

New Zealand String Quartet

Helene Pohl & Monique Lapins, violin
Gillian Ansell, viola & Rolf Gjelsten, cello

Celebrating a remarkable career over 30 seasons, the New Zealand String Quartet enjoys acclaim for its insightful and exciting interpretations in live performances across five continents and on a distinguished collection of recordings on CD. The New Zealand String Quartet is known for its imaginative programming across a wide spectrum of repertoire and collaborations, and for its powerful connection with audiences of all kinds.

Hailed in The Strad for its “terrific verve and precision” and in the New York Times for its “uncommon eloquence”, the Quartet has cultivated an unusually rich repertoire, including a wide variety of works by New Zealand composers, contemporary works by Asian composers, the classical cycles of Beethoven, Bartok, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Mozart and Berg. The quartet’s collaborations include theatrical presentations on musical topics ranging from Haydn’s “Seven Last Words”, Janacek’s “Kreutzer Sonata” and Ross Harris’ “Requiem for the Fallen”. The Requiem marks the centenary of World War I, with text and poetry by New Zealand’s Poet Laureate Vincent O’Sullivan and traditional taonga pūoro composition by Horomona Horo.

Acclaimed performances in London’s Wigmore Hall and the City of London Festival, in New York at the Frick Collection, and in Washington’s Library of Congress Coolidge Auditorium have led to regular touring in the UK, Europe and North America. The Quartet has also toured in Mexico, Curaçao, Japan, Korea, and China, and made many visits to Australia, including the Australian Festival of Chamber Music in Townsville and the Canberra International Music Festival. Much-loved by audiences in New Zealand, the country’s premier chamber ensemble presents a vast array of concerts in venues large and small all over the country each year.

On CD, the group’s extensive discography includes all the quartets by Mendelssohn, Brahms, Bartok, Berg, and Douglas Lilburn, works by Ravel, Debussy, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Dvorak, Wolf, a collection titled *Asian Music for String Quartet*, and the premiere recording of the remarkable Zoltan Szekely quartet. A career highlight is its Atoll Records release of “*Notes from a Journey*”, a collection of works by New Zealand composers which won ‘Classical Recording of

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the Year' at the NZ Music Awards. The quartet's ongoing collaboration with clarinetist James Campbell is celebrated on a new Naxos release of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet (paired with the Brahms third string quartet), and its complete Brahms cycle includes the string quintets with Grammy-winning violist Maria Lambros.

The New Zealand String Quartet is renowned for its versatility and has enjoyed collaborating with musicians from all over the globe, in a range of classical, jazz and world music genres. Collaborations with classical musicians and ensembles have included performances with Piers Lane, Kathryn Stott, Martin Roscoe, Peter Nagy, James Campbell, Nobuko Imai, James Dunham, Maria Lambros, Hariolf Schlichtig, Gao Ping, Anton Kuerti, Alexander Lonquich, Peter Cropper, Colin Carr, Frans Helmerson, Christoph Richter, and Joel Quarrington, the Lafayette, Lindsay, Michelangelo, Prazak, and Goldner quartets, the BBC Scottish Symphony, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, The Song Company and Voices New Zealand chamber choir.

Equally comfortable outside the realms of classical music, the Quartet has collaborated with jazz greats Mike Nock, Jim Hall, Wayne Marshall and Uri Caine and world music exponents such as Turkey's Omar Farouk Tekbilek and New Zealand's Richard Nunns and Horomona Horo. In 2013/2014 the group undertook a ground-breaking collaboration with the Forbidden City Chamber Orchestra, China's foremost traditional instrument ensemble, touring a program of seven new works by Chinese and New Zealand composers in both China and New Zealand. More recently the Quartet toured New Zealand with Kathryn Stott and improvised on stage with the Royal New Zealand Ballet in Alexander Ekman's "Cacti".

Dedicated teachers as well as performers, three of the Quartet members are Associate Professors at the New Zealand School of Music at Victoria University, where the group has been Quartet-in-Residence since 1991. On international tours, the Quartet is sought out for its incisive master classes and workshops. The Quartet is dedicated to the next generation and runs an annual summer school for chamber music in Nelson. In addition, Quartet members Gillian Ansell and Helene Pohl are co-artistic directors of the biennial Adam Chamber Music Festival in Nelson, regarded as one of the foremost festivals of its kind in the southern hemisphere. The three longest serving members of the Quartet have been awarded the MNZM honour for services to music in New Zealand.

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