffield Lab labels, with music from Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, up through the present.

All the Ciompi Quartet members are Professors at Duke, where they lead the string studios and chamber music program, and perform across campus in traditional and non-traditional venues.



Praise for The Ciompi String Quartet

"They produce warm, clear sonorities that change color or emotional atmosphere as the composer requests....To each piece, the Ciompi applied a spectrum of expressive nuances, judicious pacing and a firm sense of structure....Once the players entered the score's sonic world, no distractions could interrupt the probing artistry. Here was music-making of remarkable poise and control. Rhythms were buoyant, articulations crisp and dynamics gauged to elegant result." **Donald Rosenberg, Cleveland Plain Dealer**

"The sound of the strings was one of poised, easy musicianship within a loosened (but never loose) blend that allowed some individuation from each player...The performance was classically proportioned but warm; tempos were moderate and unhurried; and the compositional mechanics were transparently laid out." **Ronald Broun, The Washington Post**

"What was so touching was that the music came across with no exaggeration, no applied virtuosity, but a real sense of its importance to each of the four players. The Ciompi Quartet can play Haydn for me any time." **Ken Winters, Toronto Globe and Mail**

"The result was impressive: perfection such as we are only accustomed to hearing on mastered recordings, combined with a musical spontaneity that allows for personal expression despite the constraints of ensemble playing." **"Der Rheinphalz", Mannheim, Germany**

"The four members of the Ciompi were able to render with impeccable precision even the most complex points of the text: beauty in the midst of the storm which in its many manifestations reaches the serenity of art. Technical precision, cleanliness of sound, mastery of the bow." **La Sicilia, Italy**

Programs and Projects

Each year the Ciompi offers string quartet programs that balance old and new in interesting ways. They understand the importance of tailoring their offerings to each location and audience and are always happy to work with presenters to find a suitable program.

In addition, the quartet has invested itself in several recent collaborations that it is eager to re-create on tour. Some examples are:

Vienna to LA

W.A. Mozart: String Quartet in B-flat, K589

Arnold Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 4

Erich Korngold String Quartet No. 2

In a concert celebrating composer Arnold Schoenberg's 150th anniversary, The Ciompi Quartet performs a program of works connected by time and place. Mozart's Vienna produced Quartets like his K. 589: formally perfect, deeply learned, but with an effortless, grace. Erich Korngold and Arnold Schoenberg, both raised in Vienna, were polar opposites by the mid-1930s when they arrived in Los Angeles: Schoenberg was an avant-garde modernist and a revered figure in the Academy (UCLA); Korngold was a composer of lush romantic scores that were sought after by Hollywood. Both wrote brilliant quartets that gave their Viennese origins a 20th-century incarnation.

Featuring guest pianist Ieva Jokūbavičiūtė

William Grant Still: Lyric Quartet

W.A. Mozart: String Quartet in B-flat, K589

John Dowland: Three Songs (arr. Andrew Waggoner)

Mieczyslaw Weinberg: Piano Quintet, Op. 18 (1944)

Sol Variations

Sofia Gubaidulina String Quartet No. 2 (1987)

Shelley Washington: Middleground for String Quartet

Josef Haydn String Quartet Op 74 No. 1 in C Major

Grażyna Bacewicz: Piano Quintet No. 1 (1952)

Sofia Gubaidulina and Shelley Washington both organized their works around Sol (the pitch G), but they go in remarkably different directions. Gubaidulina probes the question "existence vs. essence" whereas Washington explores a place she calls "Home of the Heart, Heart of the Home." Revered Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz gave us one of the best piano quintets of the era: romantic, dramatic, forward-looking.

Night Music

Henri Dutilleux: Ainsi la Nuit (Thus the Night) for String Quartet (1976)

Béla Bartók: String Quartet #4

Gabriel Fauré: La bonne chanson with Jennifer Johnson Cano, and Ieva Jokūbavičiūtė, piano

Bela Bartók's term for music that depicts of the sounds and emotions of the night—is the central episode in the arch form of his Quartet #4. Fifty years later, Henri Dutilleux returned to the same nocturnal landscape in his string quartet *Ainsi la nuit*. The concert brightens after intermission with Fauré's setting of Paul Verlaine's love poetry, which floods the stage with glorious daylight. Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano, one of the stars of her generation, brings virtuoso musicianship to a collaboration with the Ciompi and Duke colleague, pianist Ieva Jokūbavičiūtė.



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