

Biography | September 2025

Sarah Ying Ma (they/she) | violin

Max Ball (they/he) | violin

Jasper de Boor (them/they) | viola

Drew Dansby (he/him) | violoncello

An “ensemble to watch” (Hyde Park Herald), the Poiesis Quartet is the 1st Prize and Commission Prize winners of the 2025 Banff International String Quartet Competition. In 2023, they were named the Grand Prize, Gold Medal, and Lift Every Voice prize winners of the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, as well as Gold Medal and BIPOC Prize at the 2023 St. Paul String Quartet Competition. In May 2024, Poiesis joined the Concert Artists Guild roster for North American management as winners of the Louis and Susan Meisel Competition.

Derived from ancient Greek (ποίησις), the word Poiesis means “to make”; specifically, to create something that has never existed before. With a focus on expanding the string quartet repertoire with vibrant new works by emerging composers, the Poiesis Quartet infuses each performance with unique moments of synchronicity and verve. Their 2024 debut album ‘as we are’ on the Bright Shiny Things label, which features world premiere recordings with mezzo-soprano Nancy Maulsby, was lauded for the quartet’s “bottomless depth” (Cleveland Classical). Having had presented several world premieres of works by composers including Brian Raphael Nabors, Kitty Brazelton, and Cara Haxo, their commission of String Quartet No. 7 ‘Surfacing’ by Chinese-Canadian composer Kevin Lau received its world premiere at the Chautauqua Institution in 2025. Furthermore, the Oberlin Commission Project (TOCP), an exciting new endeavor spearheaded by Poiesis, presents the world premieres of five newly commissioned works by LGBTQ+ composers of color from Oberlin Conservatory in March 2026.

Poiesis is honored to be selected as the 2025-26 Ernst Stiefl Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts. Additionally, as the 2025 St. Lawrence Emerging String Quartet in Residence at Stanford University, Poiesis has also previously acted as ensemble-in-residence of concertnova, a Cincinnati-based collective which presents multi-sensorial and interdisciplinary concert experiences. Recent and upcoming engagements include the San Antonio Chamber Music Society, Newport Classical, Chamber Music Raleigh, Noe Music, Guarneri Hall, and the Austin Chamber Music Center, amongst others. Highlights of the 2025-26 season include performances of ‘Absolute Jest’ with the Dayton Philharmonic in Dayton, OH as well as with the Oberlin Orchestra in Cleveland’s renowned Severance Hall. Poiesis has also completed multiple international residencies in Punta del Diablo and Punta del Este, Uruguay; the Emilia Romagna Festival in Italy; the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance in Nova Scotia, CAN; the University of Victoria in British Columbia, CAN; and the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence in France.

As part of their Banff competition prize the young quartet will perform at the Amsterdam Biennale, the Lucerne Festival, London’s Wigmore Hall, Esterházy Castle and DeutschlandRadio in Cologne, among others.

The Poiesis Quartet is currently the Graduate Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) studying under the Ariel Quartet. As graduates of Oberlin College & Conservatory, they were previously mentored by Sibbi Bernhardsson of the Pacifica Quartet and members of

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the Verona Quartet. As a multi-faceted ensemble, in addition to their performance degrees from Oberlin, members of the quartet also individually received formal education in disciplines such as chemistry, comparative American studies, feminist studies, baroque, and jazz. When not playing chamber music, Poiesis loves to learn new languages, share ice cream cakes, and take long walks on the beach.

Members of the Poiesis Quartet play on instruments and bows generously loaned by Jonathan Solars Fine Violins.

Short version

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Derived from ancient Greek (ποίησις), the word Poiesis means “to make”; specifically, to create something that has never existed before. With a focus on expanding the string quartet repertoire with vibrant new works by emerging composers by LGBTQ+ composers of color. Following world premieres of works by composers such as Brian Raphael Nabors, Kitty Brazelton and Cara Haxo, the commissioned work ‘String Quartet No. 7 Surfacing’ by Chinese-Canadian composer Kevin Lau premiered at the Chautauqua Institution in 2025. The debut album ‘as we are’ (Bright Shiny Things label, 2024) was praised for the quartet’s ‘immense depth’ (Cleveland Classical).

As part of their Banff competition prize the young quartet will perform at the Amsterdam Biennale, the Lucerne Festival, London’s Wigmore Hall, Esterházy Castle and DeutschlandRadio in Cologne, among others.