

The Harlem String Quartet

The **HARLEM QUARTET**, praised for its "panache" by *The New York Times*, is "bringing a new attitude to classical music, one that is fresh, bracing and intelligent," says the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. The quartet's mission is to advance diversity in classical music, engaging young and new audiences through the discovery and presentation of varied repertoire that includes works by minority composers.

Since its public debut in 2006 at Carnegie Hall, the New York-based ensemble has performed throughout the U.S. as well as in France, the U.K., Belgium, Panama, Canada, and recently in South Africa, where under the auspices of the U.S. State Department in May 2012 they spent two weeks on tour performing concerts and participating in outreach activities. Also in 2012 they completed their second year in the Professional String Quartet Residency Program at New England Conservatory and participated in NEC's string quartet exchange program in Paris, working with violinist Günter Pichler in a masterclass setting.

In addition to performing on chamber music series around the country, they have collaborated with such distinguished performers as violinist Itzhak Perlman; cellist Carter Brey; clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera; pianist Misha Dichter, with whom the quartet will make their Kennedy Center debut in February 2013; and jazz legends Chick Corea and Gary Burton, whom they will join for their six-month Hot House Tour, which begins at Tanglewood Music Festival in summer 2012. Later that year the quartet will make their performance debut with another jazz virtuoso, the British saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer Tim Garland.

Each member of the quartet is a seasoned solo artist, having appeared with such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Pops, and the Atlanta, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, National, New World, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras. As an ensemble they perform not only in chamber-music settings but with orchestra. Their most recent such collaboration was with Music Director Mei-Ann Chen and the Chicago Sinfonietta, where in June 2012 they gave the world premiere of Bernstein's *West Side Story* as arranged for string quartet and orchestra by Randall Craig Fleischer. The quartet will reprise their performance of that score in September 2012 with the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra under Fleischer's direction, and again in December 2012 with the Santa Fe Concert Association. Chicago Sinfonietta and the quartet have recorded the *West Side Story* arrangement, along with works for string quartet and orchestra by Michael Abels and Benjamin Lees, for a CD soon to be released on the Cedille Records label.

The Harlem Quartet has been featured on WNBC, CNN, the *Today Show*, WQXR-FM, and the *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. In 2009 they performed for President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House and appeared Christmas morning on NBC's *Today Show*. They made their European debut in October 2009 performing at the residence of the U.S. ambassador to the

U.K., and returned to Europe as guest artists and faculty members of the Musica Mundi International Festival in Belgium. In early 2011 they were featured guest artists at the Panama Jazz Festival in Panama City. In June 2012 they made their debut with the Montreal Jazz Festival.

Their recording career began in 2007 when White Pine Music issued *Take the "A" Train*, a release featuring the string quartet version of that jazz standard by Billy Strayhorn; the CD was highlighted that year in the November issue of *Strings* magazine. A second CD, featuring works of Walter Piston, was released in 2010 by Naxos. The quartet's third recording, released in early 2011, is a collaboration with pianist Awadagin Pratt and showcases works by American composer Judith Lang Zaimont. And two recording projects in collaboration with Chick Corea were completed at the end of the 2010-11 season.

The Harlem Quartet was founded in 2006 by The Sphinx Organization, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to building diversity in classical music and providing access to music education in underserved communities. The quartet is managed by Sciolino Artist Management in New York City.

Ilmar Gavilan, violin

Melissa White, violin

Jaime Amador, viola

Matthew Zalkind, cello

HARLEM QUARTET Acclaim

[Walter Piston Quartets No. 1, 3 & 5](#)

The first thing you notice in listening to this recording is the beautiful individual and ensemble sound of the Harlem Quartet.

— David Hurwitz, ClassicsToday.com

[Harlem Quartet as part of Newburgh Chamber Music](#)

Newburgh Chamber Music opened its new concert series with a remarkable group, the Harlem Quartet, only in its second year of existence yet already making its place on the musical map.

— James F. Cotter, Times Herald Record

[Young, black and Latino in a Concert for Diversity](#) The Harlem Quartet Played with panache. — Vivien Schweitzer, The New York Times

[Music in Review; Sphinx Chamber Orchestra](#)

The violinist Ilmar Gavilan and the violist Juan-Miguel Hernandez from the Harlem Quartet, an ensemble of Sphinx prizewinners, gave a commanding account of a Handel passacaglia, arranged by Johan Halvorsen. They were then joined by the other members of their quartet (the violinist Melissa White and the cellist Desmond Neysmith) for an exciting account of two movements from Wynton Marsalis's episodic and stylistically eclectic string quartet "At the Octoroon Balls."

— Anthony Tommasini, New York Times

[Sphinx Chamber Orchestra with the Harlem Quartet at Cerritos](#)

The overall feel was of understated elegance and the true beauty of the evening, excellent music aside, was that after five minutes of playing the audience had forgotten race and was enthralled by some superb young artists. The performances were as good as you would hear in any hall in America and several of the soloists may be seen on all of those stages before they are through.

— Glen Creason, Los Cerritos Community News

[Related LinkSphinx music program brings cultural diversity to classical music](#)

"An African-American girl came up to me after I played and she told me, almost in a whisper, like she didn't want anyone else to hear, 'I didn't know African-Americans played the violin.' I told her I didn't know that either when I was a kid."

— Christine G.K. LaPado, Chico News & Review

[The Sphinx Organization Performs at Carnegie Hall](#)

The orchestra gave a shapely, sumptuous reading of the first movement from Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings, with Damon Gupton conducting, as well as a vigorous, unconducted performance of the Presto from Mozart's Divertimento in F (K. 138).

— Allan Kozinn, The New York Times

[Seasoned musicians shine in group's debut](#)

From the strikingly beautiful extemporized version of the "Star Spangled Banner" to the emphatic finale of Michael Abels' "Delights and Dances," the debut concert by the Sphinx Chamber Orchestra yesterday in Orchestra Hall was an artistic triumph and a marvel of institutional collaboration.

— Sally Vallongo, Toledo Blade