

New Orford String Quartet

Jonathan Crow, violin

Andrew Wan, violin

Eric Nowlin, viola

Brian Manker, cello

Forty-five years ago a new Canadian string quartet was formed at the Jeunesses-Musicales du Canada summer camp at Parc National du Mont-Orford (today the Orford Arts Centre). The Orford String Quartet gave its first public concert on August 11, 1965. Through its many recordings and tours both at home and abroad, the Orford String Quartet became one of Canada's best-known and most illustrious musical ensembles. After 26 years and more than 2000 concerts on six continents, the Quartet disbanded, giving its last concert on July 28, 1991. In July 2009 the New Orford String Quartet arose from the fame and tradition of its glorious predecessor, giving its first concert for a sold-out audience at the Orford Arts Centre. In the short time since its creation the New Orford Quartet has seen astonishing success, giving annual concerts at the Orford Arts Centre for national CBC broadcast and receiving unanimous critical acclaim, including two Opus Awards for *Concert of the Year*. Reviews of the New Orford String Quartet debut concert in the *Montreal Gazette* applauded a concert performance that was “*sweet, balanced and technically unassailable less than a week after their members met for the first time... Lustily applauded in the Orford Arts Centre, the concert was true to the Orford name in its beauty and refinement. Indeed, there was no trace of roughness anywhere*”. *Le Devoir* described the musical result as “*stupefying*”. Recent performances in Montreal and Quebec were met with immediate invitations for return engagements.

Hailed for their “*ravishingly beautiful tone*” as well as their “*extraordinary technical skills and musicianship*” the members of the New Orford String Quartet are all principal players in the Montreal and Toronto Symphony Orchestras. In 2009, these like-minded musicians came together with a plan to revolutionize the concept of string quartet playing in Canada, bringing together four stars of the classical music field for a limited touring schedule on a project-by-project basis inspired by the success of modern chamber orchestras such as the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Rather than committing to a year-round schedule, the members of the quartet meet for residencies in various centres for short periods of time, providing a fresh perspective on interpretations of standard string quartet repertoire. The New Orford String Quartet is also dedicated to promoting Canadian works, both new commissions and neglected repertoire from the previous century. Each New Orford String Quartet project has included performances of a major Canadian string quartet from the 20th century or a premiere of a newly composed work, and programs have included repertoire from a period that spans over 225 years, from Haydn and Beethoven to Sir Ernest MacMillan and Denis Gougeon.

In 2011 the New Orford String Quartet released its debut album of the final quartets of Schubert and Beethoven on Bridge Records to international acclaim. Hailed as one of the top CDs of 2011 by *La Presse* and *CBC In Concert* and nominated for a JUNO Award in 2012, critics have described the recording as a “*performance of true greatness and compelling intensity... stunning!*” (*Audio Video Club of Atlanta*), “*flawless... a match made in heaven!*” (*Classical Music Sentinel*), “*a performance of rare intensity.*” (*Audiophile Audition*) and “*nothing short of electrifying... listen and weep.*” (*The Toronto Star*).

For more information please visit www.neworford.com or www.facebook.com/neworford.

Jonathan Crow, violin

The 2011.2012 season marks the début of Canadian violinist Jonathan Crow as Concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. A native of Prince George, British Columbia, Jonathan earned his Bachelor of Music in Honours Performance from McGill University in 1998, at which time he joined the Montreal Symphony Orchestra as Associate Principal Second Violin. Between 2002 and 2006 Jonathan was the Concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra; during this time he was the youngest concertmaster of any major North American orchestra. Jonathan continues to perform as guest concertmaster with orchestras around the world, including the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Filarmonia de Lanaudiere and Pernambuco Festival Orchestra (Brazil).

In May 1997 Jonathan performed Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in a special benefit for the Victoria Symphony under the baton of Sir Yehudi Menuhin. Lord Menuhin was so impressed that he invited him to perform again with the Vancouver Symphony in April 1998. Jonathan continues to perform in North America, having been featured as soloist with most major Canadian orchestras including the Toronto, Montreal, Calgary Philharmonic, Kingston, London, National Arts Centre, Victoria and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras, under the baton of such conductors as Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Charles Dutoit, Kent Nagano, Peter Oundjian, Sir Andrew Davis, Mario Bernardi and João Carlos Martins. He is heard frequently on Chaîne Culturelle of Radio-Canada, CBC Radio Two, and National Public Radio, along with Radio France, Deutsche Welle, Hessischer Rundfunk and the RAI in Europe.

An avid chamber musician, Jonathan has performed at chamber music festivals throughout North America, South America and Europe including the Banff, Ravinia, Orford, Domaine Forget, Seattle, Montreal, Ottawa, Incontri in Terra di Sienna, Alpenglow, Festival Vancouver, Pernambuco (Brazil), Giverny (France) and Strings in the Mountains festivals. As an advocate of contemporary music he has premiered works by Michael Conway Baker, Eldon Rathburn, Barrie Cabena, Ana Sokolovic, Marjan Mozetich, Christos Hatzis, Ernest MacMillan and Healey Willan, and includes in his repertoire major concerti by such composers as Ligeti, Schnittke, Bernstein, Brian Cherney, Rodney Sharman, and Cameron Wilson. Mr. Crow has recorded for CBC, Bridge, Oxingale, Skylark, XXI-21 and ATMA labels.

Jonathan is currently Associate Professor of Violin at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University where he has been teaching since 2005. Current and former students of Mr. Crow have received prizes at competitions across North America, including the Montreal Symphony Orchestra Competition, Shean Competition, CBC Radio's NEXT competition, Eckhardt-Grammatte Competition, Canadian Music Competition, and Stulberg International String Competition, and work regularly with orchestras such as the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Verbier Chamber Orchestra, Vienna Kammerphilharmonie and Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

Jonathan plays the ex-Wm. Kroll Guarneri del Gesù 1738 violin, made available to the TSO for the use of the Concertmaster thanks to the generosity of Dr. & Mrs. Edward Pong.

Andrew Wan, violin

Andrew Wan is equally at home as a soloist, chamber musician, and concertmaster. In August of 2008, he was named Concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, making him one of the youngest concertmasters of a major symphony. His relationship with the orchestra began with performances of Elgar's Violin Concerto, which were hailed as one of the top two musical moments of 2007 by *La Presse*.

Mr. Wan has appeared as a soloist with the orchestras of Montreal, Toronto, Newfoundland, Juilliard, Aspen, McGill Chamber and Edmonton under conductors such as Kent Nagano, Maxim Vengerov, Jean-Claude Casadesus, Peter Oundjian, James DePreist and Michael Stern.

He has concertized extensively throughout the world, appearing in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center, Jordan Hall and Salle Gaveau with artists including the Juilliard Quartet, the International Sejong Soloists, the New Zealand Trio, Gil Shaham and Cho-Liang Lin. He recently recorded the Mendelssohn Octet with James Ehnes and members of the Seattle Chamber Music Society for the Onyx label. Mr. Wan frequently performs as guest concertmaster with several North American orchestras and has appeared as artist and faculty at the Seattle Chamber, Agassiz, Aspen and Orford Music Festivals.

In addition to garnering the top prizes in the MSO Standard Life competition, Juilliard and Aspen concerto competitions, and Canadian Music and National Music Festival competitions, Andrew has also captured the grand prizes of the Fischhoff, Coleman and Plowman International Chamber Music competitions.

Mr. Wan received his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music Degrees from the Juilliard School under the tutelage of Masao Kawasaki and Ron Copes. In 2008 he was the only violinist to be accepted into the prestigious Artist Diploma Program at Juilliard. He is currently on faculty at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University in Montreal.

Mr. Wan has been the recipient of several prestigious career grants, including The Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award, as well as grants from the Canada Council, Anne Burrows Foundation, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and Winspear Fund. He performs on a 1744 Michel'Angelo Bergonzi violin, and gratefully acknowledges its loan from the David Sela Collection.

Eric Nowlin, viola

Second-prize winner of the 2006 Walter W. Naumburg competition, violist Eric Nowlin has performed extensively throughout the United States as well as abroad. He has been described by the *Springfield (MO) News-Leader* as “having a full, warm tone, expressive phrasing, and effortless technical command that suggest an artist twice his age” and by the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* as “displaying the remarkable capabilities of the viola, with a rich tone and sensitive interpretive skills”.

Past accomplishments include receiving first prize in the 2003 Irving Klein International String Competition; first prize in the 2002 Hellam Young Artists Competition; grand prize in the 2001 Naftzger Young Artists Competition; and winner of the 2001 Juilliard Viola Concerto Competition, which led to a performance of Hindemith’s *Konzertmusik* with Roberto Minzcek conducting the Juilliard Orchestra in Alice Tully Hall.

Performances have included solo engagements with the Springfield Symphony in Missouri, Santa Cruz Symphony, Peninsula Symphony, and the Kumamoto Symphony in Japan, as well as recitals in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Mexico. Mr. Nowlin has been featured on NPR, WQXR in New York, WGBH in Boston, WFMT in Chicago, as well as television programs in Wisconsin and California, and has participated in festivals such as the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont and the Steans Institute for Young Artists at Ravinia. He is a regular member of the Jupiter Chamber Players in New York City, and has also toured with Musicians from Marlboro and Musicians from Ravinia’s Steans Institute.

In addition to solo and chamber music performances, Mr. Nowlin recently won the position of Associate Principal Viola with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and started in the 2008-2009 season. He previously played regularly as a substitute in the viola section of the New York Philharmonic, performing with them during their residency at the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival as well as on their European tour in 2008, and has served as a guest principal with Cleveland’s Citymusic and New York City’s Metropolis Ensemble.

Mr. Nowlin was chosen as the recipient of a Rachel Elizabeth Barton Foundation Grant in 2004, an award intended for the advancement of young artists' performance careers, and received his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from The Juilliard School as a scholarship student of Samuel Rhodes. Eric plays on a 1910 Neapolitan viola made by Giovanni Pistucci.

Brian Manker, cello

Principal Cellist of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra since 1999, Brian Manker enjoys a diverse and varied musical career as a performer and teacher. In addition to being a frequent concerto soloist with the MSO, and his work with the New Orford String Quartet, Mr. Manker is a member of the Adorno Quartet.

Mr. Manker has performed throughout North America as a member of the Harrington String Quartet, the Cassatt Quartet, and the Atlanta Chamber Players, and performed chamber music with many distinguished artists including Walter Trampler, Laurence Lesser, Gary Graffman, Lee Luvisi and Jean-Philippe Collard. A Grand Prize winner as a member of the Harrington Quartet at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, Mr. Manker also received a special commendation from Sir Yehudi Menuhin at the Portsmouth International String Quartet Competition.

Formerly the co-director of Festival Alexandria (Ontario), Mr. Manker has participated in many music festivals, including Norfolk, Blossom, Chamber Music East, Roundtop, Swannanoa, the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, masterclasses at Orford, Domaine Forget, and at the Canton International Summer Music Academy in China. He has performed for radio, television, and internet broadcasts on the CBC, WFMT Chicago, and WQXR New York, and can be heard on his 2010 recording of the complete Bach Cello Suites on STORKCLASSICS, as well as numerous recordings of chamber music and of course with the MSO. Mr. Manker served on the jury of the prestigious and historic Prague Spring International Cello Competition in 2006.

Currently on the faculty of the Schulich School of Music of McGill University, Mr. Manker has also taught at West Texas State and Emory Universities. In 2007, Mr. Manker launched the Beethoven Project, which aims to perform all the quartets of Beethoven in their proper context, the private salon. As a companion to this project, Mr. Manker maintains a blog at <http://bquartets.blogspot.com/>. Mr. Manker plays on a cello made by Samuel Zygmuntowicz in 2005.