


Performing Arts Series

presents

**TURTLE
ISLAND
QUARTET**

***Solstice Celebration:
The Festival of Lights***

featuring

David Balakrishnan, violin, baritone violin

Mark Summer, cello

Mads Tolling, violin

Jeremy Kittel, viola

Guest Choir

Te Deum

Matthew C. Shepard, conductor

**Saturday, December 3, 2011
Polsky Theatre
Johnson County Community College**

Program

Solstice Celebration: The Festival of Lights

This joyous voyage through world holiday music commemorates the quartet members' ancestral roots with a concert showcasing the music associated with what is referred to in both the Jewish and Hindu traditions as the *Festival of Lights*. From the songs of Chanukah and the music of India's Diwali, to the old English carols and Scottish reels of the 16th century, Turtle Island Quartet explores the timeless music that has been an integral part of winter holiday celebrations for centuries. The program also features music from Vince Guaraldi's beloved *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, as well as revisiting famous classical gems that have become so indelibly tied to the holiday season.

Tonight's program will be announced from the stage throughout the concert, and will include selections from the following pieces:

"Chanukah, Oh Chanukah" - trad. Jewish

"Christmas Day I'Da Mornin'" - trad. Scottish

"Jot Se Jot Jagake Chaló" – Laxmikant/Pyarelal (India)

"Thin Ice" - Variations on Vivaldi's "Winter" Concerto

"Winter in Cairo" - based on the "Arab Dance" movement from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite"

"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" - M. Praetorius

"Linus and Lucy" - Vince Guaraldi

"Silent Night/All Blues" - trad. Austrian/Miles Davis

"World Turning" – Fleetwood Mac

"Bringing in the Sheaves" - Horace Clarence Boyer (gospel)

Recordings:

Telarc, Koch International Classics, Windham Hill, Chandos, CC&C Records, GRP, BMG

Turtle Island Quartet

“It must have been like this when Beethoven was taking Vienna by storm – the exhilaration of seeing the future of classical music unfold before your eyes and ears.”

— *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Its name derived from creation mythology found in Native American folklore, the Turtle Island Quartet, since its inception in 1985, has been a singular force in the creation of bold, new trends in chamber music for strings. Winner of the 2006 and 2008 Grammy awards for Best Classical Crossover category, Turtle Island fuses the classical quartet esthetic with contemporary American musical styles, and by devising a performance practice that honors both, the state of the art has inevitably been redefined. Cellist nonpareil Yo-Yo Ma has proclaimed TIQ to be “a unified voice that truly breaks new ground – authentic and passionate – a reflection of some of the most creative music-making today.”

The Quartet’s birth was the result of violinist David Balakrishnan’s brainstorming explorations and compositional vision while writing his master’s thesis at Antioch University West. The journey has taken Turtle Island through forays into folk, bluegrass, swing, be-bop, funk, R&B, new age, rock, hip-hop, as well as music of Latin America and India ... a repertoire consisting of hundreds of ingenious arrangements and originals. It has included over a dozen recordings on labels such as Windham Hill, Chandos, Koch and Telarc, soundtracks for major motion pictures, TV and radio credits such as the *Today Show*, *All Things Considered*, *Prairie Home Companion* and *Morning Edition*. Turtle Island has been in feature articles in *People* and *Newsweek* magazines, and collaborations with famed artists such as clarinetist Paquito D’Rivera, vibraphonist Stefon Harris, guitar legends Leo Kottke and the Assad Brothers, The Manhattan Transfer, pianists Billy Taylor, Kenny Barron, Cyrus Chestnut and Ramsey Lewis, the Ying Quartet, and the Parsons and Luna Negra dance companies.

Another unique element of Turtle Island is their revival of venerable improvisational and compositional chamber traditions that have not been explored by string players for nearly 200 years. At the time of Haydn’s apocryphal creation of the string quartet form, musicians were more akin to today’s saxophonists and keyboard masters of the jazz and pop world, i.e., improvisers, composers and arrangers. Each Turtle Island member is accomplished in these areas as well as having extensive conservatory training. Original members Balakrishnan and Mark Summer, arguably the finest cross-genre cellist of the modern age, are joined by the elite of the current crop of young alternative string players, Danish jazz violin phenom Mads Tolling and violist Jeremy Kittel, who holds the title of US National Scottish Fiddle Champion.

As Turtle Island members continue to refine their skills through the development of repertory by some of today’s cutting-edge composers, through performances and recordings with major symphonic ensembles, and through a determined educational commitment, the Turtle Island Quartet stakes its claim as the quintessential American string quartet of the 21st century.

David Balakrishnan (violin, baritone violin) graduated from UCLA with a BA in Music Composition and Violin and earned a masters degree in Music Composition at Antioch University West. The Turtle Island founder developed the template for the TIQ revolutionary compositional style—based on the principle of stylistic integration applied to bowed string instruments—that in addition to the group awards has earned him Grammy nominations in the arranging/composing categories and led to numerous grants, both from private sources such as conductor Marin Alsop, who commissioned his piece for violin and orchestra, “Little Mouse Jumps,” as well as national service organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts and Meet the Composer foundations. In 2005 he received a MTC/ASOL “Music Alive” three-year extended residency with the Nashville Chamber Orchestra, for which he composed six orchestral works. The NCO also commissioned Balakrishnan’s composition “Darkness Dreaming,” which premiered in April 2004 with guitarists Sharon Isbin and John Jorgenson. His piece, “Spider Dreams” (1992), has been widely performed and recorded throughout the world by a diverse array of musical organizations, including a live recording by Turtle Island with the Detroit Symphony conducted by Neeme Järvi on Chandos Records. A 2002 commission awarded by a consortium of presenters headed by the Lied Center of Kansas resulted in a string octet entitled “Mara’s Garden of False Delights,” which is featured on Turtle Island’s Grammy-winning Telarc release, *4+Four*. His most recent commission is again from the Lied Center, for which Balakrishnan composed a full-length work involving theatre, dance, poetry, video and Turtle Island with the KU wind ensemble that is an artistic response to the socio/political issues concerning the various theories of evolution, both scientific and cultural, entitled “The Tree of Life.”

Mark Summer (cello) is a founding member of Turtle Island and is widely regarded, thanks not least to his phenomenal percussion and pizzicato techniques, as one of the outstanding cellists of our time. A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music and recipient of its 2008 Distinguished Alumni award, Summer was a tenured member of the Winnipeg Symphony from 1981-1984, before leaving the orchestra to perform in several Canadian contemporary and Baroque ensembles, as well as his own group, The West-End String Band. Asked to perform at the Winnipeg Folk Festival in 1985, the group went on to record Summer’s original music for CBC Radio. That same year, Summer visited the Bay Area where he was invited by David Balakrishnan to help form the quartet. He continued to touch base with his classical roots, performing with the Chamber Symphony of San Francisco, the Oakland Symphony, Oakland Ballet and the contemporary music ensemble Earplay. In the 23 years since embarking on an improvisational musical odyssey, Summer has continued to develop a unique and multi-timbered style, which incorporates virtuoso jazz soloing, distinctive bass lines and extensive percussive techniques adapted from the guitar, bass and drums. He has been the subject of feature articles in *Strings* and *Bass Player* magazines, and has published two pieces for solo cello, one of which, “Julie-O,” has been performed by cellists all over the world. In addition to composing and performing with Turtle Island, Summer performed for several years in a trio with clarinet virtuoso Paquito D’Rivera, participating in the trio’s 2005 Grammy-nominated recording *The Jazz Chamber Trio*. He has been recorded for numerous motion picture soundtracks, and performed and appeared on albums with singers Linda Ronstadt, Toni Childs, guitarist Jeff Tamelier of Tower of Power, saxophonist Kirk Whalum and guitarist Will Ackerman. His more notable cello exploits include performing the Brahms Clarinet Trio in a sandstone grotto by the banks of the Colorado River in Moab, Utah, and a performance on Taos Mountain at 11,000 feet on a cello made of ice.

Mads Tolling (violin) has received Denmark's Sankt Annae's Award for Musical Excellence as well as grants from Queen Margaret, the Sonning Foundation and the Berklee Elvin Jones Award. He has performed as a soloist with Stanley Clarke, Joe Lovano, Al DiMeola, Lenny White and Gerry Brown, and regularly tours and records with his own band, Mads Tolling Quartet. Tolling grew up in Copenhagen, Denmark, and moved to the U.S. at the age of 20 to pursue jazz studies. He studied under violinist Matt Glaser, and graduated summa cum laude from Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2003. While Tolling was still attending Berklee, the renowned jazz violinist Jean-Luc Ponty recommended him to join bass legend Stanley Clarke's band. Since then, he has performed more than 100 concerts with Clarke worldwide, including the Newport Jazz Festival and Hollywood Bowl. Besides his activities as a performer, Tolling is an accomplished composer, bandleader and recording artist. In 2006 he founded Mads Tolling Quartet, and his most recent album, released in October 2009 *The Playmaker* features Stanley Clarke, pianist, and Yellow Jackets founder Russell Ferrante and vibist Stefan Harris. On the album, Tolling seeks to draw the connection between sports and music, which are both "art forms" that heavily rely on team efforts. Out of his three previous recordings of original material, one features former Jazz Messenger pianist JoAnne Brackeen. Tolling has recorded with vibraphonist Dave Samuels, appears on RMB singer Teena Marie's album *La Dona* and plays an integral part of Clarke's recording *Toys of Men*. A thriving force in the educational aspects of jazz and improvisation, Tolling has been active as a Yamaha clinician and has been involved in workshops, coaching and master classes throughout Canada and the U.S. In his spare time Tolling enjoys golfing, tennis and hiking. In 1999, together with his father, he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

Jeremy Kittel (viola), newest member of Turtle Island, is rapidly earning a reputation as one of the nation's most creative young musicians. The 2000 US National Scottish Fiddle Champion and Junior National Champion of 1998 and 1999, Kittel also qualified for international competition in Irish fiddle four consecutive years. In 2003 he competed in the first ASTA Alternative Styles Competition, winning the Alfred Award for Best Improvisation, the Mark O'Connor Award of Merit, and IAJE Award for Best Jazz Performance. Since then, Jeremy has been awarded the Daniel Pearl Memorial Violin, the 2004 Detroit Music Award for Outstanding Acoustic Instrumentalist, 2005 and 2006 Detroit Music Awards for Outstanding Folk Artist, 2006 Detroit Music Awards for Outstanding Jazz Album and Outstanding Jazz Composer, and the ASTA Alternative Strings Award for Music Traditions. He graduated from the University of Michigan at 20, earning its highest musical honor, the Stanley Medal, and has a Master of Music from Manhattan School of Music. Kittel has performed at over a thousand concerts and festivals over the past few years including the Kennedy Center, *A Prairie Home Companion*, the Ryder Cup Opening Ceremony, and Carnegie Hall. He has appeared as guest artist with the Vancouver Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic and the Republic of Strings, and has taught at many camps and schools such as the International Music Academy in the Czech Republic and Mark O'Connor Fiddle Camps. His first CD, *Celtic Fiddle*, was called "one of the top 20 Celtic albums of 2000" by the radio show Celtic Connections. His second, *Roaming*, took second place for Best Celtic Instrumental Album in a competition of 10,000 CDs. His most recent recording, *Jazz Violin* won the 2006 Detroit Music Award for Outstanding Jazz Recording.



Te Deum Chamber Choir

Te Deum Chamber Choir, a semi-professional choral ensemble based in Kansas City, presents sacred choral concerts that are both musically inspiring and spiritually stirring. The choir formed in 2008 and performs throughout the Kansas City Metropolitan area. Visit www.te-deum.org for a schedule of its concerts.

Matthew Christopher Shepard, a Kansas City native, is founder, conductor and artistic director of Te Deum Chamber Choir. Perceiving a need for high-caliber sacred choral music in Kansas City, he founded this new ensemble in 2008. Mr. Shepard accepted the position as Music Director of the Atchison-Benedictine College Symphony Orchestra in the fall of 2010. Under his direction, this 65-member orchestra has performed works including Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Brahms' Academic Festival Overture, Haydn's Symphony No. 104, Sibelius's Finlandia and Stravinsky's Suite No. 1.

Throughout his years in Kansas City, Mr. Shepard has conducted many fine ensembles. At the age of 22 he was selected to be the first conducting intern with the Fine Arts Chorale of Kansas City, and a year later took on the role of assistant conductor, a position he held from 2004-2009. While attending the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory, he served as a graduate conducting assistant, conducting multiple choral ensembles and the conservatory orchestra. He has also conducted two productions with the Kansas City Metro Opera. Recently he has conducted professional orchestras in performances of Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Poulenc, Mozart and Vaughan Williams. In the summer of 2009, Mr. Shepard was awarded a fellowship to study for five weeks at the Conductors Institute at Bard Conservatory with Maestros Harold Farberman and Leon Botstein.

Mr. Shepard also holds the position of Associate Director of Music at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village where he conducts the Village Voices youth choir, the Village Youth Orchestra, the Advanced Handbell Ensemble and an 18-piece brass ensemble.

Beginning his musical studies in flute and voice, Mr. Shepard holds an undergraduate degree from William Jewell College and two master's degrees in Music from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance. His principal conducting professors have been Dr. Arnold Epley, Dr. Ryan Board and Dr. Robert Olson. Additionally, Mr. Shepard has participated in conducting master classes with Leon Botstein, Apu Hsu, Lawrence Golan, Raymond Harvey, Jerry McCoy, Peter Bagley, William Dehning and Andrew Megill.

Turtle Island Quartet is represented by:
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