

Jeff Thayer, violin

Jeff Thayer is concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony as well as concertmaster and faculty member of the Music Academy of the West. His previous positions include assistant concertmaster at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, and concertmaster of the Canton (Ohio) Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Thayer has appeared as a soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, Jupiter Symphony, Pierre Monteux Festival Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, Canton Symphony Orchestra, Spartanburg Philharmonic, Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, Nittany Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Conservatory Orchestra of Cordoba, among others. He has also performed at such festivals as Mainly Mozart (San Diego) and Festival der Zukunft and Tibor Varga Festival, both in Switzerland. His awards include the Starling Foundation Award, the George Eastman Scholarship, and the performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music. Mr. Thayer also is a laureate of the Wieniawski Violin Competition (2001) and has won various competitions, including the Tuesday Musical Club Scholarship Auditions in Akron, Ohio, in 2000, the Cleveland Institute of Music Concerto Competition in 1999, the Fort Collins Symphony Young Artist Competition in 1999, and the American String Teachers Association Competition in Pennsylvania and Delaware in 1997.

Mr. Thayer is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, Eastman School of Music, and the Juilliard School's pre-college division, where he studied with William Preucil, Donald Weilerstein, Zvi Zeitlin, and Dorothy DeLay. He began violin lessons with his mother at age 3, and at 14 went to study with Jose Antonio Campos at the Conservatorio Superior (Cordoba, Spain). He attended Keshet Eilon (Israel), Ernen Musikdorf (Switzerland), Aspen Music Festival and School, New York String Orchestra Seminar, the Quartet Program, and as the 1992 Pennsylvania Governor Scholar, Interlochen Arts Camp.

Through the generosity of Joan and Irwin Jacobs and the Jacobs' Family Trust, the "Sir Bagshawe" Stradivarius dated 1708, is on loan to San Diego Symphony for use by Concertmaster Jeff Thayer.

Alexander Palamidis, violin

Alexander Palamidis is Principal Violin II with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, member of the San Diego Symphony String Quartet, and Concertmaster of Orchestra Nova in San Diego. He has been a member and soloist with many orchestras including Istanbul State Symphony, Denver Symphony, Austin Symphony, Austin Lyric Opera, Denver Chamber Orchestra, leader and conductor of the Istanbul Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Concertmaster with the Istanbul Radio String Orchestra, Glendale Chamber Orchestra, and former Acting Concertmaster with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra. He performed and toured with the L'Amoroso String Quartet. Prior to his appointment with San Diego Symphony he was offered the position of Principal First Violin with the Melbourne Symphony in Australia.

Alexander Palamidis earned a Master of Music in Violin Performance from the University of Southern California where he was a member of the USC String Quartet. He attended classes with emphasis on Chamber Music and Violin Performance at The Mozarteum Academy of Music in Salzburg Austria. A graduate of Istanbul Conservatory of Music, he also holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Palamidis has taught violin at the

Istanbul Conservatory of Music, La Sierra University and has given master classes with emphasis on orchestral excerpts. He is also very active in education, working with young musicians, chamber ensembles, coaching the strings at Westview High school and maintaining a busy private teaching studio.

When not playing the violin, Palamidis' special interests include Eastern philosophy, Japanese jazz-fusion, old violins and travel.

Che-Yen Chen, viola

Taiwanese violist Che-Yen Chen holds the Principal Viola position of the San Diego Symphony. Described by *The Strad* magazine as a musician whose "tonal distinction and essential musicality produced an auspicious impression," Mr. Chen has performed throughout the U.S. and abroad in venues such as Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jordon Hall, Library of Congress in D.C., Kimmel Center, Taiwan National Concert Hall, Wigmore Hall, and Snape Malting Concert Hall.

A founding member of the Formosa Quartet, the Amadeus prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition, Mr. Chen is an advocate of chamber music. A participant at the Ravinia Festival, Mr. Chen was featured in the festival's "Rising Star" series and the "Musicians from Ravinia" tour. Other festival appearances include the Kingston Chamber Music Festival, International Viola Congress, Mainly Mozart, Chamber Music International, La Jolla Summerfest, Primrose Festival, Bath International Music Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, Seattle Chamber Music Society Summer Festival, Taiwan Connection, Incontri in Terra di Siena, Emilia Romagna Festival, and numerous others.

Mr. Chen studied at The Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School under the guidance of Michael Tree, Joseph de Pasquale, and Paul Neubauer. Mr. Chen is currently teaching at San Diego State University, UC San Diego and McGill University in Montreal.

Yao Zhao, cello

Yao Zhao is the Cello Principal of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, and was Associate Cello Principal from 2005 to 2007. Born in Beijing in 1976, Zhao made his first appearance in concert at the age of five, and solo debut in the Beijing Concert Hall at age nine. That same year, he was also accepted to the China Central Conservatory of Music. For exceptional performance in a master class held by Professor Eleonore Schoenfeld, Mr. Zhao was chosen to continue his education on full scholarships at the Idyllwild Arts Academy and the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California.

Since winning a top prize at the First Chinese National Cello Competition in 1987, Mr. Zhao has kept a winning streak of thirteen competitions, awards and honors. The successful solo debut at Weill Recital Hall of Carnegie Hall in New York has been marked as one of his career highlights. Mr. Zhao has performed at renowned concert halls in more than forty cities around the world. Some of his festival appearances have included the Grand Teton Festival, the Ojai Music Festival, and the Asia Philharmonic Orchestra in Korea and Japan which gathers top Asian artists worldwide. Mr. Zhao has been interviewed by CNN, CBS, KTLA, GreekTV, and CCTV. Beyond a busy performance schedule, Mr. Zhao continues to dedicate himself to the education of youth in the arts. This year marks his 10th season teaching at the Idyllwild Arts Academy and the Idyllwild Arts Summer Festival.