

Balourdet Quartet

Angela Bae, violin | Justin DeFilippis, violin | Benjamin Zannoni, viola | Russell Houston, cello

2024-25 Biography

The Balourdet Quartet stands out for their vibrant energy and masterful blend of technical precision and emotional depth that brings a fresh perspective to both beloved classics and modern compositions. Its unique closeness and willingness to take creative risks earned it the 2024 Avery Fisher Career Grant, as well as Chamber Music America's 2024 Cleveland Quartet Award. With more than 70 concerts per season, recent highlights include the Balourdet's debuts at Carnegie and Wigmore Halls, and new string quartets by composers Karim Al-Zand, Paul Novak, and Nicky Sohn through grants from Chamber Music America (2021) and the Barlow Foundation (2023). They are currently the Graduate Quartet in Residence at the prestigious Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University and are recent graduates of the New England Conservatory's Professional String Quartet Program.

Highlights of the 2024-25 season include performances at the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, the Kennedy Center, What Makes it Great at Merkin Hall, and a weeklong residency at Stanford University. Recently, they have performed at La Jolla Music Society, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Northwestern University Winter Chamber Music Festival, and Chamber Music Houston. Collaborations include pianists Marc-André Hamelin, Simone Dinnerstein, Stewart Goodyear, Albert Cano Smit, cellist Astrid Schween, and violist Jordan Bak. During this season, they continue their position as String Quartet in Residence with the Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle in North Carolina where they curate the Up Close Chamber Music Series, serve as principals in the orchestra, and engage with the larger community of the Triangle region.

Committed to sharing their musical values with the next generation, the quartet has served regularly as faculty at the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, JDR Summer Music Academy, Berkshire Summer Music, and Opus Chamber Music. They have also given masterclasses and coachings at Northwestern University, University of Michigan, Rice University, Emory University, New England Conservatory Preparatory Department, Fischhoff Chamber Music Academy, Upper Valley Chamber Music, and Wright State University.

The Balourdet journey began in 2018 in the mountains of New Mexico at the Taos School of Music, where violinists Justin DeFilippis, Angela Bae, and cellist Russell Houston first bonded as friends over long evenings of chamber music, luxurious Peppermint Schnapps and extravagant meals created by chef extraordinaire Antoine Balourdet, a renaissance man with an exceptional love of life and music. It was the friendships, a shared passion for music and food, and gratitude for the role the festival played in the formation of the quartet, that inspired the members to name the ensemble in Chef Balourdet's honor.

Soon thereafter, in the heat of a waning Texas summer, Justin, Angela, and Russell joined with violist Benjamin Zannoni at Rice University, and the Balourdet Quartet was

formed. Inspired by their love for the repertoire and the excitement of having found each other, the four friends found themselves playing quartets late into the night for fun. After having been together for only one year at Rice University, and a summer at the Aspen Music Festival, they took second prize at the Nielsen International String Quartet Competition, and were selected as the only quartet admitted to Boston's historic New England Conservatory Professional String Quartet Program under the tutelage of Cleveland Quartet cellist Paul Katz.

In 2021, the Quartet won the Grand Prize at New York's Concert Artists Guild Competition, which included joint management by Concert Artists Guild in the U.S., and Young Classical Artist's Trust (YCAT) in the UK and Europe. In addition, the Balourdet has been prizewinners in Canada's Banff International String Quartet Competition, the International Premio Paolo Borciani Competition in Italy, Gold Medal winners at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, and Gold Medal and Audience Prizewinners at the Yellow Springs Competition.

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