



2025/2026

78th SEASON

**Friends of Chamber Music present the Jasper String Quartet in concert
at the Vancouver Playhouse, Tuesday, October 28, 2025, at 7:30 pm**

JASPER STRING QUARTET

**J Freivogel and Karen Kim – violins
Andrew Gonzalez – viola
Rachel Henderson Freivogel – cello**



Due to unforeseen circumstances the Esmé Quartet is unable to play for us this season. In their place we are thrilled to present the Jasper String Quartet.

Celebrated as one of the preeminent American string quartets of the twenty-first century, the prizewinning Jasper String Quartet is hailed as being “flawless in ensemble and intonation, expressively assured and beautifully balanced” (Gramophone). The Quartet is highly regarded for its “programming savvy” (ClevelandClassical.com), which strives to evocatively connect the music of underrepresented and living composers to the canonical repertoire through thoughtful programs that appeal to a wide variety of audiences.

Formed at Oberlin Conservatory, the Jasper String Quartet launched their professional career in 2006 while studying with James Dunham, Norman Fischer, and Kenneth Goldsmith as Graduate Quartet-in-Residence at Rice University. In 2008, the Quartet continued its training with the Tokyo String Quartet as Yale University’s Graduate Quartet-in-Residence. That same year, the Quartet swept through the competition circuit, winning the Grand Prize and the Audience Prize in the Plowman Chamber Music Competition, the Grand Prize at the Coleman Competition, First Prize at Chamber Music Yellow Springs, and the Silver Medal at the 2008 and 2009 Fischhoff Chamber Music Competitions. They were the first ensemble honoured with Yale School of Music’s Horatio Parker Memorial Prize, an award established in 1945, and selected by the faculty for “best fulfilling...lofty musical ideals.”

A recipient of Chamber Music America’s prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award (2012), the Quartet’s playing has been described as “sonically delightful and expressively compelling” (The Strad). The ensemble has released eight albums, including its most recent release, *Insects and Machines: Quartets of Vivian Fung*, named CMA’s 2025 Album of the Year. Strings Magazine praised the Quartet on the album as “intensely dramatic throughout demonstrating both their advocacy of new music and their transcendent mastery.” The Quartet’s 2017 release, *Unbound*, was named by The New York Times as one of the year’s 25 Best Classical Recordings.

The Quartet regularly collaborates with some of today’s leading artists, including tenor Nicholas Phan, clarinetist Derek Bermel, pianists Amy Yang, Natalie Zhu and Myra Huang, and the Jupiter String Quartet. Collaborations and commissions with living composers include Lera Auerbach, Derek Bermel, Patrick Castillo, Vivian Fung, Brittany J. Green, Aaron Jay Kernis, Akira Nishimura, Reinaldo Moya, Michelle Ross, Caroline Shaw and Joan Tower.

The Quartet will release new recordings in 2026, including *Lamenting Earth* with tenor Nicholas Phan and pianist Myra Huang, Reinaldo Moya's *Pájaros Garabatos* with soprano Maria Brea, and an album of chamber works by Richard Festinger. In celebration of its Twentieth Anniversary in 2026-27, the Quartet has commissioned new works from composers Patrick Castillo, Brittany J. Green, Reinaldo Moya and Michelle Ross.

The Jasper String Quartet is passionate about connecting with audiences beyond the concert hall and has performed hundreds of outreach programs in schools and community centers across the US. The Quartet is the Professional Quartet-in-Residence at Temple University's Center for Gifted Young Musicians and is also Director of the annual Saint Paul Chamber Music Institute. In addition, the Quartet is regularly invited to conduct short-term residencies at colleges and universities, and in partnership with presenters. Past residencies include those at Trinity University (San Antonio), Michigan State University, BYU Idaho, Swarthmore College, Oberlin Conservatory, Credo Music, Caramoor Center for Music and Arts, and the University of Iowa.

The Jasper String Quartet is named after Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada, and is represented by Suono Artist Management.

Programme

String Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 76 No 5

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Allegretto - Allegro

Largo cantabile e mesto

Menuetto: Allegro

Finale: Presto

This is one of the most characteristic of Haydn's quartets. It was composed at the height of his career, after his second triumphant return from London. Simple, melodious, spiritual, a masterpiece from the philosophical smiling older gentleman genius, this quartet is a prize among many of the eighty-three quartets that he wrote. The six Quartets covered under Opus 76 are known collectively as the Erdödy Quartets, each of which is outstanding. We heard Opus 76 No 4 in concert two weeks ago played by the Aris Quartett. This Quartet is sometimes nicknamed "Largo" because the second movement with that tempo dominates the quartet both in length and in character.

This quartet is somewhat unusual in that it does not open with the usual first movement sonata-allegro form, as do the two works which surround the fifth quartet. Here, Haydn employs a combination of ternary and variation forms. The **Allegretto: Allegro** movement opens with a tuneful theme and set of variations on that theme.

The lyrical quality continues in the second movement. Scored in the unusual key of F-sharp minor, this is one of the most richly harmonized creations ever written. Written in sonata form, the **Largo**, marked "cantabile" (in a singing style), is a lovely melancholy song.

The third movement, **Menuetto: Allegro**, in D major and D minor, is a standard minuet and trio, while the fourth movement's D major, cut time **Presto** is in an irregular sonata form.

Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout (string quartet) (2001)

Gabriela Lena Frank (1972-)

"Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout for string quartet" draws inspiration from the idea of *mestizaje* as envisioned by the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas, where cultures can coexist without the subjugation of one by the other. As such, this piece mixes elements from the western classical and Andean folk music traditions.

"Toyos" depicts one of the most recognizable instruments of the Andes, the panpipe. One of the largest kinds is the breathy toyo which requires great stamina and lung power, and is often played in parallel fourths or fifths.

"Tarqueada" is a forceful and fast number featuring the tarka, a heavy wooden duct flute that is blown harshly in order to split the tone. Tarka ensembles typically also play in fourths and fifths.

"Himno de Zampoñas" features a particular type of panpipe ensemble that divides up melodies through a technique known as hocketing. The characteristic sound of the zampoña panpipe is that of a fundamental tone blown flatly so that overtones ring out on top, hence the unusual scoring of double stops in this movement.

"Chasqui" depicts a legendary figure from the Inca period, the chasqui runner, who sprinted great distances to deliver messages between towns separated from one another by the Andean peaks. The chasqui needed to travel light. Hence, I take artistic license to imagine his choice of instruments to be the charango, a high-pitched cousin of the guitar, and the lightweight bamboo quena flute, both of which are featured in this movement.

"Canto de Velorio" portrays another well-known Andean personality, a professional crying woman known as the llorona. Hired to render funeral rituals even sadder, the llorona is accompanied here by a second llorona and an additional chorus of mourning women (coro de mujeres). The chant Dies Irae is quoted as a reflection of the comfortable mix of Quechua Indian religious rites with those from Catholicism.

"Coqueteos" is a flirtatious love song sung by gallant men known as romanceros. As such, it is direct in its harmonic expression, bold, and festive. The romanceros sing in harmony with one another against a backdrop of guitars which I think of as a vendaval de guitarras ("storm of guitars").

— Gabriela Lena Frank

Intermission

String Quartet in G Minor, Opus 10 (1893)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Animé et très décidé

Assez vif et bien rythmé

Andantino, doucement expressif

Très modéré – En animant peu à peu – Très mouvementé et avec passion

Debussy's only string quartet, written for the Ysaÿe Quartet in 1893, is unique. It shows Debussy at the beginning of his career, clearly leading the way to a new kind of music. The whole-tone scale is an important element in the quartet's melodic line. The cool restraint and sensitivity suggest rather than state. Debussy was more concerned with the sensuous quality of the musical sound than with form and structure. This new music reflected the aims of the symbolist poets and painters who were called *impressionists* and along with *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* established the impressionistic style in music. In this quartet, the orthodox methods of development are still in evidence and the form of the individual movements conforms to the traditional pattern. However, there is also a feeling of great originality in Debussy's use of short melodic figures, of sustained trills, colourful tremolos and repeated notes. The music is characterized by refinement, elegance, delicacy of expression and by a variety of veiled colours unknown in earlier compositions.

The opening notes of the quick first movement are of overriding importance as they make up the germ cell from which the entire quartet unfolds and grows. Following the short motif and its repetitions, three other melodies are heard. The various themes are then heard in an imaginative procession of shapes and guises until the movement reaches its conclusion.

The second movement, a scherzo, is the most startling. In the combination of arco and pizzicato scoring and frenzy of cross rhythms, one loses track of any thematic thread and is forced to appreciate the texture alone. The result is almost orchestral in its variety and stands as the earliest model for quartet writers of the 20th Century, Webern and Bartok, for whom timbre assumed a dominant role.

After a false start by the second violin and viola, the Andantino opens softly singing a languid melody that gently rocks back and forth. The viola then presents two new themes, with the second worked up into an impassioned climax, before the quiet rocking theme returns.

The Finale opens quietly with the original motif, then grows more animated as the cello presents a fugue-like passage. A more rapid cluster-of-notes theme on the viola follows. Eventually, shared notes of both themes accompany the motif in a grandiose elongation. Finally, the scherzo rhythm begins an exciting coda which ends with a bounding run up to the final G major chord.

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Next concerts - both at the Vancouver Playhouse

Quatuor Modigliani

Tuesday, November 11, 2025 – 7:30 pm

Haydn: String Quartet in F Major, Opus 77 No. 2 “Lobkowitz”

Kurtág: String Quartet, Opus 13 “Microludes”

Brahms: String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Opus 51 No. 2

Cuarteto Casals

Sunday, February 1, 2026 – 3:00 pm

Arriaga: String Quartet No 3 in E-flat Major

Fabregas: Quartet “Fiery Earth” (2024) – Canadian premiere

Schubert: String Quartet in G Major, Opus 161 D 887

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