

Argus Quartet



photo credit: Shervin Lainez

www.ArgusQuartet.com

AQ
2024-2025

BIOGRAPHY

The Argus Quartet's "vivacious foursome" (*The New Yorker*) is committed to bringing thoughtful and personal programs to both seasoned listeners and audiences new to classical music. The Quartet enjoys projects that celebrate collaboration, community, and risk-taking in venues of all shapes and sizes.

Praised for playing with "supreme melodic control and total authority" and "decided dramatic impact" (*Calgary Herald*), Argus has quickly emerged as one of today's most dynamic and versatile ensembles. Formed in Los Angeles in 2013, the Quartet has performed in some of the country's most prestigious venues and festivals, including Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, the Ravinia Festival, the Albany Symphony's American Music Festival, and Music Academy of the West. In 2017, Argus won First Prize at both the M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition and the Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition.

Highlights of the 2022-23 concert season included two appearances at Carnegie Hall, a return to Columbia University's Miller Theatre for its Pop-Up Concerts series, continued collaboration with composer-pianist-vocalist Samora Pinderhughes, and the launch of a new program consisting of works by Indigenous composers. Featuring a newly commissioned work by Pulitzer Prize finalist Anne Leilehua Lanzilotti, this program premiered in San Diego, Long Beach, and Denver in spring 2023.

Central to the Quartet's work is close collaboration with living composers. In 2022, Argus premiered Jessica Meyer's "Of Being," commissioned by Chamber Music America, at the Morgan Library. Past commissions include works by Katherine Balch, Donald Crockett, GRAMMY nominee Eric Guinivan, Hermitage Prize winner Thomas Kotcheff, and Guggenheim Fellowship recipient Juri Seo. Argus' recording of Seo's works for string quartet was released in May 2019 on Innova Recordings; December 2022 saw the release of Christopher Cerrone's "The Air Suspended" with pianist Shai Vosner on New Focus Recordings. The Quartet has received grants from the Koussevitzky Foundation, Concert Artists Guild, and the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts in support of their commissioning efforts.

Education and outreach are an important part of the Argus Quartet's mission. The Quartet has worked with students through residencies and masterclasses at Yale and Princeton, Temple University, James Madison University, Rockport Music, California State University Long Beach, and the Virginia Arts Festival. From 2020-2022, they were an ensemble in residence with Midori & Friends, regularly presenting interactive performances in New York City public schools.

From 2015-17, Argus served as the Fellowship Quartet in Residence at the Yale School of Music under the guidance of the Brentano Quartet, and from 2017-19 held the position of Graduate Resident String Quartet at the Juilliard School, where they worked closely with the Juilliard String Quartet. They have also held residencies at New Music on the Point working with the JACK Quartet, and at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts as the Ernst Stiefel Quartet in Residence.

THEMED PROGRAMS 2024-2025

Like a Flock of Birds

What do a string quartet and a flock of birds have in common? In *The Conference of the Birds*, Christopher Theofanidis was inspired by the “group logic” that characterizes a flock of birds in flight – “a kind of unity of movement and purpose in which all the parts are highly interdependent.” Likewise, a string quartet “flocks” – four individuals sometimes playing together, sometimes diverging from one another, but always with a shared sense of purpose, an interdependence. In different ways, the four works on this program take their inspiration from birds and the natural world, from Theofanidis’ musical depiction of a group of birds journeying toward enlightenment, to Haydn’s sunny early quartet in which birds seem to sing, chirp, and chatter with one another. Paul Novak’s *a string quartet is like a flock of birds* alternates rapidly between moments of unity and independence, while Juri Seo’s *Infinite Season*, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, features sounds of birds and other fauna as a year’s four seasons transform into one another.

Christopher Theofanidis: *The Conference of the Birds*
Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet in C Major, Op. 33 No. 3 “The Bird”
- Intermission -
Paul Novak: *a string quartet is like a flock of birds*
Juri Seo: *Infinite Season*

(Total Time: 82 min)

Home / Land

This program explores the concept of “home” through several different lenses. Shelley Washington’s *Middleground* remembers the composer’s childhood in Missouri and Kansas, while inti figgis-vizueta’s *Talamh (land)* recalls walking through “the rich and magical mountains, streams, and forests” of Ireland. Two Argus Quartet commissions tell stories of communities’ relationships to home and homeland. Leilehua Lanzilotti’s string quartet explores the Hawaiian concept of ahupua’a – land division centered around community needs. Joseph Bohigian’s *Rerooted*, for string quartet and electronics, draws on the recorded testimonies of over a dozen Armenian families to reflect the resilience of a community defined by exile, displacement, and the eventual return to a homeland. Benjamin Britten’s final string quartet, the last major work he completed, evokes a kind of philosophical “home” – it represents an almost spiritual distillation of the composer’s musical language, and a farewell to earthly existence.

Shelley Washington: *Middleground*
inti figgis-vizueta: *Talamh (land)*
Joseph Bohigian: *Rerooted*
- Intermission -
Leilehua Lanzilotti: *ahupua’a*
Benjamin Britten: *String Quartet No. 3 in G Major, Op. 94*

(Total Time: 77 min)

THEMED PROGRAMS 2024-2025 (CONT.)

ahupua'a

Centered around works by Indigenous composers exploring humans' relationship to the lands they live on, cosmology and temporality, and identity, this program highlights Pulitzer finalist Leilehua Lanzilotti's *ahupua'a*, written for the Argus Quartet with the generous support from the National Performance Network Creation & Development Fund Project. Also featured is Argus violinist Giancarlo Latta's *Ordinary Time*, written for the Quartet in 2023.

Leilehua Lanzilotti: *the space in which to see*
inti figgis-vizueta: *mayu: the great river*
Giancarlo Latta: *Ordinary Time*
figgis-vizueta: *Talamh (land)*
Lanzilotti: *ahupua'a*

(Total Time: 55 min)

Thresholds

"Thresholds" showcases works that exist on the cusp of something – pieces motivated by change, experimentation, exploration, newness. Written in his mid-20s, the set of six string quartets, Op. 1, was Joseph Bologne's first published work, in addition to being among the earliest such works by a French composer. The famous "Rosamunde" Quartet, on the other hand, is one of Schubert's last works in the genre, and was written at a time when the composer, confronting his own mortality, was beginning to leave *lieder* behind to focus on instrumental chamber music – some of the resulting works would be his finest achievements. Henry Purcell wrote a set of fifteen *Fantazias* for viols when he was twenty, likely as exercises in counterpoint, in a time when the genre of viol consort music was already going out of style. These are works of often extreme invention, with shocking harmonies and sudden changes in tempo. Most radically, Schoenberg's Second String Quartet is a watershed work in both Schoenberg's oeuvre and the history of the string quartet genre, through the addition of a soprano soloist in two movements. In it, Schoenberg begins to break from tonal and formal tradition, hinting at his ultimate abandonment of traditional tonality.

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de St. Georges: String Quartet Op. 1 No. 5 in G minor
Franz Schubert: String Quartet No. 13 in A Minor, "Rosamunde"
- *Intermission* -
Henry Purcell: selected *Fantazias*
Arnold Schoenberg: String Quartet No. 2, Op. 10 (with soprano Amber Evans)

(Total Time: 82 min)

REPERTOIRE 2024-2025

*Joseph Bohigian: *Rerooted*

Benjamin Britten: String Quartet No. 3 in G Major, Op. 94

inti figgis-vizueta: *mayu: the great river*

inti figgis-vizueta: *Talamh (land)*

Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet in C Major, Op. 33 No. 3, "The Bird"

*Leilehua Lanzilotti: *ahupua'a*

Leilehua Lanzilotti: *the space in which to see*

*Giancarlo Latta: *Ordinary Time*

*Jessica Meyer: *Of Being*

Paul Novak: *a string quartet is like a flock of birds*

Florence Price: String Quartet No. 1 in G Major

Henry Purcell: *Fantazias*

Arnold Schoenberg: String Quartet No. 2, Op. 10

Franz Schubert: String Quartet No. 13 in A Minor, "Rosamunde"

*Juri Seo: *Infinite Season*

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de St. Georges: String Quartet Op. 1 No. 5 in G minor

Germaine Tailleferre: String Quartet

Christopher Theofanidis: *The Conference of the Birds*

Shelley Washington: *Middleground*

* denotes an Argus Quartet commission, with generous support from organizations including New Music USA, National Performance Network, Chamber Music America, and the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress.

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