



From left to right: Adrienne Munden-Dixon, Carrie Frey, Julia Henderson, and Caroline Drexler. Photo by Emma O'Halloran

Desdemona

BIOGRAPHY

Desdemona is a New York City-based ensemble devoted to creating unique and inventive performances of repertoire spanning from the Renaissance to world premieres. Described by the *New Yorker* as an “excellent young quartet” and by *OperaWire* as “fantastic,” the group fuses the conservatory training of Juilliard-educated members with immersion in the New York experimental scene. Desdemona is known for expanding the sonic possibilities of traditional instrumentation with vocalization, improvisation, and mixed media.

Desdemona has appeared at venues including the Ukrainian Museum, Spectrum, Areté Gallery, 1 Rivington, Elebash Hall at the CUNY Graduate Center, Princeton University’s Unruly Sounds Festival, Savannah Philharmonic’s Larsen Spotlight Series, the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, and at numerous home gatherings through Groupmuse. They recently premiered “Magdalene”, an opera by 14 composers for soprano, quartet, and harp as part of PROTOTYPE Festival 2020. In Savannah, Georgia, Desdemona regularly performs on the Live Oak Concert Series, bringing classical and new music to a broader audience in venues from art galleries to kayak shops. Their 2021 season includes features on the Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival and Re:Sound, Cleveland Uncommon Sound Project’s streaming festival. The quartet was selected as one of Chamber Music America’s Ensemble Forward 2021 grantees, and will soon be recording a portrait album of Finola Merivale’s work, supported by the Irish National Concert Hall Music Recording Award.

Taking advantage of the string quartet’s chameleonic nature, Desdemona collaborates with a wide range of talents in NYC and beyond, including harpist Sonia Bize, mezzo-soprano Mikki Sodergren, and the Classical Saxophone Project. They were featured on composer/percussionist Adam Holmes’ 2021 album “Music From A Small Shelter” and recently recorded music by Paul Sikivie with Grammy award-winning vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, soon to be released. They have worked closely with living composers including Anthony R. Green, Peter Kramer, David Bird, Robinson McClellan, and Kinds of Kings collective, whose six string quartets they gave the New York premiere.

Desdemona has offered masterclasses at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, Garrison School for the Arts in Savannah, and workshopped works by composition students at the Kaufman Center. All of Desdemona’s members maintain private studios in New York and are passionate about instilling creativity in musicians of all ages.

Desdemona is Adrienne Munden-Dixon (violin), Caroline Drexler (violin), Carrie Frey (viola), Julia Henderson (cello), and Margarita Rovenskaya (piano).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Adrienne Munden-Dixon is a New York-based violinist praised for her “animated and driven” performances (Connect Savannah). She is a current member of the Savannah Philharmonic and Desdemona (“an excellent young quartet” The New Yorker) and is on faculty at Greenwich House Music School. She has given recent solo performances at Roulette Intermedium, Princeton University, MassMOCA, Columbia University, and Areté Gallery. As an orchestral player Adrienne has played under the baton of Robert Spano, Manfred Honeck, Leonard Slatkin, Yan Pascal Tortelier, and Jane Glover. She has commissioned works for violin and electronics by Gemma Peacocke, Finola Merivale, and David Bird and has performed at festivals including Bang on a Can, Prototype, Resonant Bodies, and SPLICE. Outside of music, Adrienne is a former competitive surfer and certified yoga instructor.

Caroline Drexler (violin) is an enthusiastic orchestral musician and holds a tenured position with the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera. Additionally, she performs across the country with groups such as Desdemona, Chamber Orchestra of New York, Symphony in C, New York Virtuosi, the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, the Savannah Philharmonic, and the Orchestra and Opera of the Bronx. She has performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Merkin Hall. As a recording artist, Caroline can be heard on projects for the Smithsonian Museum and Bungie Games. She has appeared as an NYC Fashion Week performer for designers such as Tory Burch and Dolce and Gabbana. Formerly a faculty member of Chattanooga State Community College, she currently teaches at City Strings & Piano. She received her B.A. from Covenant College and graduated with honors from the University of Tennessee with a Masters in Violin Performance.





Violist **Carrie Frey** is an active performer and educator, focused on working with open, inquisitive musicians and composers and encouraging creativity in her students. A founding member of string trio Chartreuse and string quartet Desdemona, and recent addition to the Rhythm Method String Quartet, she also coordinates the chamber music program at Bloomingdale School of Music. In New York City, Carrie performs with Wavefield, Talea Ensemble, Cantata Profana, Heartbeat Opera, Wet Ink Large Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, and toy piano/toy viola duo Wind-Up Elephant. As an orchestral musician, she has played with the Greenville Symphony and the Savannah Philharmonic and at festivals around the world, including the Grafenegg Academy in Austria; Lucerne Festival Academy and Alumni in Switzerland; Britten-Pears Festival in the UK; Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC; and Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan. Her debut sonata album, *The Grey Light of Day*, with pianist Robert Fleitz, was

released by Wild Iris Productions in 2016. Carrie is a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory (BM) and the Manhattan School of Music Contemporary Performance Program (MM), and is currently pursuing a DMA at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. www.carriefrey.com

Recent performances have found cellist **Julia Henderson** at the Joyce Theatre, Carnegie Hall, Birnam Arts Center (UK), and in her own neighborhood of Inwood as part of Listen Closely concert series. She is an avid chamber musician, performing with groups throughout New York City, as well as with the chamber music theatre group Core Ensemble. Julia holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and The Juilliard School, where she studied with Darrett Adkins and Timothy Eddy. She has coached with members of the Shanghai, Juilliard, St. Lawrence, Jupiter, Cavani, and Orion String Quartets, and plays regularly with members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Knoxville Symphony as faculty of the Montserrat Music Festival. In addition to performing, Julia is a passionate teacher, and is on faculty at Sonic Exploration El Sistema Program and The Trinity School, as well as running a private cello studio in NYC.



Pianist **Margarita Rovenskaya** has performed extensively in the US and abroad, with recitals in Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall and Steinway Hall. Winner of the Mary Smart International Concerto Competition, Westminster Piano Concerto Competition, and Connecticut Young Artist Competition, Margarita has also performed and studied internationally at the Sulzbach-Rosenberg International Music Festival in Germany and the International Academy of Music at Castelnuovo di Garfagnana in Italy, as well as festivals such as the Summit Music Festival, PianoSummer at New Paltz, Beethoven Institute at Mannes, Heifetz Institute and Round Top Festival Institute. She performed in the Manchester Music Festival chamber music series and has performed several trios in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie hall as a winner of the Chamber Music Prize at the American Festival of Fine Arts. She earned her Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance at Oberlin Conservatory in May 2012, her Masters in Piano Studies at New York University in May 2014, where she served as Adjunct Piano Faculty, and is currently earning her Doctorate of Musical Arts at Rutgers University. She is currently based in New York.



THEMED PROGRAMS

Different Voices (*STRING QUARTET - 60'*)

Steve Reich: Different Trains (1988) 28'

Shelley Washington: SAY (2016) 10'

Mary Kouyoumdjian: Bombs of Beirut (2014) 22'

Folk Inspired (*PIANO QUARTET - 89'*)

Johannes Brahms: Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60 35'

Zoltan Kodaly: Duo for Violin and Cello, Op. 7 15'

Witold Lutoslawski: Bucolics for Viola and Cello 7'

Joseph Haydn: Piano Trio No. 39 in G major, Hob. XV/25 "Gypsy Trio" 15'

Bjarne Brustad: Capricci for Violin and Viola 12'

Katherine Vokes: Too Late Now (2016) 5'

Hammers & Strings (*PIANO QUINTET - 70'*)

Cesar Franck: Piano Quintet in F minor 40'

Peter Kramer: de fortune (2018) for piano quartet 12'

Scott Wollschleger: violin, viola, cello, and piano (2013/19) 8'

Jessica Meyer: Get Into the NOW (2017) for string quartet 10'

Sacred and Profane (*STRING QUARTET and HARP - 73'*)

Leila Adu: Alyssum (2014) 13'

R Murray Schafer: Theseus (1983) 20'

André Caplet: Conte Fantastique (1908) 17'

Gian Carlo Menotti: Cantilena & Scherzo 11'

Debussy: Danse sacrée et danse profane 12'

Fantasies and Visions (*STRING TRIO - XX'*)

Marcos Balter: Vision Mantra (2009) 8'

Henry Purcell: Fantasias a3, Z. 732-734 (ca. 1680) 10'

Sofia Gubaidulina: String Trio (1989) 20'

Anthony Green: Collide-oscope II (2016) 8'

Luciano Berio: Divertimento (1946) 6'



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Desdemona is dedicated to nurturing performers of all ages, building communities of listeners, and collaborating with emerging and established composers. The quartet has given concerts and workshops for students at institutions including the Kaufman Center, CUNY Graduate Center in New York, the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, and, in Savannah, the Garrison School for the Performing Arts, Savannah Arts Academy, and The Oaks retirement community.

Desdemona offers a variety of classes and workshops as stand-alone events or in combination with public performances:

For advanced high school students and college students:

Public or private chamber music coachings or masterclasses

Seminars on entrepreneurship and professional development

Public or private individual instrument lessons and masterclasses in piano, violin, viola, and cello

For the general public:

Pre-concert talks / Post-concert talkbacks