

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Additional Information Available Here:

<http://www.theamericanstringproject.org/>

Tickets Available Here:

<http://www.theamericanstringproject.org/season>

Photos Available Here:

<http://www.theamericanstringproject.org/gallery>

Stripped Down to Just the Strings. 15 Bold Brave Musicians 'Go Commando' at Three-Day Festival.

*Classical Musicians with the American String Project Share their
Fascinating Instrument Histories.*

Benaroya Hall's Nordstrom Recital Hall; May 12, 14, 15 2011 – Tickets On Sale Now

Seattle, WA –For three days each Spring 15 bold, brave string musicians enter Benaroya's Nordstrom recital hall and prepare to 'go commando!' as part of a conductorless string orchestra –and they savor every minute of it! For ten years **The American String Project (TASP)** has presented one of the finest assemblages of world class string musicians as part of their annual three day festival; this year the musicians open up about their very personal relationships with the beloved 300-400 year old instruments they play.

Each of the 15 musicians performing with the American String Project has a unique story to tell about their own career development, but the acquisition story and instrument history is often equally as compelling. Any musician will tell you, each instrument has a distinct personality; and conversations with the 2011 TASP musicians reveal fascinating tales of **fate, passion, destiny, obsession** and **love**. One on one interviews with the 2011 TASP musicians and their incredible instruments are available upon request. Many of their instrument's histories are summarized below. Tickets are \$28 and on sale now by phone 206-215-4747, through the Benaroya Hall Box office (M-F 10am-6pm; Sat 1-6pm) or online at www.benaroyahall.org.

The 2011 TASP Festival Repertoire includes:

Thursday 5/12: 7:30pm

Johannes Brahms: String Quartet, Opus 67 in B-flat Major (lead by Stephanie Chase)
Antonín Dvořák: Serenade for Strings in E Major (lead by Andres Cardenes)

Saturday 5/14, 7:30 pm

Edvard Grieg: *From Holberg's Time* Opus 40 for String Orchestra (lead by Emmanuelle Boisvert)
Dmitri Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 3, Opus 73 (lead by Joan Blackman)

Sunday 5/15, 2:00 pm

Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Opus 76, No. 2 (This is the first piece ever performed by TASP, lead by Maria Larionoff)
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: String Quartet No. 3 in E-flat minor, Opus 30 (lead by Jorja Fleezanis)

The 2011 TASP Musicians include:

Violin

Joan Blackman - made in Milan Italy by Carlo Ferdinando Landolfi (c. 1714 – 1787). Purchased from from a concertmaster in Quebec, Canada who owned it for 20+ years. Her violin came equipped with over a dozen custom made bridges to accommodate the extreme temperature/weather changes in Canada.

Andres Cardenes – made in Mantua Italy by Petrus Guarnerius (c. 1719). It was once owned by the Hungarian virtuoso Josef Szigeti (1892-1973) and Andres bought it from a collector, reluctant to sell, who died four months after the purchase –Fate!

Stephanie Chase - made in Venice Italy by Petrus Guarnerius (c. 1742). It belonged to Stephanie's mother who described her first encounter with the violin in a Chicago violin shop in the mid-1940's as "love at first hearing." Stephanie began playing on it at age eleven and purchased it from her when she was about 22 years old. In 1992 Stephanie took the violin to Venice for its 250th anniversary. She walked up and down the Calle dei Stagneri, the site of its "birth." Because she did not know the exact building where Pietro worked, she hoped the violin would act as a divining rod and point to the precise building --this did not happen.

Maria Larionoff – made by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (c. 1775) and previously owned by Edith Lorand, a famous Hungarian violinist who led her own orchestra. It is currently on loan from the family of Dr. Benum W Fox of Chicago.

and **Harumi Rhodes, Timothy Garland, Yoko Fujita, Jorja Fleezanis, Emmanuelle Boisvert**

Viola

Steve Wyczynski – made in Turin Italy by Giovanni Baptista Genova (c. 1770). It was previously owned by the long serving Assistant Principal Violist William Schoen of the Chicago Symphony from whom I bought it directly. It is an unusual instrument since it is still the original size which is 17 inches. Many large tenor violas were cut down to make them smaller during the 19th and 20th centuries. It was featured in a two page spread containing photos and an article in Strad magazine in July 2005 titled "The Tenor Giant".

and **David Harding, Thomas Turner**

Cello

Stephen Balderston - made in Paris by Claude Victor Rambaux (c. 1840). It was previously owned by Daniel Hofmekler, who played in the Berlin Philharmonic under Wilhelm Furtwangler. Most likely due to the strong anti-semitic pressures of the times, he left the orchestra in 1933, emigrated to Palestine, became Principal Cello of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra and later, principal of the Israel Philharmonic. The cello made its way to America in the 1990s, most likely through a London auction. Stephen purchased it in Chicago and currently uses an endpin made of hollow aircraft titanium for enhanced resonance.

Second cellist TBD

Bass

Barry Lieberman - made in Breccia Italy by Giovanni Paulo Maggini (c. 1597). It is one of the oldest instruments currently in use in the world. It was previously owned by his friend and teacher Stuart Knussen who was the Principal Bass of the London Symphony for 30+ years. It was originally much larger than it is today and was reduced in size by another famous instrument maker, Simon Fendt around 1800. It therefore appears to be an "English" shape as opposed to Italian. Barry owns several bows all made by Reid Hudson of Victoria, Canada. His favorite bow is mounted in gold with an ivory frog.

About The American String Project – 10th Anniversary Season

5, 4, 3, 2, 1! The fifteen member conductorless ensemble is comprised of five first violins, four second violins, three violas, two cellos and one double bass. To maintain a chamber music ambience, the ensemble cannot be too large. With this dazzling collection of players and the brilliant acoustics of Benaroya's Nordstrom Recital Hall, the sound

created by this group is substantial. All of the players are drawn from title positions in major orchestras and renowned chamber groups. This unique string ensemble is dedicated to presenting string music written for smaller ensemble and arranged in a never-before-heard format. Rehearsals are a combination of suggestions, arguments, resolutions, compromise and laughter. This egalitarian effort results in total commitment on the part of each player to the quality of the performance that the audience experiences.

All of the players involved in The American String Project are of the absolute highest caliber, drawn from the title positions in major orchestras, soloists, and renowned chamber music musicians. Most are already known to one another, and have likely played together in the past. The camaraderie factor is accentuated here as one of the major attractions for the musicians themselves. Playing chamber music together brings musicians closer together.

This camaraderie greatly enhances the audience experience. The intimate scale of TASP's performance venues provides a unique opportunity for patrons to feel as though they are truly part of the performance. Pre-concert talks, and question and answer sessions with the musicians offer audience members an unprecedented opportunity to engage with the musicians. Open rehearsals for donors, sponsors, and students also provide a unique, inside glimpse into the work that goes into presenting world-class music for the concert stage.

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