

Cypress String Quartet

Cecily Ward, *violin*

Tom Stone, *violin*

Ethan Filner, *viola*

Jennifer Kloetzel, *cello*

Known for their elegant performances, the Cypress String Quartet's sound has been called "beautifully proportioned and powerful" by The Washington Post, and the ensemble has been singled out by Chamber Music Magazine as "a Generation X ensemble to watch." The Cypress (Cecily Ward, violin; Tom Stone, violin; Ethan Filner, viola; and Jennifer Kloetzel, cello) formed in 1996 in San Francisco and during its first rehearsals together created a now-signature sound through intense readings of J.S. Bach's Chorales. Built up from the bottom register of the quartet and layered like a pyramid, the resulting sound is clear and transparent, allowing the texture of the music to be discerned immediately.

The Cypress String Quartet's unusual approach to their career is informed by their fierce dedication to the ensemble. From the beginning, the foursome made a commitment to each other to only perform as a quartet (meaning that they would not take on teaching or freelance jobs as orchestral members or with other chamber ensembles). They realized early on that they needed to create their own performance opportunities and organized as a non-profit – the Cypress Performing Arts Association.

Now, on top of a busy schedule of over 90 concerts each year at venues across the US and internationally, including major concert halls and series such as the Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Stanford Lively Arts, Krannert Center and Ravinia Festival, the Cypress String Quartet is a vibrant member of the San Francisco arts community and is dedicated to reflecting and enriching the city's cultural landscape. This season, the quartet returns for the fourth year to the Montalvo Arts Center for its signature Salon Series, which seeks to demystify classical music by exploring one work per concert through performance and discussion. Through its Call & Response commissioning and outreach program, the Cypress String Quartet has created a dialogue between the old masters and living composers, performing known and loved repertoire in a fresh context and introducing groundbreaking new works to the chamber music genre. Over just a decade, the Cypress String Quartet has commissioned and premiered more than 30 new works, four of which are now included on Chamber Music America's list of "101 Great American Ensemble Works."

The Cypress is recording the six quartets written by Beethoven between 1822 and 1826 (historically known as Beethoven's Late Period) for commercial release in three volumes. Volume one of the set was released in August 2009. Gramophone praised the disc as "revealing artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion." The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported, "The Cypress players converse with such rare sincerity as to make long-familiar music sound utterly fresh." The album was featured as one of The Denver Post's "Best discs of 2009." In its review of Volume Two - released in August 2010 - the Plain Dealer again praised the recordings, writing "In the forest of Beethoven recordings, the Cypress's are some of the mightiest trees." The third disc will be released during the Quartet's 15th Anniversary season, in 2011-12.

The Cypress Quartet members trained individually at institutions including The Juilliard School, Interlochen Arts Academy, Cleveland Institute of Music, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music. They play exceptional instruments, including violins by Antonio Stradivarius (1681) and Carlos Bergonzi (1733), a viola by Vittorio Bellarosa (1947), and a cello by Hieronymus Amati II (1701). The Cypress Quartet takes its name from the set of twelve love songs for string quartet, *The Cypresses*, by Antonin Dvořák.