

# TURTLE ISLAND QUARTET

**David Balakrishnan** (violin, baritone violin) graduated from UCLA with a B.A. in music composition and violin and earned a masters degree in music composition at Antioch University West. The Turtle Island founder developed the template for the TIQ revolutionary compositional style—based on the principle of stylistic integration applied to bowed string instruments—that in addition to the group awards has earned him GRAMMY® nominations in the arranging/composing categories and led to numerous grants, both from private sources such as conductor Marin Alsop, who commissioned his piece for violin and orchestra, “Little Mouse Jumps,” as well as national service organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts and Meet The Composer foundations. In 2005 he received a MTC/ASOL “Music Alive” three year extended residency with the Nashville Chamber Orchestra, for which he composed six orchestral works. The NCO also commissioned Balakrishnan’s composition “Darkness Dreaming,” which premiered in April 2004 with guitarists Sharon Isbin and John Jorgenson. His piece, “Spider Dreams” (1992), has been widely performed and recorded throughout the world by a diverse array of musical organizations, including a live recording by Turtle Island with the Detroit Symphony conducted by Neeme Järvi on Chandos Records. A 2002 commission awarded by a consortium of presenters headed by the Lied Center of Kansas resulted in a string octet entitled “Mara’s Garden Of False Delights,” which is featured on Turtle Island’s Grammy winning Telarc release, “4+Four.” His most recent commission is again from the Lied Center, for which Balakrishnan composed a full-length work involving theatre, dance, poetry, video, and Turtle Island with the KU wind ensemble that is an artistic response to the socio/political issues concerning the various theories of evolution, both scientific and cultural, entitled “The Tree Of Life.”

**Mark Summer** (cello) is a founding member of Turtle Island, and is widely regarded, thanks not least to his phenomenal percussion and pizzicato techniques, as one of the outstanding cellists of our time. A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music and recipient of their 2008 Distinguished Alumnae award, Summer was a tenured member of the Winnipeg Symphony from 1981-1984, before leaving the orchestra to perform in several Canadian contemporary and Baroque ensembles, as well as his own group, The West-End String Band. Asked to perform at the Winnipeg Folk Festival in 1985, the group went on to record Summer’s original music for CBC Radio. That same year, Summer visited the Bay Area where he was invited by David Balakrishnan to help form the quartet. He continued to touch base with his classical roots, performing with the Chamber Symphony of San Francisco, the Oakland Symphony, Oakland Ballet, and the contemporary music ensemble, Earplay. In the 23 years since embarking on an improvisational musical odyssey, Summer has continued to develop a unique and multi-timbered style, which incorporates virtuoso jazz soloing, distinctive bass lines, and extensive percussive techniques adapted from the guitar, bass and drums. He has been the subject of feature articles in *Strings* and *Bass Player* magazines, and has published two pieces for solo cello, one of which, “Julie-O,” has been performed by cellists all over the world. In addition to composing and performing with Turtle Island, Summer performed for several years in a trio with clarinet virtuoso Paquito D’Rivera, participating in the trio’s 2005 GRAMMY®--nominated recording *The Jazz Chamber Trio*. He has been recorded for numerous motion picture soundtracks and performed and appeared on albums with singers Linda Ronstadt, Toni Childs,

guitarist Jeff Tamelier of Tower of Power, saxophonist Kirk Whalum, and guitarist Will Ackerman. His more notable cello exploits include performing the Brahms Clarinet Trio in a sandstone grotto by the banks of the Colorado River in Moab, Utah, and a performance on Taos Mountain at 11,000 feet on a cello made of ice.

**Mads Tolling** (violin), has received Denmark's Sankt Annae's Award for Musical Excellence as well as grants from Queen Margaret, the Sonning Foundation and the Berklee Elvin Jones Award. He has performed as a soloist with Stanley Clarke, Joe Lovano, Al DiMeola, Lenny White and Gerry Brown and regularly tours and records with his own band, Mads Tolling Quartet. Tolling grew up in Copenhagen, Denmark and moved to the U.S. at the age of 20 to pursue jazz studies. He studied under violinist Matt Glaser, and graduated summa cum laude from Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2003. While Tolling was still attending Berklee, the renowned jazz violinist Jean-Luc Ponty recommended him to join bass legend Stanley Clarke's band. Since then, he has performed more than 100 concerts with Clarke worldwide, including the Newport Jazz Festival and Hollywood Bowl. Besides his activities as a performer, Tolling is an accomplished composer, bandleader and recording artist. In 2006 he founded Mads Tolling Quartet, and his most recent album, released in October 2009 "The Playmaker" features Stanley Clarke, pianist and Yellow Jackets founder Russell Ferrante and vibist Stefon Harris. On the album, Tolling seeks to draw the connection between sports and music, which are both "art forms" that heavily rely on team efforts. Out of his three previous recordings of original material one features former Jazz Messenger pianist JoAnne Brackeen. Tolling has recorded with vibraphonist Dave Samuels, appears on RMB singer Teena Marie's album "La Dona" and plays an integral part of Clarke's recording "Toys of Men". A thriving force in the educational aspects of jazz and improvisation, Tolling has been active as a Yamaha clinician and has been involved in workshops, coaching and master classes throughout Canada and the U.S. In his spare time Tolling enjoys golfing, tennis and hiking. In 1999, together with his father, he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

**Jeremy Kittel** (viola), newest member of Turtle Island, is rapidly earning a reputation as one of the nation's most creative young musicians. The 2000 US National Scottish Fiddle Champion and Junior National Champion of 1998 and 1999, Kittel also qualified for international competition in Irish fiddle four consecutive years. In 2003 he competed in the first ASTA Alternative Styles Competition, winning the Alfred Award for Best Improvisation, the Mark O'Connor Award of Merit, and IAJE Award for Best Jazz Performance. Since then, Jeremy has been awarded the Daniel Pearl Memorial Violin, the 2004 Detroit Music Award for Outstanding Acoustic Instrumentalist, 2005 and 2006 Detroit Music Awards for Outstanding Folk Artist, 2006 Detroit Music Awards for Outstanding Jazz Album and Outstanding Jazz Composer, and the ASTA Alternative Strings Award for Music Traditions. He graduated from the University of Michigan at 20, earning their highest musical honor, the Stanley Medal, and has a Master of Music from Manhattan School of Music. Kittel has performed at over a thousand concerts and festivals over the past few years including the Kennedy Center, "A Prairie Home Companion," the Ryder Cup Opening Ceremony, and Carnegie Hall. He has appeared as guest artist with the Vancouver Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic and the Republic of Strings, and has taught at many camps and schools such as the International Music Academy in the Czech Republic and Mark O'Connor Fiddle Camps. His first CD, "Celtic Fiddle," was called "one of the top 20 Celtic albums of 2000" by the radio show Celtic Connections. His second, "Roaming," took second place for Best Celtic Instrumental Album in a competition of 10,000 CDs. His most recent recording, "Jazz Violin" won the 2006 Detroit Music Award for Outstanding Jazz Recording.