

Ensemble — icarus Quartet

Like the mythological figure from which it draws its name, the half piano/half percussion **icarus Quartet** dares to fly towards the sun, aspiring to new heights of artistry. Following their Carnegie Hall debut, composer Paul Lansky simply remarked, “This is music making of the highest order.” The Wall Street Journal praised icarus Quartet’s 2022 album, *BIG THINGS*, for the group’s “virtuosity, precision and unflagging energy,” applauding the release as “a beautifully immersive recording... an impressive calling card.”

Winner of the 2019 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition, icarus Quartet has given new life to old masterpieces as well as the future of their instrumentation. The Quartet was chosen as Chamber Music Northwest’s 2020 Protégé Project Ensemble and was subsequently the first ensemble to hold the Klinger ElectroAcoustic Residency at Bowling Green State University. Past engagements include appearances at the Kennedy Center’s REACH, the Vienna Summer Music Festival, the Horowitz Piano Series, the Queens New Music Festival, the São Paulo Contemporary Composers Festival, the Adalman Chamber Series, and at Princeton University for a Lansky tribute concert held in honor of the emeritus professor’s 75th birthday.

icarus’ indie classical aesthetic blends the best of adventurous contemporary programming with an arena rock atmosphere. Their instrumental installations are flanked by jumbotron-esque projections of the pianists’ fingers flying up and down their keyboards, giving audiences truly immersive experiences where the visceral, communal energy of live performance doesn’t sacrifice the detail offered by video captures with an ideal view. And while the majority of iQ’s sounds are produced acoustically, albeit through occasionally unconventional means, their setups have increasingly featured synthesizers, drum trigger pads, and augmentative electronic audio samples. This inclusion of synthesized timbres have enabled unique infusions of disparate musical genres, including looped and reprocessed audio layerings typifying DJ mixes as well as dance styles like merengue and EDM. Their mainstream leanings are further injected into recital programs with the constant breaking of the fourth wall, as the musicians speak candidly from the stage to provide inside perspectives on the repertoire along with their personal relationships with the composers represented throughout their set list.

Fostering the development of new works through commissioning and collaborating lies at the core of the group’s mission, inspiring partnerships with titans of the classical

contemporary field, established artists of electronic and indie music scenes, as well as the two gifted student composer Scholars chosen each year for their iQ Tests program. In Fall 2024, icarus made their Secrest Artist Series debut with “Bartók Rebórn,” a program showcasing the Hungarian’s 1937 masterpiece, *Sonata for two pianos and percussion*, an arrangement of Witold Lutosławski’s *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, and three commissioned Bartók companion works written expressly for the Quartet by Charles Ives Living Award recipient Martin Bresnick, Pacific Symphony composer-in-residence Viet Cuong, and Pulitzer Prize winner Jennifer Higdon. The Cultural Voice of North Carolina lauded icarus’ concert as a “performance about as perfect as one could ask for: superior musicality with nuance, and a commitment to music-making as expressive as possible.”

The ensemble’s work often extends beyond the realm of music. In Spring 2025, icarus collaborated with the Peabody Institute’s NEXT Ensemble, conductor Julianio Aniceto, and the American Prison Writing Archive to present “Songs from the Inside,” a pairing of Luigi Dallapiccola’s *Canti di prigionia (Songs of Imprisonment)* with a commissioned companion work by Elijah Daniel Smith featuring poetry by incarcerated author Brian Fuller. And *Wilderness Suite*, an in-progress intermedia project combining icarus Quartet with the forces of composer Ruby Fulton, geographer Teresa Cavazos Cohn, and eight independent video artists, examines the unique “anti-development” of the 2.4 million-acre Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness site through still imagery, data, film, recorded interviews, natural sound samples, and live music. With generous support from the NEA, the University of Idaho’s Confluence Lab, and the Tri-M Foundation, the *Suite* will receive its full premiere in February 2026.

Passionate about educating and engaging with the next generation of musicians, icarus Quartet thrives in school and university settings. They have given classes on chamber music, composition seminars on writing for their instruments, and discussions on entrepreneurship and nonprofit operations at institutions including Columbia State’s Schwob School of Music, the University of North Carolina’s School of the Arts, the Peabody Conservatory, Purdue University Fort Wayne, Colorado State University, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bridgeport University, the University of Florida, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, the University of Northern Iowa, Florida State University, Lebanon Valley College, the University of Central Florida, Wright State University, the University of Idaho’s Lionel Hampton School of Music, and the São Paulo State University, in addition to presentations for grade school and Pre-K students.

Larry Weng, Max Hammond, Matt Keown, and Jeff Stern are all celebrated soloists in their own rights, and together they have found a special chemistry and inimitable joy playing chamber music. They are dedicated to the discovery, creation, and performance of new music, but what distinguishes their approach to contemporary music is a strong training and background in the classical genre. icarus Quartet is committed to performing new works with a studied and convincing interpretation that mirrors the validity of works with performance practices developed over centuries.

LARRY WENG, piano

Winner of the 2019 NYCA Worldwide Debut Audition and a laureate of the 2016 Queen Elisabeth International Piano Competition, **Larry Weng** has been described in The New York Times as playing with “steely power and incisive rhythm.” Of his 2014 New York debut at Weill Hall, the New York Concert Review described him as “an extremely sensitive musician and mature interpreter,” and “mature beyond his years.”

Larry has been featured in concert in France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, China, Japan, Brazil, and Venezuela, and has performed in many of the world’s renowned halls, including Boston’s Symphony Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, SubCulture, the Salle Cortot, the Sala São Paulo, Carnegie Stern Auditorium, and the Berlin Philharmonie Kammermusiksaal. An avid chamber musician and collaborator, Larry is a full-time member of the icarus Quartet.

Larry graduated from the highly selective joint degree program between Columbia University and The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Professors Jerome Lowenthal and Matti Raekallio. He continued his studies with Professor Boris Berman at the Yale School of Music, completing the doctoral program in 2019. During his time at Yale, Larry served as an instructor in undergraduate piano and secondary piano. As of the 2021-2022 academic year, Larry serves on the faculty of the Wake Forest University Department of Music.

MAX HAMMOND, piano

A pianist who plays with the “the finesse, the grace, and the ebullience of a Mozart” (Harry Rolnick, *The Classical Music Network*), **Max Hammond**’s passion lies in putting canonical works in conversation with new voices. An avid performer of contemporary music, Max has had the honor to premiere works by composers including Joan Tower, Carlos Simon, and Harold Meltzer. He has also performed around the globe as a chamber musician, with appearances across North America, Scotland, and France, alongside groups Mirror Visions Ensemble, eighth blackbird, and the Akropolis Reed Quintet. As the winner of Juilliard’s Concerto Competition, Max made his Lincoln Center

debut in Alice Tully Hall performing Schoenberg's Piano Concerto, Op. 42 with the Juilliard Orchestra under David Robertson. As a concerto soloist, Max has performed a diverse range of works across the country, from Prokofiev's Third Concerto to Bernstein's Age of Anxiety with the Yale Symphony Orchestra, the Bellflower Symphony, and Pasadena Community Orchestra. As a passionate interpreter of the work of Schoenberg, Max also had the privilege of performing *Pierrot Lunaire* at the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna in honor of the composer's 150th birthday. This season, he will make his Carnegie Hall debut in a concert exploring the work of Meredith Monk. Max graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Magna cum Laude from Yale College with a BA in mathematics, where he studied at the Yale School of Music with Wei-Yi Yang, and is currently pursuing a master's degree at the Juilliard School under Julian Martin and Soyeon Kate Lee.

MATT KEOWN, percussion

In an art form that cherishes and longs for divergences from normalcy, **Matt Keown's** artistry is defined by a unique duality. At the core of his creativity remains the technique of a rudimental percussionist and the sensibility of a classical musician. The idiosyncrasies of this relationship afford him a unique musical perspective characterized by precise execution and thoughtful interpretation.

When prioritizing his various creative endeavors, Matt defines himself primarily as a chamber musician. He is a founding member of icarus Quartet, praised by composer Paul Lansky for "music making of the highest order." He is also a founding member of The Percussion Collective, an ensemble that "transcends the medium of percussion through uncommon performance experiences that surprise and engage audiences at a profound emotional level."

Matt is honored to be the fourth percussionist to have ever been granted acceptance to Yale University's prestigious Doctor of Musical Arts program. He completed the residency of this degree in 2018 and is currently based in Maryland. Matt is a Guest Lecturer of Percussion at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University and Professor of Percussion at Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania. Matt proudly endorses Vic Firth Sticks and Mallets, Zildjian Cymbals, Remo Drumheads and Pearl/Adams Percussion Instruments. Matt was born and raised in Oregon and currently resides in Maryland.

JEFF STERN, percussion

Known for performing “with precision and an impressive attention to timbral detail” (Boston Musical Intelligencer), percussionist **Jeff Stern** has developed a voice to listen for in today’s contemporary music scene. He has performed extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, and has collaborated with a number of the world’s most prominent composers. Notable premieres include Alejandro Viñao’s *Stress and Flow* with The Percussion Collective, James Wood’s *Secret Dialogues* for solo marimba, and John Luther Adams’ *Sila* at Lincoln Center’s Out of Doors Festival.

Jeff is the executive director, co-artistic director, and founding percussionist of icarus Quartet, a 2 piano/2 percussion group and winner of the 2019 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition. As a core member of The Percussion Collective, his concert highlights include a live broadcast for WXQR’s Midday Masterpieces, a headlining performance at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, a recital at the Kennedy Center with virtuoso violinist Paul Huang, and concerto appearances with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Florida Orchestra, and the Phoenix Symphony. Jeff has appeared at the Eighth Blackbird Creative Lab, the Yellow Barn, Bang on a Can, Lake George, Annapolis Chamber Music, and Norfolk Chamber Music festivals, and can be heard on the Albany, Furious Artisans, Elm City, Bright Shiny Things, figureeight, and Cantaloupe record labels.

Jeff has served on the percussion faculty at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University since 2017 and at the Luzerne Music Center since 2022. He holds degrees from UMass Amherst, the Peabody Conservatory, and the Yale School of Music. Jeff is a proud artist endorser of Vic Firth sticks and mallets, Zildjian cymbals, Evans drumheads, and Pearl/Adams drums and percussion.