

Cypress String Quartet | Full Biography

Known for its elegant performances, the Cypress String Quartet (Cecily Ward, violin; Tom Stone, violin; Ethan Filner, viola; and Jennifer Kloetzel, cello) has been praised by *Gramophone* for its “artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion,” and its sound has been called “beautifully proportioned and powerful” by *The Washington Post*. The Cypress Quartet was formed in San Francisco in 1996, and during its initial rehearsals the group created a 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.

During its fifteenth anniversary season in 2011-2012, the Cypress String Quartet is adding two new recordings to its ten-album discography. In November the Quartet releases *The American Album*, which includes Dvořák’s String Quartet No. 12 (“American”), Charles Griffes’ *Two Sketches Based on Indian Themes*, and Barber’s Quartet, Op. 11. In March, the Cypress completes its three-volume set of Beethoven’s Late Quartets. Volume three will include the groundbreaking Opus 132. Of volume one, released in 2009, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote, “The Cypress players converse with such rare sincerity as to make long-familiar music sound utterly fresh.”

The Cypress continues to maintain a busy national and international tour schedule, making appearances on concert series and in venues including Cal Performances, Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Stanford Lively Arts, Krannert Center and Ravinia Festival. Their collaborators include artists such as Leon Fleisher, Jon Nakamatsu, Awadagin Pratt, Gary Hoffman, Atar Arad, James Dunham, and Zuill Bailey. The ensemble is a vibrant member of the San Francisco arts community and dedicates itself to reflecting and enriching the city’s cultural landscape through collaborations with the DeYoung Museum and San Francisco Girls Chorus.

Through its signature *Call & Response* program the Cypress Quartet commissions and premieres new string quartets from both emerging and celebrated composers, asking them to write in response to established chamber repertoire. *Call & Response* creates a dynamic dialogue between the past and present, between performers and composers, and among audiences of all ages. The Cypress Quartet’s annual *Call & Response* concert at Herbst Theatre has earned a strong West Coast following; this major concert is preceded by performances throughout the Bay Area in community centers, unorthodox spaces, and schools. In addition, the Cypress frequently tours *Call & Response* repertoire, bringing these new works to cities across the country.

To date, the Cypress Quartet has commissioned and premiered over 30 pieces, four of which were chosen for Chamber Music America’s list of “101 Great American Ensemble Works.” Commissioned composers include Benjamin Lees, Jennifer Higdon, Kevin Puts, George Tsontakis, and Elena Ruehr.

The Cypress Quartet members received degrees from many of the world’s finest conservatories before coming together as a quartet. These include The Juilliard School, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music (London), The Cleveland Institute of Music, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. After a residency at the Banff Centre and a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Quartet Studies of the Aspen Music Festival, the Quartet coached intensively in London with the Amadeus Quartet. Cypress members count the Cleveland and Juilliard Quartets as some of their greatest influences.

The members of the Cypress Quartet 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 Cypressess*, by Antonin Dvořák.

The Cypress Quartet is managed by Christina Daysog Concert Artists. For more information, visit www.cypressquartet.com.