



short bio

Winner of the Gold Medal at the 2012 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and Prizewinner in the 2012 London International String Quartet Competition and 2013 Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition, the **Tesla Quartet** was formed at The Juilliard School in 2008. The *London Evening Standard* called their rendition of the Debussy Quartet “a subtly coloured performance that balanced confidently between intimacy and extraversion,” and *The Strad* has praised them as “technically superb.” From 2009 to 2012, the quartet held a fellowship as the Graduate String Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Colorado-Boulder, where they studied with the world-renowned Takács Quartet.

The quartet has enjoyed a busy performing schedule, both in the States and abroad, with appearances in Austria, England, and France. Recent engagements include concerts in Chicago, Montréal, Steamboat Springs, Long Island, Salt Lake City, Lake Tahoe, Tulsa, and the quartet’s French debut in Provence through the ProQuartet European Chamber Music Center. Highlights of the 2014-15 season include the quartet’s West Coast debut as well as a return to London for a performance at Wigmore Hall.

Inspired by Nikola Tesla’s words, “Though free to think and act, we are held together, like the stars in the firmament, with ties inseparable,” the Tesla Quartet views music as the incredible, binding force, and strives to create meaningful connections with their audiences. The Tesla Quartet is Ross Snyder (violin), Michelle Lie (violin), Edwin Kaplan (viola), and Serafim Smigelskiy (cello).



PHOTO BY ARTHUR MOELLER

press

“The Tesla Quartet (US) followed with Debussy’s String Quartet, the fleeting atmospheres of which have defeated some of the world’s finest. This was a subtly coloured performance that balanced confidently between intimacy and extraversion. A real sense of four players listening to each other did not obstruct a natural rapport with the audience.”

–*London Evening Standard*

“There was poise, mystery and elegance in the first movement, and playing in the second that was at once strong and delicate, the staccato perfectly judged to both speak and bite, the fortis-

simo outbursts raw and vehement...The Tesla was technically superb in Debussy’s Quartet, its performance full of urgency, colour and subtle dynamics. This was a masterclass in quartet technique, with great momentum in the last movement.”

–*The Strad*

“What was really impressive was their refined interpretative skill. They can delve into a score and bring out the essence of the music with their nuanced playing. Their technical acumen is equally strong, as is their musicality. In short, they are anyone’s dream team quartet.” –*Reichel Recommends*

SPIRITS TO ENFORCE *art to enchant*

www.arielartists.com ∞ booking@arielartists.com



program offerings

SATURATION AND SENSATION

The inspiration for this incredible Tesla Quartet program came from Caroline Shaw's description of her quartet, *Valencia*, which she describes as "literally about how awesome it is to eat an orange. Saturated color and flavor." Likewise, her two other quartets, *Punctum* and *Entr'acte*, create innovative, colorful textures through unconventional techniques. As the father of the string quartet genre, Haydn saturated the repertoire with 68 works, and his influence can still be found to this day. Rounding out the program is Ravel's magical *String Quartet in F major*. Ever the consummate colorist, Ravel creates a new aural landscape with a palette of rich harmonies and sensuous melodies.

Works to be performed on the "Saturation and Sensation" program include:

Haydn, *String Quartet in F minor, Op. 20, No. 5*

Caroline Shaw, *Punctum*

Shaw, *Entr'acte {a minuet & trio}*

Shaw, *Valencia*

Ravel, *String Quartet in F major*

PERSPECTIVES ON FOUR STRINGS

The Tesla Quartet offers a variety of different approaches to the standard string quartet repertoire. Of course, while the string quartet as we know it today was a product of the Classical era, it wasn't the first genre for two violins, viola, and cello. Johann Friedrich Fasch, a Baroque composer and contemporary of J. S. Bach, scored some sonatas for this instrumentation, and here the Tesla Quartet presents his *Sonata a quattro in D minor* as a precursor to the genre. Haydn managed to imbue each of his string quartets with freshness and originality, despite writing 68 of them over the course of his career. His *String Quartet in F minor, Op. 20, No. 5*, draws on inspirations from the past while reimagining them in a new context. Pulitzer Prize winner Caroline Shaw creates music that looks simultaneously forward and backward, and the result is both whimsical and emotionally penetrating. *Punctum*, inspired by a passage from Roland Barthes's 1980 book *Camera Lucida*, is an experiment in expectation and fulfillment, based on a chorale from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. A modern take on a traditional quartet movement, *Entr'acte* is Shaw's "Tim Burton-inspired warped version of a Haydn Minuet & Trio." Finally, Tesla presents Beethoven's monumental *String Quartet in C-sharp minor, Op. 131*, a visionary work in which the composer explores the struggles of the human spirit.

Works to be performed on the "Perspectives on Four Strings" program include:

Johann Friedrich Fasch, *Sonata a quattro in D minor*

Caroline Shaw, *Punctum*

Shaw, *Entr'acte {a minuet & trio}*

Haydn, *String Quartet in F minor, Op. 20, No. 5*

Beethoven, *String Quartet in C-sharp minor, Op. 131*

COMMEMORATION

"Where words fail, music speaks," wrote Hans Christian Andersen, and with this program the Tesla Quartet presents deeply personal musical tributes. On the death of Stravinsky, whose *Concertino* and *Three Pieces for String Quartet* open the pro-



PHOTO BY ARTHUR MOELLER

SPIRITS TO ENFORCE *art to enchant*

www.arielartists.com ∞ booking@arielartists.com



program offerings (cont.)



PHOTO BY ARTHUR MOELLER

gram, Russian composer Alfred Schnittke penned his *Canon in memoriam Igor Stravinsky*, a contemplative work whose simplicity of expression is a fitting testament to the 20th-century icon. Dmitri Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8*, which was originally dedicated to "the victims of fascism and war" (referring in particular to the bombing of Dresden in World War II), is now understood to be an autobiographical work that is both deeply personal and universally transcendent. Finally, proving that music can express joy as well as suffering, we present Alexander Borodin's beautifully lyrical *String Quartet No. 2*, which he wrote for his wife on the occasion of their 25th anniversary.

Works to be performed on the "Commemoration" program include:

Stravinsky, *Concertino and Three Pieces for String Quartet*
Schnittke, *Canon in Memoriam Igor Stravinsky*
Borodin, *String Quartet No. 2 in D major*
Shostakovich, *String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110*

MUSICAL FUSION

Folk music has always been an inspiring source of material for classical musicians, as exemplified in this program from the Tesla Quartet. Haydn's proximity to Hungary, by way of his employment at the Esterházy court, meant that he had regular interaction with Hungarian musicians. The finale of Haydn's *String Quartet in D major, Op. 20, No. 4* (Menuet alla Zingarese, or "Gypsy Minuet") shows the composer's love of the folk idiom.

Perhaps the one composer who made the greatest use of material from folk music in his own work was Béla Bartók. Bartók spent years traveling throughout Eastern Europe collecting the traditional music of the peasant population far from the urban centers. His thorough study and exploration of this folk music led to his development of a unique musical language that

assimilated many different styles of music into one voice. His *String Quartet No. 6*, written just before his emigration from Hungary to the U.S. during World War II, is a perfect synthesis of chromaticism and folksong modality that is typical of his late style.

Dvořák began his final string quartet, *Op. 105*, while living in New York and working as the director of the National Conservatory of Music. His homesickness is apparent in much of his musical output of this period, as evidenced by the many Czech folk melodies that found their way into his works. At that time, Dvořák was also interested in Native American melodies, and even suggested that the future of American classical music lay in African American spirituals.

Works to be performed on the "Musical Fusion" program include:

Haydn, *String Quartet in D major, Op. 20, No. 4*
Bartók, *String Quartet No. 6*
Dvořák, *String Quartet No. 14 in A-flat major, Op. 105*



additional offerings

MASTER CLASS AND CHAMBER MUSIC COACHING

The Tesla Quartet is delighted to share their knowledge through teaching. A master class can last one to two hours, depending on the number of groups involved, and Tesla will give ensembles the opportunity to play a movement of their choice. Through detailed attention to the score, the Tesla Quartet will help guide students in discovering and highlighting the character of the music in addition to addressing more technical issues such as ensemble performance, intonation, and balance. Members of the quartet can also provide individual coaching to groups in a more private setting.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The Tesla Quartet is happy to offer community enrichment programs for a variety of audiences. Tesla has an extensive background bringing their music to schools, libraries, retirement and assisted living centers, coffee shops, and even public transit ter-

minals. The quartet presents exciting and informative programs that can be tailored to a particular venue or audience. Typical programs include introducing the instruments and classical music to young children, storytelling through music, and lecture/performances on specific repertoire. Through these programs, the Tesla Quartet aims not only to educate, but to excite the creative potential of the listeners.

MEET THE TESLAS

The tradition of the string quartet is rooted in conversation, and the Tesla Quartet is pleased to be able to continue that dialogue beyond the stage. Possible formats for more personal interaction include an informal post-concert Q&A or a meet-and-greet in the lobby. Topics for discussion could address Tesla's concert repertoire and programming, group dynamics, and their interpretive process.



PHOTO BY ARTHUR MOELLER

SPIRITS TO ENFORCE *art to enchant*

www.arielartists.com ∞ booking@arielartists.com