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Lakes Area Music Festival's Prelude Series Brings Free Concerts Across Central Minnesota

Thalea String Quartet Performs in Three Cities July 25–26

Brainerd, MN (July 9, 2026) – The Lakes Area Music Festival (LAMF) kicks off its 2026 season with the Prelude Series, a beloved tradition that brings inspiring chamber music directly to communities across central Minnesota. From July 25 to 26, the acclaimed Thalea String Quartet will present three free concerts in Aitkin, Nisswa, and Bemidji. No tickets are required, and all performances are open to the public with free-will donations accepted.

“These concerts are an incredible way to warm up to the mainstage season while engaging with communities throughout the region,” said Scott Lykins, LAMF Founder and Artistic & Executive Director. “Whether you’re a lifelong fan of chamber music or new to classical performance, these programs are designed to connect, inspire, and welcome all.”

Prelude Series Dates and Locations

- **AITKIN** – Saturday, July 25 at 7:30 p.m. | Ripple Center (301 Minnesota Ave N)
- **NISSWA** – Sunday, July 26 at 2:00 p.m. | Lutheran Church of the Cross (5064 County Rd 13)
- **BEMIDJI** – Sunday, July 26 at 7:30 p.m. | First Lutheran Church (505 Bemidji Ave N)

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 Prelude Series, the Thalea String Quartet will return to the Lakes Area Music Festival stage for *Lovers in the Night* on August 5 at the Gichi-ziibi Center for the Arts. Joined by violist Masumi Rostad and cellist Coleman Itzkoff, the ensemble will perform Arnold Schoenberg's spellbinding *Transfigured Night*, the centerpiece of a program inspired by passion beneath the stars.

This July, their musical journey continues through Minnesota's heartland, inviting audiences of all ages to gather, listen, and connect through the power of chamber music. In addition to these performances, the quartet will carry out numerous community outreach activities throughout the region, including visits to eldercare facilities, libraries, shelters, and the Crow Wing County Jail.

To learn more about the Prelude Series and see all upcoming LAMF events, visit 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).