

MEDIA RELEASE

'Phenomenal' US ensemble showcases great American string playing

Musica Viva welcomes the Pacifica Quartet

11-26 June 2017



'Nothing short of phenomenal.'
Telegraph, UK

'Outstanding!'
The Guardian

Pacifica Quartet: Sibbi Bernhardsson, Simin Ganatra, Masumi Per Rostad & Brandon Vamos

Experience great American string playing in all its brilliant warmth when the **Pacifica Quartet** tours nationally for **Musica Viva** from **11 to 26 June 2017**. Renowned for its exuberant, exhilarating virtuosity, the GRAMMY-winning ensemble is a must-see for lovers of chamber music. On this tour, the group sheds new light on favourites by **Haydn, Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Shostakovich**, as well as by leading Australian composer, **Nigel Westlake**.

The message was clear. Audiences at the 2013 Musica Viva Festival in Sydney simply couldn't get enough of the Pacifica Quartet. Warm, funny and astonishingly musical, they quickly amassed hordes of fans, who rushed to meet them in the foyer whenever they appeared. It was obvious that they needed to return.

Now, Musica Viva has obliged with a national tour that sees the Pacifica Quartet visit **Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra, Newcastle and Sydney** over the course of a fortnight - a rare opportunity to experience what is widely regarded as one of the greatest string quartets playing today.

At home on the major concert stages of the world, violinists **Simin Ganatra** and **Sibbi Bernhardsson**, violist **Masumi Per Rostad** and cellist **Brandon Vamos** are based at the Jacobs School of Music in Indiana, USA. They must keep a trophy cabinet there stuffed with prizes; the 2009 **GRAMMY for Best Chamber Music Performance** jostling for space alongside the **'Ensemble of the Year'** title from Musical America, countless international competition wins and the prestigious **Avery Fisher Career Grant** (2006) – only the second ever awarded to a chamber ensemble in the Grant's long history. The Pacificas were also quartet-in-residence at the **Metropolitan Museum of Art** from 2009 to 2012 – a position that has otherwise been held only by the Guarneri String Quartet.

Gramophone Magazine picked them up in 2005 as "one of the five new quartets you should know about", their image gracing the front cover. However, their story goes back much further, as cellist Brandon Vamos explains: indeed, some of them have been playing together since their school days.

Vamos's parents – one of Hungarian background, the other Russian – were renowned string players and teachers at Oberlin College, Ohio. It was thanks to them that Vamos took to the world of chamber music. "Simin Ganatra and Sibbi Bernhardsson, our two violinists, were both studying with my parents," he says, "so we knew each other as teenagers and we used to go to summer courses at music festivals together. I went away to college, but in the vacations, we'd meet, play chamber music, spend time together – and it was a dream to play in a string quartet." The group officially formed in 1994 and violist Masumi Per Rostad joined seven years later.

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For the first of their 2017 tour programmes, the group will perform Nigel Westlake's String Quartet no 2, the cherished Haydn op 76 no 1 and Mendelssohn's brilliant String Quartet in A minor, op 13. "We were thinking about what pieces we could do from our early times that are really special to us," says Vamos, who counts the Mendelssohn among his favourites. "In the late Haydn quartet, everybody has a lot to do and say, and it has an incredibly beautiful slow movement. I think the works complement each other well."

Westlake's second quartet fits in perfectly, offering a tempting palette of lyricism and rhythm. Commissioned for Musica Viva by the late Kenneth W Tribe and premiered by the Goldner String Quartet in 2005, it makes a welcome return to the Musica Viva stage in expert hands.

The second program opens with Westlake, followed by Beethoven's final string quartet op 135 and Shostakovich's Quartet no 3. "We often like to program Beethoven and Shostakovich because we've lived with both languages for so long," says Vamos. "They are two of the greatest quartet cycles – both composers wrote mammoth quartets, on so many levels, and we love all of them. The last quartet that Beethoven ever wrote has such lightness about it; and then this huge work of Shostakovich's is full of emotion and depth." That emotion and depth shine through in the group's newly released recording of Shostakovich's complete quartets – an achievement hailed in Classics Today as 'a landmark, plain and simple.'

The Quartet can't wait to return to Australia. "I love it," Vamos enthuses. "We haven't seen enough of the country yet, and this tour will be a chance for us to really experience it."

The Pacifica Quartet will tour to Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra, Newcastle and Sydney. For bookings and further details, please visit www.musicaviva.com.au/pacifica.

Brandon Vamos and Masumi Per Rostad will also mentor talented young students at **special masterclasses in Adelaide and Sydney**.¹ For details, please see <https://musicaviva.com.au/masterclass-pacifica-quartet/>. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

TOUR DATES

Perth **11 Jun 2017 7:30 PM**
Melbourne **13 Jun 2017 7:00 PM**
Adelaide **15 Jun 2017 7:30 PM**
Melbourne **17 Jun 2017 7:00 PM**
Canberra **20 Jun 2017 7:00 PM**
Newcastle **22 Jun 2017 7:30 PM**
Sydney **24 Jun 2017 2:00 PM**
Sydney **26 Jun 2017 7:00 PM**

PROGRAM ONE

(Canberra, Melbourne Weekday, Perth, Sydney Weekday)

HAYDN String Quartet in G major, op 76 no 1
WESTLAKE String Quartet no 2*
MENDELSSOHN String Quartet in A minor, op 13

VENUES

Adelaide: **Adelaide Town Hall**
Canberra: **Llewellyn Hall**
Melbourne: **Melbourne Recital Centre**
Newcastle: **Newcastle Conservatorium of Music**
Perth: **Perth Concert Hall**
Sydney: **City Recital Hall**

PROGRAM TWO

(Adelaide, Melbourne Weekend, Newcastle, Sydney Weekend)

WESTLAKE String Quartet no 2*
BEETHOVEN String Quartet no 16, op 135
SHOSTAKOVICH String Quartet no 3, op 73

**Commissioned for Musica Viva Australia by the late Kenneth W Tribe*

¹Musica Viva's Masterclass program is supported by principal patrons Stephen Johns & Michele Bender, the Sydney Conservatorium Association (NSW), Lyn Hamill & Ian Dover (Queensland), Wesfarmers Arts (Western Australia), and Mary Turner OAM (Newcastle).

Adelaide masterclass presented in partnership with Elder Conservatorium, University of Adelaide, Sydney masterclass presented in partnership with City of Sydney as part of the Musica Viva at Green Square Library program.

Musica Viva is the largest presenter of chamber music in the world, a truly national company with offices in every Australian state and territory. Founded in 1945, it now embraces music of all styles, sharing leading Australian and international artists with around 360,000 concertgoers and school students each year. Today, digital technologies expand its reach even further and it is at the forefront of artist development – inspiring musicians and audiences alike in a shared passion for ensemble music of quality, diversity, challenge and joy.

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