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Lakes Area Music Festival Brings Thalea String Quartet to Historic Pillsbury Castle

Special Minneapolis Performance Opens Festival's 2026 Prelude Series

Brainerd, MN (July 9, 2026) – The Lakes Area Music Festival (LAMF) launches its 2026 Prelude Series with a special performance by the acclaimed Thalea String Quartet on Friday, July 24 at 7:30 p.m. at historic Pillsbury Castle in Minneapolis. The evening includes a pre-concert cocktail hour with complimentary bar service and light bites provided by The Capital Grille.

The Prelude Series serves as the opening chapter of LAMF's summer season, bringing artists and audiences together through intimate performances before the Festival's mainstage programming begins in Brainerd later in the summer.

"Pillsbury Castle provides a remarkable setting for chamber music," said Scott Lykins, LAMF Founder and Executive & Artistic Director. "The combination of extraordinary artists, a historic venue, and an intimate audience creates a truly memorable experience. We're excited to share a preview of the Festival season with Twin Cities audiences, and we look forward to returning to Pillsbury Castle this winter for a series of five special events."

Winners of the 2021 Ann Divine Educator Award from the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the Thalea String Quartet brings vibrancy and emotional commitment to every performance. Their Prelude Series program will include Maurice Ravel's *String Quartet in F*, alongside works that reflect the past, present, and future of the string quartet repertoire while celebrating diverse musical traditions from around the world.

Comprised of violinists Christopher Whitley and Kumiko Sakamoto, violist Lauren Spaulding, and cellist Alex Cox, the quartet has performed at major venues across North America, Europe, and China, including the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and Massey Hall. The ensemble is also widely recognized for its commitment to education and community engagement.

Following the Minneapolis performance, the quartet will continue the Prelude Series with free concerts in Aitkin, Nisswa, and Bemidji before returning to the Festival stage for *Lovers in the Night* on August 5 at the Gichi-ziibi Center for the Arts in Brainerd. Joined by violist Masumi Rostad and cellist Coleman Itzkoff, the ensemble will perform Arnold Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night*, the centerpiece of a program inspired by passion beneath the stars.

The Lakes Area Music Festival's 2026 season, *Passion*, runs July 31 through August 23 and features more than 200 artists from the nation's leading orchestras, opera companies, and ensembles. The season includes orchestral concerts, chamber music, opera, dance collaborations, and community events throughout central Minnesota.

Tickets and additional information are available at lakesareamusic.org.

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About the Lakes Area Music Festival

The Lakes Area Music Festival is Minnesota's summer home for world-class opera, orchestra, and chamber music. Celebrating its 18th anniversary season, more than 200 artists from the nation's top orchestras and opera companies will present 60 concert, education, and community outreach activities this July and August. Founded in 2009, the Lakes Area Music Festival sparks connections between its central Minnesota community and the nation's top classical performers to create transformative musical experiences. The Lakes Area Music Festival is a 501c3 non-profit based in Brainerd, MN. To find out more visit lakesareamusic.org or call 218-ASK-LAMF (218-275-5263).