

**Lux**  
string quartet



# Lux String Quartet

[luxstringquartet.com](http://luxstringquartet.com)

[lux@luxstringquartet.com](mailto:lux@luxstringquartet.com)



**Lux String Quartet** is a Twin-Cities based ensemble, bringing a dynamic edge to performance and education since 2013. As avid recitalists, Lux maintains an active presence in a wide array of musical spheres, from concert halls and churches to coffee shops and podcasts. Their concert series, "Lattes with Lux," established an enthusiastic fan base and is currently hosted by several local, independent coffee houses around the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

A wide spectrum of musical backgrounds and tastes contribute to the group's creativity, which is reflected in their collaborative projects with other artists. In addition to presenting classical repertoire, Lux frequently collaborates with other musicians, actors, and composers to perform contemporary works, pushing boundaries of presentation.

Dedicated to music education and instilling a love for their art in the next generation, Lux String Quartet presents at elementary schools and early music education programs. They served as quartet in residence at Augsburg University Suzuki Talent Education, and are currently the quartet in residence for the Oskaloosa Music Festival.

# Member Bios Long



**Erika Blanco**, a Southerner from the coast of South Carolina by birthright and Midwesterner by recent transplant, holds a bachelor's degree in violin performance from Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music and a master's degree in violin performance and Suzuki pedagogy from the University of Minnesota. She studied under the late Stephen Panchaud, assistant concertmaster of the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, before transferring to Blair School of Music under Blair String Quartet first violinist Christian Teal. Most recently, she has studied at the University of Minnesota with Suzuki pioneer Mark Bjork. Erika has performed in masterclasses with violinists Alexander Kerr, Professor of Violin at Indiana University and Concertmaster of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra; Soh-Hyun Park Altino, Professor of Violin at the University of Memphis; and Leanne League, Professor of Violin at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Loving collaboration, Erika is a founding member and first violinist of Lux String Quartet and is an active, long-time participant in the Oskaloosa Music Festival, directed by Benjamin Davis and hosted in his hometown Oskaloosa, IA. At the 2013 festival, she soloed Vivaldi's Summer concerto with

the chamber orchestra. She's played with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, and the Mankato Symphony, and is currently a first violinist in the [Quad City Symphony Orchestra](#) under Mark Russell Smith.

Concurrently with her chamber and orchestral playing, Erika performs with Minneapolis-based salsa band [Charanga Tropical](#), which is the first North American group ever to be invited to Cuba's 2015 International Danzón Festival in Havana. Charanga Tropical participated in the festival and recorded a live album in EGREM Studios, site of the 1999 film Buena Vista Social Club.

A Suzuki student herself, Erika teaches students in her home studio and with [Augsburg College Suzuki Talent Education](#). She has completed, in addition to her long-term training with Mark Bjork, various short-term Suzuki training units with Carol Smith, Ronda Cole, Brian Lewis, Kimberly Meier-Sims, Mary Cay Neal, Kathy Wood, Nancy Jackson, Doris Preucil, and Nancy Lokken. She staunchly believes that every child can achieve a high level of ability given a nurturing environment and sound teaching

Though trained classically, Erika enjoys jammin', stompin', and shakin' in any setting: homegrown folk, fiddlin', rockin'-and-a-rollin', salsa, and the new music scene. Relishing the opportunity to meet different people, she feels privileged to have her passion and her career blended together. Professionally, her ambition is to nurture an appreciation for beauty, collaboration, and the learning process, and personally, to be spurred on by great musicians and colleagues and to participate in the transcendental efficacy of music.





**Stephanie Skor** has spent the last fifteen years as a performing artist in Boston, but now as violinist and St. Paul native has returned to her hometown. She performed extensively in the New England area, and is now pursuing a busy freelance career in the Twin Cities, and most recently joined the Lux String Quartet.

Stephanie is an honors graduate of the New England Conservatory, where she studied with Nicholas Kitchen, a founding member and first violinist of the Borromeo String Quartet. While studying at NEC, she attended Madeline Island Chamber Music, the Mannes Beethoven Institute, and Bowdoin International Music Festival. Stephanie began playing string quartets at the age 14, and ever since has loved to explore chamber music in all its forms.

In demand for her diversity as a violinist, Stephanie has enjoyed an eclectic performing career – from a U.S. tour with Jethro Tull to concertmaster at the Rockport Chamber Music Festival. For six seasons she was a violinist in the critically acclaimed Boston-based chamber orchestra Discovery Ensemble, founded and conducted by Courtney Lewis. Stephanie has performed with such artists as Kim Kashkashian, Paula

Robison, Jorja Fleezanis, and the Pacifica Quartet. She was a member of the Gardner Chamber Orchestra and has worked with inspiring conductors including Osmo Vänskä, Michael Stern, Douglas Boyd, Joshua Weilerstein, James Ross, and Larry Rachleff. Stephanie has appeared in performances on WGBH, MPR, TPT, and Newstalk, a national radio station in Ireland.

Passionate about 20th century and contemporary music, Stephanie has premiered over twenty new works. She has enjoyed working with composers Georg Friedrich Haas, Vinko Globokar, Christian Wolff, and Nicholas Vines, and has played works by John Cage, György Ligeti, Cornelius Cardew, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Lei Liang, Thomas Adès, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. In Boston Stephanie was a member of the Composers' Series in Jordan Hall, the NEC Contemporary Ensemble, and Juventas New Music Ensemble. She plays in the Callithumpian Consort and has performed with that Boston-based ensemble in the Festival Internacional Cervantino in Guanajuato, México. Stephanie will be recording a new work by Australian composer Nicholas Vines in June 2019 at Cornell University



**Kirsti Petraborg** is a versatile chamber musician and a passionate teacher. Now the violist of Lux String Quartet, Kirsti refined her skills as a chamber musician as a founding member of the Meadowlark Quartet. Kirsti currently performs with the Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra as well as the Clear Water Chamber Players and is a regular guest at the Oskaloosa Chamber Music Festival. In 2016, she performed Hindemith's *Trauermusik* with the festival chamber orchestra. Not only a chamber musician, Kirsti has soloed with Exultate Chamber Orchestra and the Southwest Minnesota Orchestra and has played with the Duluth-Superior, LaCrosse and Sioux City Symphony Orchestras. Kirsti diversifies her schedule by playing musical theater with Artistry Minnesota and by performing with the one of the few Cuban-style charanga groups in the United States, Charanga Tropical. The Latin group takes her out of the concert hall and into places a viola normally would not travel, including the Minnesota State Fair and Chicago's much-loved Summer Dance in Grant Park, and has given her the occasion to use her dancing skills on stage as well.

Kirsti has been an adjunct faculty member at Southwest Minnesota State University as well as Luther College. At her teaching studios in the Twin Cities area, her students hone their technique as well

as learn the art of making music. She teaches at the Southwest Minnesota String Festival, and has spent several summers at Lutheran Summer Music Festival.

Energetic about sharing her love of the viola with others, Kirsti is currently on the board of the Minnesota Viola Society in the capacity of Past President. She received her doctoral degree in Viola Performance at the University of Minnesota, where she also earned her Master's and Bachelor's degrees. She has studied with Korey Konkol, Sabina Thatcher, and Dr. Andrea Een.



**Eric Graf** is a performer and teacher based in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. He is the cellist of Lux String Quartet, and is a section cellist with the Duluth Symphony. He has also held positions as assistant principal cellist with the Wheeling Symphony, section cellist in the Lexington Philharmonic, and principal cellist of the Mansfield Symphony. As founding member of the Aceso Quartet, he traveled to Denmark for a chamber music residency at the Hvide Sande Masterclass. Eric has performed as soloist with the Long Prairie Chamber Orchestra, Mansfield Symphony, and Central Lakes Symphony Orchestra, among others. Eric loves solo, chamber, and orchestral playing equally, but has a soft spot for chamber music.

Having completed his long-term Suzuki teacher training with Dr. Melissa Kraut, Eric has a deep understanding of the Suzuki method as well as more traditional methods. An avid teacher of all levels, he teaches around the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

Eric holds a Master's degree in Cello Performance and Suzuki Pedagogy from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with renowned Suzuki pedagogue Dr. Melissa Kraut. He also holds a Bachelor's degree in Cello Performance from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, having studied with Ms. Tanya Remenikova.

Eric grew up playing piano, alto saxophone, and cello. His childhood years playing alto saxophone in jazz band constantly remind him that classical music should be just as fun, free, and expressive.

# Member Bios Short

**Erika Blanco**, a Southerner by birthright and Midwesterner by recent transplant, earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in violin performance from Vanderbilt University and the University of Minnesota, respectively, where she studied with Christian Teal and Mark Bjork. Though trained classically, Erika loves exploring other types of music and enjoys jammin', stompin', and shakin' in any setting: homegrown folk, fiddlin', rockin'-and-a-rollin', salsa, and jamming freestyle with other musicians. Currently, she maintains an active teaching studio in the Twin Cities, working with Suzuki students of all ages. In addition to teaching, she plays with Lux String Quartet, the Quad City Symphony Orchestra, and, most recently, Charanga Tropical, a Minneapolis-based salsa band. Loving both teaching and performing, Erika relishes the opportunity to meet different people and feels privileged to have her passion and her career blended together.

**Stephanie Skor** spent the last fifteen years as a performing artist in Boston, and as a violinist and St. Paul native, returned to the Twin Cities, pursuing a busy freelance career, most recently with Lux String Quartet. Stephanie graduated with honors from New England Conservatory, where she studied with Nicholas Kitchen. She attended Madeline Island Chamber Music, the Mannes Beethoven Institute, and Bowdoin International Music Festival. Stephanie's eclectic performing career has encompassed everything from a U.S. tour with Jethro Tull to concertmaster at the Rockport Chamber Music Festival. She played in the critically acclaimed chamber orchestra Discovery Ensemble, founded and conducted by Courtney Lewis and has performed with artists Kim Kashkashian, Paula Robison, Jorja Fleezanis, and the Pacifica Quartet. She was a member of the Gardner Chamber Orchestra and worked with conductors Osmo Vänskä, Michael Stern, Douglas Boyd, Joshua Weilerstein, James Ross, and Larry Rachleff. She has worked with contemporary composers Georg Friedrich Haas, Vinko Globokar, Christian Wolff, and Nicholas Vines. Stephanie will be recording a new work by Australian composer Nicholas Vines in June 2019 at Cornell University.

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**Eric Graf** is a performer and Suzuki certified teacher based in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and is the cellist of Lux String Quartet, section cellist with the Duluth Symphony and former assistant principal cellist with the Wheeling Symphony, section cellist in the Lexington Philharmonic, and principal cellist of the Mansfield Symphony. As founding member of the Aceso Quartet, he traveled to Denmark for a chamber music residency at the Hvide Sande Masterclass. Eric has performed as soloist with the Long Prairie Chamber Orchestra, Mansfield Symphony, and Central Lakes Symphony Orchestra, among others. Eric grew up playing piano, alto saxophone, and cello. His childhood years playing alto saxophone in jazz band constantly remind him that classical music should be just as fun, free, and expressive.

# Education

Lux String Quartet presents to audiences of all kinds, from those with no previous classical music exposure to classical music students who themselves play. Regardless of who their audience is, Lux provides an interactive music experience that is engaging and fun. Some of the ways Lux makes themselves accessible is through education and concert programs which include:

- Oskaloosa Music Festival (OMF)/OMF String Camp
- Schubert Club Young Composers Mentorship Program
- Augsburg College Suzuki Talent Education Program
- MPR Class Notes Artists
- Bloomington Orchestra Festival
- St. Paul Conservatory for the Performing Arts
- Valley View Middle School Presentation
- Olson Middle School Presentation
- Hope Academy