

Remembering Charles Beare 1937-2025

Intrepid American
string quartets

Ayanna Witter-Johnson
Sentimental Work

SINCE 1890

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JULY 2025 VOL.136 NO.1623

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'FARINA' MONTAGNANA CELLO

A POWERFUL MASTERPIECE FROM
THE VENETIAN MAKER'S FINEST PERIOD



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SOS - SAVE OUR SCHOOL: Students at the Newark School for Violin Making gathered outside the building on 18 May to protest the news that the degree programme would not be starting in the 2025–26 academic year. A statement by Lincoln College, which owns and oversees the School of Musical Instrument Craft (MIC) said: 'For the last 3 years the School of MIC has run at a substantial loss,' and that 'alternatives are being explored.' A petition set up by the students (bit.ly/4kwQEby) has garnered more than 16,000 signatures at the time of going to press; see also the Opinion piece on page 21.

PREMIERE of the MONTH

Finding freedom

The history of slavery in Rhode Island builds the basis for a new cello quartet

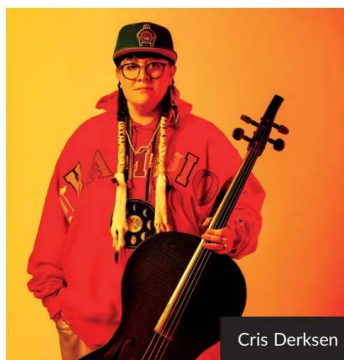
COMPOSER **Cris Derksen**

WORK **First Light**

ARTISTS **Galvin Cello Quartet**

DATE **13 July 2025**

PLACE **The Breakers, Newport, RI, US** bit.ly/43i2QWH



Cris Derksen



Galvin Cello Quartet

The only stipulation for the piece was that it had to be about Newport,' says Canadian composer and cellist Cris Derksen about her new cello quartet commission for the Newport Classical Music Festival. 'I did some research and Rhode Island has a really intense history with colonisation – including the slavery of Indigenous populations,' adds the composer, who is Indigenous herself. The work is called *First Light* and explores the idea of dawn and the break of day with a sense of both darkness and hope. The title also references the Indigenous Wampanoag people from the Rhode Island area, who are called the 'People of the First Light'.

The ten-minute work's overarching story is that of an enslaved boy who runs away at dawn. The music 'starts in the darkness, with a feeling of danger' says Derksen. It evokes a 'calm before the storm' with long, sustained chords overlapping

and shifting slowly. The four cellos then chatter between each other, as if 'several people are planning to escape', before the boy escapes alone and an energetic groove sets in. 'It's actually quite fun. Some of the cellos are playing a more percussive part, and you can hear music that's really true to me – elements like hip-hop,' the composer says. There are moments of silence, representing sudden stops as the boy freezes and looks back. Ultimately it is a story that ends with hope, as the young boy 'reclaims his own light'.

'The Galvin Quartet is just so damn good,' says Derksen. 'So it's been really nice to write something that is actually too hard for me to play!' This includes starting the work in E flat minor (with its key signature of six flats), as well as using the full range of the instruments. And while some parts are virtuosic, Derksen ultimately wants the work to be 'relatable and accessible'.

DERKSEN PHOTO: TANJA TIZIANA; QUARTET PHOTO: TODD ROSENBERG