Visiting Scholar Proposal

From

USC School of Music

for

A String Quartet-in-Residence at USC:

The Parker String Quartet

Amount of Money Requested:
$25,000

Principal Investigators: (USC School of Music)
Dr. Robert Jesselson – P.I. – Carolina Distinguished Professor (Cello) – 777-2033
Dr. Connie Gee – Assistant Professor (Viola) – 777-4114
Dr. Rebecca Hunter - Assistant Professor (Violin) – 777-6006
Dr. Donald Portnoy – Koger Distinguished Professor (Violin) – 777-7500
Dr. William Terwilliger – Professor (Violin) – 777-5702
Proposal Narrative

1. Background

This proposal will create a unique opportunity for a String Quartet-in-Residence at USC, with two weeks of public concerts, master classes, chamber music coachings, and collaborations with USC faculty. With this grant, a full-time professional string quartet will be in residence for two weeks, one in the Spring and one in the Fall of 2013.

Audiences at USC and in Columbia have rarely had the opportunity to enjoy the presence of a professional string quartet. Except for occasional one-night performances as part of the Columbia Museum Wadsworth concerts or the Southern Exposure Series, very few professional string quartets ever perform in Columbia. We have never had a sustained residency by a quartet. Audiences here seldom have the opportunity to hear the late quartets by Beethoven, for example, or the quartets of Bartok, Shostakovitch or Prokofiev. This music requires intense study by musicians who specialize in this difficult repertoire, and who rehearse and perform together on a regular basis. Our USC string faculty play together occasionally as a quartet (Terwilliger, Hunter, Gee and Jesselson). However we are not a permanent group with a regular rehearsal schedule due to our full-time teaching loads and our own solo performances and other research.

Many universities¹ now have permanent quartet-in-residence, which enables their communities to hear the great string quartet literature on a regular basis. Such quartets are also excellent ambassadors for their schools. When they perform nationally and internationally they spread the reputation of their host universities as significant cultural and intellectual centers. There are no such quartets in South Carolina.

2. Objectives

This proposal will bring the Parker String Quartet to Columbia for four concerts, master classes and outreach "informances" which will benefit USC undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and the community.

"Hailed by The New York Times as 'something extraordinary', the Grammy Award-winning Parker Quartet has rapidly distinguished itself as one of the preeminent ensembles of its generation. The quartet began its professional touring career in 2002 and garnered international acclaim in 2005, winning the Concert Artists Guild Competition as well as the Grand Prix and Mozart Prize at the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition in France. In 2009, Chamber Music America awarded the quartet the prestigious biennial Cleveland Quartet Award for the 2009-2011 seasons”². (for full bios, please see #6, below).

The residency will begin with a performance featuring the Parker Quartet in the USC School of Music Recital Hall. This program will be open to the public. During the week the Parker Quartet will work with our undergraduate and
graduate students who are studying chamber music. We currently have about 16 undergraduate chamber music groups (trios, quartets, quintets, etc), with about 40 students enrolled in these courses. The Parker Quartet members will also coach our USC Graduate Quartet, which is composed of four outstanding graduate students: Shr Han Wu (DMA student) violin, Ying Li Pan (MM student) violin, Andre Raffield (MM student) viola, and Tsu-Ying Liao (DMA student) cello. In addition, the Parker Quartet will conduct a public master class one evening, in which several of these groups will perform a movement of a quartet and the Quartet will coach them. As part of this proposal, the Parker Quartet will also visit several local high schools in the region (including perhaps the SC Governor’s School for the Arts) and provide “informances” in which they perform and talk to the students about the music and their background. The Parker Quartet is very experienced in conducting these activities as part of their outreach work. The week will conclude with another concert by the Parker Quartet, featuring a collaboration with USC faculty in a larger chamber music work, such as the Brahms Sextet or the Mendelssohn Octet.

1. Some examples of universities with a permanent quartet-in-residence include the University of Texas-Austin (Miro Quartet), the University of Denver (St. Lawrence String Quartet), University of Nebraska (Chiara Quartet), West Texas A&M University (Harrington Quartet), University of Illinois-Champaign (Jupiter Quartet), University of Colorado, Boulder (Takacs Quartet), and Shendandoah University (Audubon Quartet).

2. From the Parker Quartet website: http://www.parkerquartet.com/

3. Significance of the interaction with visiting scholar

The presence of an internationally renowned full-time professional string quartet will have a major impact on the students and faculty of the USC School of Music, as well as the Columbia community. Through their own performances, their expertise in chamber music, their knowledge of the special techniques for playing quartets and the quartet literature, their experience in performing nationally and internationally, and their knowledge of competition-level playing, this residency will clearly influence us in dramatic ways. Since there has never been a week-long residency with musicians such as these in Columbia, this project has the potential to impact this community in many important ways, and could be the beginning of a relationship with the quartet which could lead to a permanent ensemble-in-residence in the future.

4. Timeline with expected accomplishments during the course of the grant

Spring, 2013:
April 14 – Parker Quartet arrival
April 15 - Coach 3 chamber music groups; Recital in USC School of Music
Recital Hall
April 16 - Coach 3 chamber music groups; Outreach “Informance”;
Rehearse with USC faculty
April 17 - Outreach “Informance”; Rehearse with USC faculty; Public
Chamber Music Master Class
April 18 - Coach 3 chamber music groups; Outreach “Informance”;
Rehearse with faculty
April 19 - Recital with USC faculty in USC School of Music Recital Hall;
Reception
April 20 – Quartet leaves

Fall, 2013:
Proposed dates: November 8-14 or 19-24, 2013
-similar schedule as in Spring, 2013

5. Specific outcomes of the project

This proposal will benefit USC undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and the community in many ways.

- The week-long presence of the Parker Quartet will provide opportunities for the Columbia community to hear and observe a world-class professional string quartet.
- This residency will be a unique experience for USC faculty and students to interact with the quartet members, to work with them, and to be coached by them.
- This residency will enable USC undergraduate and graduate students to hear four concerts by this outstanding quartet, to receive individual chamber music lessons from them, as well as being coached by them in a master class setting. Students will also be able to observe an open rehearsal of the Parker Quartet, and gain valuable experience in how a professional quartet works out the many issues of ensemble, balance, and musical style.
- For the USC faculty this residency will provide two weeks of stimulating contact with string players who specialize in chamber music, culminating in collaborative performances with them. This residency also has the potential for further faculty collaborations with USC faculty composers and composition students.
- For the Columbia audiences, this residency will offer four public concerts (two during each week of the proposed residence) with the opportunity to hear a professional string quartet performing works which are otherwise unavailable in Columbia.
- For high school students this residency will provide the unique experience of hearing a world-class quartet in their own schools, with an informal performance and engagement by the artists.
• For USC this residency will enable the School of Music to have an association with a national/international touring ensemble. Such an association can enhance our reputation as an important music school, with a major impact on our ability to recruit talented string players. This will also affect our reputation as an important center for music performance in the South.

6. Biographical Sketch of Quartet:

The Parker Quartet has been profiled in *Time Out NY*, *The Boston Globe*, *Chamber Music Magazine*, and on Musical America.com for their pioneering performances for audiences in non-traditional venues. In addition to concerts in bars and clubs nationwide, the ensemble was the first String Quartet-in-Residence at Barbès Bar and Performance Space in Brooklyn, New York, in 2007. The residency embraced a series of collaborative concerts with artists of various genres including jazz, folk, and world music. This season, the quartet also collaborated with slam poets through the organization With Our Words. Their collaboration included pianist Seth Knopp and baritone William Sharp in a program that interwove poetry and music to illuminate both mediums.

Performance highlights of the quartet’s 2011-12 season include a European tour, with appearances at Wigmore Hall in London, Stadthalle Marburg, Kultur im Oberäu, and Concerts Classiques d’Épinal; appearances with pianist Shai Wosner at Amherst College and Carnegie Hall; and visits to many of the leading colleges and universities of the United States, including the Eastman School of Music, San Francisco State University, and UCLA. This season, the quartet is partnering with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra to launch All Hearts Listen, a concert series in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. This series will feature the quartet in six performances throughout the Twin Cities.

Successful early concert touring in Europe helped the quartet forge a relationship with Zig-Zag Territoires, which released their debut commercial recording of Bartók’s String Quartets Nos. 2 and 5 in July 2007. The disc received high praise by numerous critics, including Gramophone: “The Parkers’ Bartók spins the illusion of spontaneous improvisation… they have absorbed the language; they have the confidence to play freely with the music and the instinct to bring it off.” The quartet’s second recording, of György Ligeti’s String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2 and Andante & Allegretto, was released on Naxos in December 2009 to critical acclaim. The Ligeti recording won the 2011 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance. The quartet’s next disc will be a selection of Haydn string quartets, produced by Grammy Award-winner Judith Sherman.

The Parker Quartet served as Quartet-in-Residence with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra from 2008 through 2010 and were the first-ever Artists-in-Residence with Minnesota Public Radio for the 2009-2010 season. This year, they will be in residence at the University of Minnesota, working throughout the year with chamber music students. They will also be teaching instrumental lessons at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN.
The Parker Quartet’s members hold graduate degrees in performance and chamber music from the New England Conservatory of Music and were part of the New England Conservatory’s prestigious Professional String Quartet Training Program. Their mentors include the Cleveland Quartet, Kim Kashkashian, György Kurtág, and Rainer Schmidt.

**Daniel Chong** was born in Southern California where at the age of four he started playing the violin. When he was twelve, Daniel moved to the east coast where he studied at the Curtis Institute of Music, the Cleveland Institute, and the New England Conservatory and earned his B.M. and M.M. degrees. His teachers were Robert Lipsett, Victor Danchenko, Donald Weilerstein, and Kim Kashkashian. Other mentors of his include Paul Katz, Miriam Fried, Rainer Schmidt, and Roger Tapping.

Violinist **Karen Kim** is a founding member of the Parker Quartet, and has performed internationally as both a soloist and chamber musician. She has presented solo performances at Jordan Hall in Boston, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. and Steinway Hall in New York City. Karen received her BM and MM in violin performance, as well as her MM in chamber music, from the New England Conservatory. She studied classical violin with Donald Weilerstein and jazz violin with vocalist Dominique Eade. She has also worked with Paul Katz, Roger Tapping, Kim Kashkashian, Miriam Fried, Martha Strongin Katz, and Lucy Stoltzman. Karen plays on a Joseph Rocca violin made in 1852.

Violist **Jessica Bodner** began playing the violin at the age of two, and then switched to the viola at the age of twelve after only wanting to play on the violin’s G-string. A native of Houston, Texas, Jessica began playing and loving chamber music from the time she was in elementary school. Jessica spent seven years at the New England Conservatory in Boston, earning a Bachelor and two Masters degrees in Viola and Chamber Music. Her primary teachers were Kim Kashkashian and Martha Strongin Katz, and other mentors included Donald Weilerstein, Paul Katz, Roger Tapping, Miriam Fried, and Lucy Chapman.

A native of Seoul, Korea, **Kee-Hyun Kim** is active as a soloist and as a chamber musician. He has participated in many prestigious festivals, including the Mostly Mozart Festival, the Kronberg Cello Masterclasses and Festival, the World Cello Congress III, Sarasota Music Festival, and Music Academy of the West, among others. He holds a B.M. from the New England Conservatory, as well as two M.M. from the same institution. Kee plays on an 1844 Giaccomo Rivolta cello made in Milan, as well as a custom-made bow from Benoit Rolland, made in 2007.

*For more information about the Parker Quartet, and individual bios of the members go to: [http://www.parkerquartet.com/](http://www.parkerquartet.com/)*