

BIOGRAPHY

CECILIA STRING QUARTET

Min-Jeong Koh | Sarah Nematallah | Caitlin Boyle | Rachel Desoer
www.gamisimonds.com www.ceciliastringquartet.com

Hailed for their "powerful" (Chicago Sun-Times) and "dauntingly perfect" (Berliner Zeitung) performances, the CSQ perform for leading presenters in North America and Europe. Past engagements include performances at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Berlin Konzerthaus, Prague's Rudolfinum, the Buffalo Chamber Music Society, and London's Wigmore Hall. Their live concert recordings have been broadcast on more than a dozen international public radio networks, including Australia (ABC Classical FM), Canada (CBC/SRC), the United States (WQXR), Germany (DeutschlandRadio), and England (BBC Radio 3). The Cecilia String Quartet is currently based in Toronto Canada where they are the James D. Stewart Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music.

In addition to performing, the CSQ records for ANALEKTA. Their debut album of music by Dvořák in 2012 was acclaimed for its "deeply felt imperativeness" (The Strad), and their 2013 recording featuring music by Janáček, Berg, and Webern, was applauded for "unleashing the ecstasy and angst of the music" (Gramophone Magazine). Their 2016 recording of string quartets by Felix Mendelssohn was nominated for a JUNO Award, and was named as one of Gramophone Magazine's 10 Best Mendelssohn Recordings.

Prize-winners at several international competitions, including Osaka (2008) and Bordeaux (2010), they were awarded First Prize at the 2010 Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC), where they also won the prize for the best performance of the commissioned work. To celebrate the start of their second decade as an ensemble, the CSQ has initiated two exciting new projects that are currently ongoing:

- **Xenia Concerts:** a concert series designed to appeal to, and be welcoming of, children on the autism spectrum and their families. This series has been designed to embody the CSQ's philosophy that everyone should have equal access to quality chamber music performances.
- **Celebrating Canadian Women in Music:** a spotlight on a 'quartet' of immensely talented female Canadian composers, involving four new commissions that the CSQ will premiere and record.

Enthusiastic educators and mentors to the next generation of chamber musicians, the CSQ has held teaching posts at festivals, conservatories, and universities across Canada and the United States, both as an ensemble and as individuals. Each member is an adjunct professor at the University of Toronto where they work with music performance majors, as well as engage in collaborative projects with the Composition Department and Department of Humanities. Initiatives developed by the CSQ at the University of Toronto include the Music Mentorship Program, and the String Quartet Composition Competition.

Deeply committed to outreach, the CSQ began developing educational presentations on classical music and the string quartet while they were String-Quartet-in-Residence at San Diego State University from 2007-2009. Since that time they have performed hundreds of educational presentations across Canada, the United States, Italy, and France. They have presented for a wide variety of organizations such as the Monarch School for Homeless Youth, Veteran's Village for Homeless Veterans, Learning Through the Arts at the RCM, and the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory.

Min-Jeong Koh plays on a ca. 1767 Joannes Baptista Guadagnini violin, Sarah Nematallah plays on an 1851 Jean Baptiste Vuillaume violin, and Rachel Desoer performs on a 1929 Carlo Giuseppe Oddone cello, all on loan from an anonymous donor. Caitlin Boyle plays on a 2002 viola by Joseph Curtin. The quartet would like to thank the anonymous donor, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council for their generous support.

Min-Jeong Koh, violin

Praised for her “extreme versatility” and “simply unbeatable beauty of tone” (Berliner Zeitung), Min-Jeong Koh maintains a busy schedule as a concert violinist, violist, and as an educator. Prior to joining the quartet, she was the second prize winner of the 2006 Eckhardt-Gramatté Competition, where she was also awarded the Prize for Best Performance of the Commissioned Piece, a winner at Canada Council’s 2009 Musical Instrument Bank Competition, and a soloist with the Banff Festival orchestra.

A passionate educator, Ms. Koh has extensive experience teaching violin, was a panel speaker at a Solution Focused Brief Therapy Association conference, and worked closely with Mimi Zweig in the String Pedagogy Workshop at Indiana University. Her dedication to performance and music education has led to an invitation to the national honour society, Pi Kappa Lambda, and most recently Ms. Koh was invited to teach undergraduate violin students at Wilfrid Laurier University to fulfill a sabbatical post. Ms. Koh holds a Doctoral of Musical Arts Degree from the University of Toronto where she researched the proliferation of Canadian string quartets. Through the generosity of a private benefactor, Ms. Koh performs exclusively on a ca. 1767 Joannes Baptista Guadagnini violin.

Sarah Nematallah, violin

Applauded by the Globe and Mail (Toronto) for her "velvety sound" and the "fine-grained fluidity of her playing", Sarah Nematallah is a founding member of the Cecilia String Quartet. She has performed internationally as an orchestral and chamber musician for organizations such as the Verbier Festival and the Banff Summer Arts Festival, and has appeared as a soloist in Canada, the United States, and Spain. During her studies in violin performance, Ms. Nematallah was the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, including the University of Toronto William and Phyllis Waters Graduating Award given to a graduating student deemed by the university to have the greatest potential for making an important contribution to the field of music.

Committed to education, Ms. Nematallah completed a Masters Degree in Music Education at the University of Toronto, where she researched topics related to music philosophy and cognition, especially connections between music and language. She has given presentations on topics related to music performance and education for organizations such as the Canadian Arts Presenting Organization (CAPACOA) and Chamber Music America. Ms. Nematallah plays on an 1851 Jean Baptiste Vuillaume on loan from an anonymous donor.

Caitlin Boyle, viola

Passionate about the viola, Caitlin Boyle has been playing this instrument since the age of three. She began her studies at the Hamilton Suzuki School of Music and subsequently completed her Bachelor of Music in Viola Performance at the Glenn Gould School; an Artist Diploma at the Hochschule für Musik München; a Masters of Music in Viola Performance at San Diego State University; a Graduate Diploma at McGill University; and a Doctor of Musical Arts Degree at the University of Toronto. Her enthusiasm for chamber music was fostered at the Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute and the Domaine Forget Chamber Music Sessions, and continued to grow through support of artists such as Richard Lester, Terence Helmer, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet. Inspired to continue playing chamber music, she joined the Cecilia String Quartet in the spring of 2006. Delighted also to play orchestra, she has played with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, the Schleswig-Holstein Orchestral Academy, the Munich Symphony Orchestra, and currently plays with Sinfonia Toronto. Joseph Curtin made her viola in 2002.

Rachel Desoer, cello

Rachel Desoer is a cellist from Hamilton, Ontario. She has studied at the Juilliard School, Oberlin College, McGill University and the Banff Centre. She graduated from Oberlin in 2008 with a Bachelor of Music. Her main focus has been chamber music but she has also had the opportunity to perform solo works and play in orchestras. She is currently the cellist of the Cecilia String Quartet. This ensemble tours extensively around the world and records on the Analekta label. Rachel now performs on the 1929 Carlo Giuseppe Oddone cello on loan from an anonymous donor.