

# KINDRED

New West Symphony's Alyssa Park shares an enduring bond with her instrument.

BY MIKE NELSON

Ever meet someone for the first time and feel like you already know that person?

The same can be true of musical instruments. Just ask Alyssa Park, who at age 5 saw Itzhak Perlman playing violin on TV, and asked her mom if she could learn to play the violin instead of the piano.

"I have a distinct memory of feeling somehow connected to the violin," she recalled. "It might sound ridiculous, but it's similar to when you meet someone and you immediately know you are kindred spirits."

"Kindred" is putting it mildly. Park has since become an internationally acclaimed and much-in-demand violinist, performing in solo, ensemble and orchestral settings around the world. She has served as concertmaster of Thousand Oaks-based New West Symphony since 2015, is a founding member of the highly regarded Lyris Quartet, and has played on numerous film and television scores, serving several times as concertmaster of the Academy Awards orchestra.

Earlier this month, Park was a featured soloist for New West Symphony's first fall concert of the season, performing "Amalgamian," a world premiere violin concerto written for her by Los Angeles-based composer

Derrick Skye.

"It's not only important to learn the classics," she said, "but to use one's voice to share the music and compositions being created in our own time."

## INTERNATIONAL HONORS

Born and raised in Long Island and Lexington, Kentucky, Park grew up with parents who loved classical music, hence her early introduction to piano and then violin. At age 8, following the advice of an early violin teacher, she auditioned for Dorothy DeLay, who was Itzhak Perlman's teacher.

"I don't think I even realized that at the time," Park said. "It was all so incredible. She became my mentor, teacher and friend for the next couple decades."

At age 11, she performed with the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, followed by her New York City debut recital at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. The New York Times lauded her "unusually strong technique and a youthful sense of music making."

And at 16, Park became the youngest prize winner of the prestigious Tchaikovsky Violin Competition, held every four years in Russia.

"To be a part of this iconic competition was such an honor and an eye-opener," she said.

That performance allowed her to meet the Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer, which led her to sign with his European manager right after the competition. She has since performed extensively throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas as



**NEW WAVE** Alyssa Park (front, center) formed the Lyris Quartet 15 years ago. The quartet frequently performs the work of living Southern California composers. (Submitted)

# SPIRITS

a concert soloist, and with major chamber ensembles and symphony orchestras, including New West Symphony.

“I am grateful to be a part of such a community,” Park said. She has begun her 10th year with NWS. “It has been a challenge to bring audiences back since COVID. But through all of that, the musicians of the symphony have been continually dedicated to performing at the highest level. And Music Director Michael Christie has really brought a special energy to the orchestra, as well as his brilliant programming.”

Part of her enjoyment of her NWS association comes from New West Symphony’s involvement with its community and schools, “a vital part of its organization.” She has been involved in many of its children’s concerts, calling them “one of the most important things that the orchestra does. This is my favorite way to connect with the community.”

## ‘A PASSION PROJECT’

Another way she connects is via the Lyris Quartet, which Park co-founded 15 years ago as “a passion project to explore the string quartet repertoire,” and is now among the most sought-after ensembles on the West Coast. Described as “radiant, exquisite and powerfully engaged” by music critic Mark Swed of the Los Angeles Times, Lyris Quartet curates the “Hear Now” new music festival dedicated to performing the works of living Southern California composers.

“Playing chamber music with people I love and respect has been one of the most rewarding things in my life,” Park said of playing with violinist Shalini Vijayan, violist Luke Maurer and cellist Timothy Loo.

She also appreciates having the opportunity to serve as a musician and concertmaster for more than 100 television and film scores, and working with John Williams, James Newton Howard, Danny Elfman and Mychael Danna, to name a few.

### “I HAVE A DISTINCT MEMORY

of being somehow connected to the violin,” Alyssa Park says. *(Submitted)*



Continued on page 10 ►►





**THE LYRIS QUARTET** From left: Alyssa Park, violin; Timothy Loo, cello; Shalini Vijayan, violin; Luke Maurer, viola. (Submitted)

“This behind-the-scenes work has been a big part of my life in the past couple decades,” she said. Yet Park most enjoys the concert stage and performing new works, like the aforementioned “Amalgamatian.”

“Live music, especially these days, brings me the greatest joy, as well as bringing new music to audiences,” she said. “It is so important to value the artistic endeavors of the artists around you. There is no better way to connect with people than by honoring the traditions of the past and living in the present moment.”

## NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION

Park’s busy life also includes being a wife and raising a daughter, “nurturing her own talents and fostering a love of music.”

And whenever time allows, she is mentoring and teaching those who share her youthful passion for making music.

“Nurturing the next generation of musicians and recording artists is an important part of my life,” she said.

That includes serving as concertmaster of MUSE/IQUE, a vibrant L.A.-based music group conducted by Rachael Worby, whose “amazing outreach program” includes student matinees for youth who might not otherwise be able to experience live music.

“Education of our young people,” Park said, “is the key to keeping this music alive and thriving.” ▣

“**NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUSICIANS**” is a big part of Park’s life, who says her work with MUSE/IQUE and NWS’s Harmony Project is extremely rewarding.

### NEW WEST SYMPHONY

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