

## **HARLEM QUARTET FULL LENGTH BIO**

New York-based Harlem Quartet, currently quartet-in-residence at the John J. Cali School of Music and the Royal College of Music in London, has been praised for its “panache” by The New York Times and hailed in the Cincinnati Enquirer for “bringing a new attitude to classical music, one that is fresh, bracing and intelligent.” It has also won plaudits from such veteran musicians as GRAMMY-winning woodwind virtuoso Ted Nash of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, who declared in a May 2018 Playbill article, “Harlem Quartet is one of the greatest string quartets I have ever heard. They can play anything.” Since its public debut at Carnegie Hall in 2006, the ensemble has thrilled audiences and students in 47 states as well as in the U.K., France, Belgium, Brazil, Panama, Canada, Venezuela, Japan, Ethiopia, and South Africa.

Harlem Quartet has three distinctive characteristics: diverse programming that combines music from the standard string quartet canon with jazz, Latin, and contemporary works; a collaborative approach to performance that is continually broadening the ensemble’s repertoire and audience reach through artistic partnerships with other musicians from the classical and jazz worlds; and an ongoing commitment to residency activity and other forms of educational outreach.

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 composers of color. Passion for this work has made the quartet a leading ensemble in both educational and community engagement activities. In this capacity, the quartet has written several successful grants, including a Cultural Connections Artist-In-Residence grant from James Madison University and a 2016 Guarneri String Quartet grant from Chamber Music America; the latter allowed the quartet to participate in an extended performance and educational residency in Mobile, AL, which included a close partnership with the Mobile Symphony Orchestra. In the 2017-18 season Harlem Quartet undertook a week of residency activities with the Santa Fe Youth Symphony. And since 2015 it has led an annual workshop at Music Mountain in Falls Village, CT, culminating in a concert at that venue.

In addition to performing a varied menu of string quartet literature across the country and around the world, Harlem Quartet has collaborated with such distinguished artists as classical pianists Michael Brown, Awadagin Pratt, Misha Dichter, and Fei-Fei; jazz pianists Chick Corea and Aldo López-Gavilán; violist Ida Kavafian; cellist Carter Brey; clarinetists Paquito D’Rivera, Eddie Daniels, Anthony McGill, and David Shifrin; saxophonist Tim Garland; jazz legends Ted Nash, Gary Burton, Stanley Clarke, and John Patitucci; the Shanghai Quartet; and Imani Winds.

Harlem Quartet’s 2019-20 engagements included a weeklong Quad City Arts Residency (Rock Island, IL); debuts with Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Dizzy’s Club, Chamber Music Tulsa, Stanford Live, and Duke University; and return engagements with the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, the Phillips Collection (Washington, DC), Asheville Chamber Music Series, and Calgary Pro Musica. Scheduled for 2020-21 are concerts with bassist John Patitucci at Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL) and Chamber Music Concerts (Ashland, OR); an engagement at Newberry Opera House (Newberry, SC); and a joint appearance with the Catalyst Quartet at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, sponsored by the Chamber Music Society of Philadelphia.

Alongside its regular activities as a chamber ensemble, Harlem Quartet performs a variety of works written for solo string quartet and orchestra. In 2012, with the Chicago Sinfonietta under Music Director Mei-Ann Chen, the quartet gave the world premiere of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* as arranged for string quartet and orchestra by Randall Craig Fleischer. It reprised its performance of that score with the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra under Fleischer's direction, and again with the Santa Fe Concert Association. Chicago Sinfonietta and the quartet recorded the *West Side Story* arrangement, along with works for string quartet and orchestra by Michael Abels and Benjamin Lees, for the Cedille Records release *Delights and Dances*.

Harlem Quartet has been featured on WNBC, CNN, NBC's *Today Show*, WQXR-FM, and the *News Hour* with Jim Lehrer, and it performed in 2009 for President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House. The quartet made its 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 the ensemble was featured at the *Panama Jazz Festival* in Panama City.

The quartet's 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 three string quartets by Walter Piston, was released in 2010 by Naxos. The quartet's third recording, released in 2011, is a collaboration with pianist Awadagin Pratt and showcases works by American composer Judith Lang Zaimont. More recently the quartet collaborated with jazz pianist Chick Corea in a Grammy-winning *Hot House* album that included Corea's "Mozart Goes Dancing," which won a separate Grammy as Best Instrumental Composition. The jazz album *Heart of Brazil: A Tribute to Egberto Gismonti*, recorded with the Eddie Daniels Quartet, was released in June 2018 on Resonance Records. Harlem Quartet's latest album, the July 2020 release *Cross Pollination*, features works by Debussy, William Bolcom, Dizzy Gillespie, and Guido López-Gavilán.

Harlem Quartet was founded in 2006 by The Sphinx Organization, a national nonprofit dedicated to building diversity in classical music and providing access to music education in underserved communities. In 2013 the quartet completed its third and final year in the *Professional String Quartet Training Program* at New England Conservatory, under the tutelage of Paul Katz, Donald Weilerstein, Kim Kashkashian, Miriam Fried, and Martha Katz.