

JACK Quartet

Biography

Christopher Otto, violin
Austin Wulliman, violin
John Pickford Richards, viola
Jay Campbell, cello

Hailed by The New York Times as “our leading new-music foursome,” and described as “expert in the most ferociously difficult modern scores” by The New Yorker, the GRAMMY-nominated JACK Quartet is one of the most respected experimental string quartets performing today, synchronized in its mission to create international community through transformative, mind-broadening experiences and close listening. Comprising violinists Christopher Otto and Austin Wulliman, violist John Pickford Richards, and cellist Jay Campbell, JACK was founded in 2005 and operates as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the performance, commissioning, and appreciation of 20th and 21st century string quartet music. Through intimate, longstanding relationships with many of today’s most creative voices, the quartet has a prolific commissioning and recording catalog and has been nominated for three GRAMMY Awards.

JACK is featured in the ongoing celebrations of John Zorn’s 70th birthday, including an album release of his complete string quartets on Zorn’s Tzadik Records, major global tour dates, and the premiere of a new work with regular collaborator Barbara Hannigan. Described as “some of Mr. Zorn’s most able and enthusiastic interpreters” (The New York Times), JACK performs his music at venues including the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), KunstFestSpiel Herrenhausen, Miller Theatre (NYC), Great American Music Hall (San Francisco), and Cité de la Musique (Paris), among others in anticipation of JACK’s release of a recording of his eight string quartets. Other season highlights include a three-concert day at London’s Wigmore Hall, featuring the European premieres of works by Vicente Atria, Juri Seo, and Amy Williams. In 2024, JACK premieres Natacha Diels’ *Beautiful Trouble* at Penn Live Arts in Philadelphia, embarks on an Australian tour, and celebrates the 5th edition of its commissioning and composer development initiative, JACK Studio.

JACK embraces close collaboration with the composers they perform, yielding a radical embodiment of the technical, musical, and emotional aspects of their work. Through its successful nonprofit model, the quartet has both self-commissioned and been commissioned to create new works with artists such as Julia Wolfe, George Lewis, Helmut Lachenmann, and Caroline Shaw, with upcoming and recent premieres including works by John Luther Adams, Catherine Lamb, Liza Lim, Tyshawn Sorey, Wadada Leo Smith, Amy Williams, and John Zorn. The world’s top composers choose JACK because of its singular dedication to innovation and experimentation, realized through the invisible labor of extensive studio time and the support of full-time leadership staff and a Board of Directors.

Committed to helping dismantle outmoded classical music pipelines for composers, JACK’s all-access initiative JACK Studio supports collaborations with a selection of artists each year, who receive money, workshop time, mentorship, and resources to develop new works for string quartet. Having long observed how the social, cultural, and economic realities of institutional access disproportionately and unfairly exclude many people, JACK Studio offers composers paid opportunities to develop new work, hear their music performed by JACK, consult with mentors in the field, and receive recorded documentation. JACK receives hundreds of applications each season, and selects up to 15 composers or artists for two distinct opportunities: Two-Year Residencies, offering a longer-term relationship with the quartet, and Reading Sessions, in which recipients have existing works for string quartet read by JACK.

More than 40 composers have worked with JACK through JACK Studio thus far, hailing from Argentina, Belarus, Canada, Germany, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, South Africa, Syria, and the United States. Their projects have been performed by JACK at venues including TIME:SPANS, Central Park, the Lucerne Festival, MoMA PS1, and Mannes School of Music, in addition to being recorded for professional releases. Commissioned artists have been paired with musical mentors including Marcos Balter, Clara Iannotta, George Lewis, Catherine Lamb, Georg Friedrich Haas, Donnacha Dennehy, Claire Chase, and Nadia Sirota.

JACK has performed to critical acclaim at Carnegie Hall (USA), Lincoln Center (USA), Berlin Philharmonie (Germany),

Wigmore Hall (United Kingdom), Muziekgebouw (Netherlands), The Louvre (France), Kölner Philharmonie (Germany), the Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), La Biennale di Venezia (Italy), Suntory Hall (Japan), Bali Arts Festival (Indonesia), Festival Internacional Cervantino (Mexico), and Teatro Colón (Argentina). Among their honors, they have earned an Avery Fisher Career Grant and Fromm Music Foundation Prize; been selected as Musical America's 2018 "Ensemble of the Year; and received Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, New Music USA's Trailblazer Award, and the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming.

According to Musical America, "many of their recordings are must-haves, for anyone interested in new music." They have been nominated for multiple GRAMMY Awards, the most recent being their albums of music by John Luther Adams – nominated in the 2022 and 2023 Best Ensemble Performance category. Other albums include music by Helmut Lachenmann, Catherine Lamb, Du Yun, Elliott Sharp, Zosha di Castri, Iannis Xenakis, and an upcoming release of the complete quartets of Elliott Carter.

The JACK Quartet makes its home in New York City, where it is the Quartet in Residence at the Mannes School of Music at The New School and provides mentorship to Mannes's Cuker and Stern Graduate String Quartet. They also teach each summer at New Music on the Point, a contemporary chamber music festival in Vermont for young performers and composers, and at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. JACK has long-standing relationships with the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program, where they teach and collaborate with students each fall and spring, as well as with the Lucerne Festival Academy, of which the four members are all alumni.

2023/2024 Season

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