



2022-23 Season

Curtis Institute of Music Receives Extraordinary \$10 Million Gift to Permanently Endow the Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence Program

This generous gift ensures that future generations of Curtis musicians will receive firsthand mentorship from one of today's most successful and innovative ensembles.

PHILADELPHIA, PA—March 9, 2023—The Curtis Institute of Music announces that it has received an extraordinary gift of \$10 million from Penelope P. Watkins, a longtime member of the Curtis board of trustees, to endow the school's **Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence** program. Presently held by one of the world's preeminent string quartets, the two-time GRAMMY-nominated Dover Quartet, this innovative program has redesigned and reinvigorated the faculty residency model for music conservatories in the 21st century. Building on the rich history of Curtis's resident ensembles—including the legendary Curtis String Quartet and the celebrated Guarneri Quartet—Ms. Watkins's tremendous generosity underscores the importance of chamber music training at Curtis and ensures the permanent presence of a major resident ensemble at the school in perpetuity.

"We are deeply honored by Penny's generosity to Curtis and her longstanding, unwavering support of our mission," says Roberto Díaz, the school's president and CEO. "As we approach Curtis's centenary in 2024, we look back at and celebrate our tremendous history and impact, but more importantly, we are focused on the future of our school and students. Penny's gift enables us to do both: it recognizes the importance of chamber music in Curtis's history, while ensuring that it continues to develop and flourish at Curtis for generations to come."

Among the most significant single gifts in Curtis's history, Ms. Watkins's generosity amplifies the school's focus on educating and training exceptionally gifted young musicians to engage a local and global community through the highest level of artistry.

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Since the school's founding in 1924, intense study of chamber music has been a cornerstone of the Curtis Institute of Music educational experience for all students. By embracing and deeply studying a vast range of chamber music repertoire through small ensemble work, Curtis students gain lifelong invaluable skills—including active listening, collaboration, and leadership—while they strengthen their musicianship and expand their understanding and knowledge of this repertoire. These skills, in addition to large ensemble and solo repertoire study, provide students with the tools to forge their own artistic identities and position them for successful musical careers. With Curtis's famous "learn by doing" philosophy, students often perform chamber music repertoire alongside the school's renowned faculty and alumni, both in Philadelphia and around the world through Curtis on Tour.

"I am so honored to be able to play this role in Curtis's historic legacy," says Penelope Watkins. "By endowing this residency, we're helping to foster not only the future of chamber music, but developing the kind of innovative, flexible, and collaborative musicians who can adapt, create, and thrive no matter where their careers take them."

Created in 2020 and held by the Dover Quartet, the Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence embodies Curtis's three main pillars—teaching, touring, and technology: mentoring the next generation of chamber ensembles, performing at the highest level on stages across the globe, and cultivating audiences through innovative digital initiatives. The Dover Quartet serve as members of the chamber music faculty, where they coach and mentor emerging Nina von Maltzahn String Quartet Program participants—currently the Viano String Quartet—as well as other student chamber groups at Curtis, helping the school develop the leading ensembles of the future.

Through the generosity of Ms. Watkins's endowment, future generations of exceptionally gifted young musicians will experience firsthand the blend of skills, mindset, and entrepreneurialism that make one of the world's preeminent chamber ensembles so successful.

About Penelope P. Watkins

Penelope P. Watkins has served on the Curtis board of trustees since 2002. Ms. Watkins grew up in the United Kingdom and attended the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. She taught English before working for the British Foreign Office in London and the Netherlands, and then for the United Nations in the office of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). In 1965, Ms. Watkins relocated to Pennsylvania where she became involved in various cultural, art and charitable interests. In addition to her service to Curtis, she is a member of the president's council at the Natural Lands Trust, a member of the Maestro's Circle of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and is on the Chairman's Council of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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**About the Dover Quartet**

Named one of the greatest string quartets of the last 100 years by *BBC Music Magazine*, the GRAMMY® nominated Dover Quartet has followed a “practically meteoric” (*Strings*) trajectory to become one of the most in-demand chamber ensembles in the world. In addition to its faculty role as the Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence at the Curtis Institute of Music, the Dover Quartet holds residencies with the Kennedy Center, Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University, Artosphere, and the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival. The group’s awards include a stunning sweep of all prizes at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, grand and first prizes at the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition, and prizes at the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition. Its prestigious honors include the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Chamber Music America’s Cleveland Quartet Award, and Lincoln Center’s Hunt Family Award. The Dover Quartet was formed in 2008 at the Curtis Institute of Music. Learn more at [Curtis.edu/DoverQuartet](https://www.curtis.edu/DoverQuartet).

About the Curtis Institute of Music

The Curtis Institute of Music educates and trains exceptionally gifted young musicians to engage a local and global community through the highest level of artistry. For nearly a century Curtis has provided each member of its small student body with an unparalleled education alongside musical peers, distinguished by a “learn by doing” philosophy and personalized attention from a faculty that includes a high proportion of actively performing musicians. With admissions based solely on artistic promise, no student is turned away due to financial need. Curtis invests in each admitted student, ensuring no tuition is charged for their studies and they enter the profession free from educational debt. Each year Curtis students hone their craft through more than 200 orchestra, opera, and solo and chamber music offerings in Philadelphia and around the world. Learn more at [Curtis.edu](https://www.curtis.edu).

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