



Danish String Quartet Press

23|24 SEASON

 UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

DANISH STRING QUARTET

FREDERIK ØLAND, violin

RUNE TONSGAARD SØRENSEN, violin

ASBJØRN NØRGAARD, viola

FREDRIK SCHØYEN SJÖLIN, cello

FRI, APR 19, 7:30 pm

Hodgson Concert Hall

Supported by

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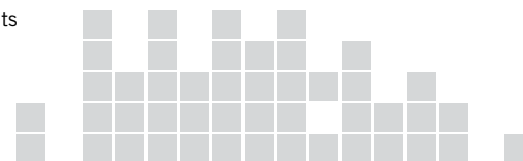
CHARLIE AND TERESA FRIEDLANDER

The Danish String Quartet is currently exclusive with ECM Records and has previously recorded for DaCapo and Cavi-Music/BR Klassik.

North American Representation:
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PROGRAM

HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)

Chacony in G Minor (arr. Britten) [5:30]

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 20, No. 3 [24:30]

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Menuet. Allegretto & Trio
- III. Poco Adagio
- IV. Allegro molto

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

String Quartet No. 7 in F Sharp Minor, Op. 108 [13:00]

- I. Allegretto
- II. Lento
- III. Allegro

INTERMISSION

DANISH STRING QUARTET (arr.)

Folk music arranged by the quartet

Program is subject to change.

PROGRAM NOTES

by Laurie Shulman ©2024

Chacony in G Minor

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

In 1945, Great Britain observed the 250th anniversary of Henry Purcell's death. The commemoration spurred renewed interest in England's greatest Baroque composer. As part of the celebration, Benjamin Britten—a lifelong admirer of Purcell's music—undertook arrangements of many Purcell compositions, including songs, instrumental works, and some of Purcell's stage works. In 1948, Britten arranged the Chacony for string quartet or string orchestra. In that modern iteration, the Chacony is arguably the best known of Britten's Purcell arrangements.

Henry Purcell is not your standard-issue chamber music composer. Celebrated as organist of Westminster Abbey for most of his career, he is best remembered today for his stage music: overtures, *entr'actes*, songs, dances, and some hybrid larger works that have been dubbed “semi-operas.” Lesser known are his compositions for consorts of viols, predecessors to the modern string family. Chacony is such a work, conceived for one on a part.

The term is an English variant of the French *chaconne*, a dance in slow triple meter with a repeated ground bass that provides the foundation for sequential variations. *Chaconnes* appear in French operas starting in the late 1650s. The dance seems to have found its way to England in the 1670s. Purcell's Chacony is part of a manuscript from about 1680 that contains other 4-part string fantasias.

Purcell was comfortable with complex structures, particularly in his string fantasias. He especially enjoyed the challenge of writing above a ground bass. Examples occur in *The Fairy Queen*, *The Gordian Knot*, *King Arthur*, and *Dido and Aeneas*, as well as in his instrumental compositions. This Chacony for strings merges aspects of dance, fantasy, and concert piece. Purcell's rich harmonic imagination colors the 18 variations in provocative ways, taking advantage of chromaticism in the underlying bass to trigger unusual harmonies. His voicing is also creative, sometimes transferring the ground bass to viola or even violin, leaving the cello temporarily silent. He calls on contrapuntal devices more commonly associated with Bach. This Chacony is a refreshing and persuasive reminder of England's rich musical heritage.

Quartet in G Minor, Op. 20, No. 3 **Franz Joseph Haydn** (1732-1809)

Haydn went to work for the princely house of Esterházy in 1761, composing and supervising the performance of church music and operas. His responsibilities were extensive. He rehearsed, coached, and directed all other facets of in-house musical activity for both sacred and entertainment music. The prince's court orchestra included some excellent players, who inspired Haydn to write many of his instrumental concertos.

Between 1769 and 1772, his duties were somewhat lighter, permitting him some free time to compose works beyond those specifically requested by the Prince. In string quartets, which he still called *divertimenti à quattro* [divertimenti in four parts] on his manuscripts, he could write in a

concertante style for his first chair players. The seamless elegance and virtuosic difficulty of the string writing is a reminder how accomplished were the Prince's musicians.

The Opus 20 quartets, which date from 1772, have a curious publication history. Haydn waited nearly three years after composing them to see them in print. Johann André published the first edition in Offenbach-am-Main in 1775. Four years later, an edition issued in Berlin by the house of Hummel pictured a rising sun on its frontispiece. The image stuck, resulting in the set quartets becoming collectively known as the "Sun" Quartets. A Viennese edition, published by Artaria in 1801, was dedicated to Baron Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz, who is better known as a friend and patron of Beethoven.

The phrase that recurs most frequently in written discussions of the Op. 20 quartets is "emancipation of the cello." The early 1770s were a period of transition in music. *Rococo* and *style galant* elements were ceding to what we call the high classic style. Symphonies composed during these years still include harpsichord as one component of continuo; the other key component was cello. Although the cello anchored the bass line in late Baroque and early classical-era music, it was relegated to a supporting harmonic role, and rarely assumed a melodic lead.

In Opus 20, Haydn made a decisive change in the quartet fabric by allotting significantly more importance to the cello part. Four of the six quartets have fugal finales in which, by definition, the players have more balanced distribution of material. The G minor quartet on this evening's

program is one of the two that do *not* have a fugal finale; however, it has its own distinguishing features.

Haydn's rhythmic structure is irregular. In contrast to the classical balance of four- and eight-bar phrases we associate with later Haydn and Mozart, here the phrase lengths vary: three-, five-, even seven-measures. So too does the articulation: from the opening gesture, both bowed and staccato, with an overall downward thrust punctuated by angular leaps. The first movement is monothematic, meaning that Haydn derives his second theme from the first, a favorite ploy. In fact, attentive listeners will discern a subtle motivic linkage in the openings to all four movements.

The placement of the Minuet second, rather than third, is unusual. Once again we have irregular phrase lengths. The second violin has a melodic solo in the trio section, with the first violin accompanying in a lower register. An improvisatory feel, almost like a fantasy, prevails in the *Poco adagio*, with some marvelous wanderings for the cello. The finale is both terse and playful: a concise sonata form that still manages to interject a hint of jocularity, despite its minor mode.

Quartet No. 7 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 108

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Generally speaking, Shostakovich expressed his more public thoughts through his symphonies, reserving his more personal and private musings for the string quartets. The Seventh Quartet is indisputably a personal work.

The composer was married three times: first to Nina Varzar, then later briefly to Margarita Kainova (1956-59), and

finally in 1962 to Irina Supinskaya. He dedicated this quartet to the memory of his first wife, Nina. The composer had lived with her from 1929 until her death in 1955. She was the mother of his children, Galya (b.1936) and Maxim (b.1938). The quartet is the briefest of his fifteen, with three movements compressed into a pithy thirteen minutes. It has been called his shortest masterpiece.

What, if anything, does this brilliant and polished quartet tell us about the composer or the woman he apparently mourned and honored in its pages? It dates from 1960, the year of the Eighth Quartet. That frankly autobiographical work expressed Shostakovich's horror at the atrocities of war. In September 1960, Shostakovich was accepted by the Composers' Union as a candidate member of the Communist Party. He had completed the Seventh Quartet in March; the Beethoven Quartet played the premiere in May at the Leningrad Philharmonic. Consider the following quotations from Shostakovich's writings, both published in 1960.

I am glad that I work for the composers' organization of our country and represent the most progressive, most humane music in the world, that I represent Soviet culture. I hope to use my work to justify my holding the high title of Member of the Communist Party. *Pravda*, 15 September 1960

My work has always been done under the guidance of the Communist Party, whose instructions I considered binding, and tried to fulfil to the best of my abilities. *Literature I Zhizn*, 2 October 1960

Certainly there is nothing in the Seventh Quartet to indicate that he was composing under anyone's instructions. The piece has no programmatic associations beyond certain theories that it is in some way a musical portrait of Nina. According to Shostakovich's friends and biographers Dmitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky, by the time he undertook work on this quartet:

... the bitterness of loss had softened. What remained were unclouded memories, regret, and sadness. Obviously, this was a leave-taking; Shostakovich was bidding farewell to one who had shared his life for more than 20 years.

Whether audited as requiem, loving tribute, or absolute music, the quartet makes for fascinating listening and raises more questions than it answers. Shostakovich demonstrates a masterly understanding of string playing, the quartet medium, and the demands of quartet form. The first movement, dominated by the rhythmic motive of an anapest (short short LONG), is a sonata structure with truncated development. The anapest motive suggests the knocking on the door of the KGB in the middle of the night, a sound that would have struck terror into the heart of any Soviet citizen in the 1930s or 1940s.

The slow movement, a tripartite *Lento*, is played with muted strings throughout. The descending four notes of the violin line that recur throughout the movement are a quotation from the Russian Mass for the dead. All Russians would have recognized this music and divined its significance, especially since sacred music was forbidden under the Soviet regime. In any case,

Shostakovich was making another gesture toward his deceased wife. If we wish to perceive grief in this work, here is its most funereal manifestation.

The quartet concludes with a fiery, argumentative Allegro that borrows elements from scherzo, slow introduction, and fugue. Shostakovich resolves the frenzy with unexpected quietude, calming the strings to an Allegretto dance that alludes to the music of the opening movement. (Listen for the anapest ‘knocking.’) He concludes the quartet in rich F-sharp major, with *pizzicato* cello emphasizing the unanticipated ray of sunlight. But are we really intended to accept this ‘happy ending’ at face value? As Ian MacDonald has noted:

Conceivably the secret of the Seventh Quartet is known to the Shostakovich family and will one day be made public. For now, its crystalline precision and intimate eloquence are sufficient in themselves.

Danish Folk Songs Arranged by the Danish String Quartet

The Danish String Quartet has graciously provided the following background to their folk song set, which appears on their 2014 CD ‘Wood Works’ on Dacapo Classical. The text, reprinted by permission, has been slightly modified for concert performance.

We are in the tiny village of Sønderho on the island of Fanø. It is the westernmost Danish island, and the wind lashes the shore relentlessly. Today is the third Sunday of July — it’s ‘Sønderho Day’, a local day of

celebration, music and dance. From the village hall the sounds of fiddles can be heard, and people are dancing round and round for hours. The music is simple, yet with a touch of exotic melancholy.

In the forests of southern Sweden we find Lasse. He is a traveling fiddler and he provides the music for festive occasions. Lasse is poor, so he will play you some music if you give him a meal. As he can’t afford new strings for his violin, he tunes the ones he has down to make them last slightly longer. His claim to fame is a waltz he is always playing: a little melody that people enjoy dancing to. Sometimes Lasse plays it to himself while sitting alone in his wooden shed.

Up in Norway a young man has just returned from his Grand Tour of Europe. While passing through the Rhineland, he picked up a very popular dance that everyone danced in the elegant salons. He doesn’t know the name of the dance, so he simply calls it a ‘Reinlønder’. Wanting to introduce it to his friends, he writes a couple of tunes to accompany the new dance.

Folk music is the music of all the small places. It is the local music, but as such it is also the music of everywhere and everyone. Like rivers, the melodies and dances have flowed slowly from region to region: Whenever a fiddler stumbled on a melody, he would play it and make it his own before passing it on. You don’t own a folk tune, you simply borrow it for a while.

We have borrowed and arranged a selection of tunes that are all very close to our hearts. We perform them as a string quartet, one of the most powerful musical vehicles we know of. The string

quartet is a pure construct: Four simple instruments made of wood. But in all its simplicity the string quartet is capable of expressing a myriad of colors, nuances, and emotions — just like folk music. Our idea is to marry these two simple but powerful things: the folk music and the string quartet. Normally the string quartet has been reserved for the classical masters.

Now we want to see what happens when we let the Nordic folk music flow through the wooden instruments of the string quartet.

Does it work? We hope so. And remember: We simply borrowed these tunes. They have already been returned.—*The Danish String Quartet*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DANISH STRING QUARTET

The Grammy-nominated Danish String Quartet continues to assert its preeminence among the world’s finest string quartets. Celebrated for their “intense blend, extreme dynamic variation (in which they seem glued together), perfect intonation even on harmonics, and constant vitality and flow” (*Gramophone*) and renowned for the palpable joy they exude in music-making, the Danish String Quartet has become one of today’s most in-demand classical quartets, performing to sold-out concert halls around the world. The Danish Quartet celebrated their 20th Anniversary in 2022-2023, having formed when violinists Frederik Øland and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen and violist Asbjørn Nørgaard were teenagers under the mentorship of Tim Frederiksen of Copenhagen’s Royal Danish Academy of Music. In 2008, the three Danes were joined by Norwegian cellist Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin.

The Danish Quartet’s inventive and intriguing programming and repertoire choices have produced critically acclaimed original projects and commissions as well as popular arrangements of Scandinavian folk music. This season, the Quartet will complete its DOPPELGÄNGER series, an ambitious four-year international commissioning project pairs world premieres from four composers — Bent Sørensen, Lotta Wennäkoski, Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, and Thomas Adès — with late major chamber works by Schubert. Each season, the Quartet has performed a world premiere on a program with its doppelgänger — the Schubert quartet or quintet that inspired it — culminating in 2024 in the premiere of a quintet by Adès, after the String Quintet in C Major. The DOPPELGÄNGER pieces are commissioned by the Danish String Quartet with the support of Carnegie Hall, Cal Performances, UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures, Vancouver Recital Society, Flagey in Brussels, and Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam.

In summer 2023 the Quartet performed at Ravinia and at Tanglewood’s Seiji Ozawa Hall. The 2023-2024 season sees them on tour in eighteen cities in the USA and Canada and venues in Norway, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Brussels, Italy, and their home of Denmark.



The Danish String Quartet's most recent recording project is PRISM, a series of five discs on ECM New Series that explores the symbiotic musical and contextual relationships between Bach fugues, Beethoven string quartets, and works by Shostakovich, Schnittke, Bartók, Mendelssohn, and Webern. The final disc, PRISM V, was released to great acclaim in April 2023, with *The Strad* praising the quartet's "refined, coherent and erudite performances, which combine an exhilarating sweep with minute attention to details of phrasing and timbre." The Quartet's discography reflects the ensemble's special affinity for Scandinavian composers, with the complete quartets of Carl Nielsen (Dacapo, 2007 and 2008) and Adès, Nørgård & Abrahamsen (their debut on ECM in 2016). They also released two discs of traditional Scandinavian folk music, *Wood Works* (Dacapo 2014) and *Last Leaf* (ECM 2017), which was chosen as one of the top classical albums of the year by NPR, Spotify and *The New York Times*. A third folk recording is planned for release in 2023 on ECM.

The Quartet takes an active role in reaching new audiences through special projects. In 2007, they established the DSQ Festival, which takes place in intimate and informal settings in Copenhagen. In 2016, they inaugurated a concert series, Series of Four, in which they both perform and invite colleagues to appear.

The Danish String Quartet has been the recipient of many awards and appointments, including *Musical America's* 2020 Ensemble of the Year and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust. The Quartet was named in 2013 as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist and appointed to the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). The Quartet was awarded the 2010 NORDMETALL-Ensemble Prize at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany, and, in 2011, received the Carl Nielsen Prize, the highest cultural honor in Denmark. www.danishquartet.com.

University of Georgia Performing Arts Center Lobby Gallery Current Exhibition



Paradigm Shift

by Margaret Morrison

Now through July 26

Paradigm Shift springs from the artist's sense of loss she experienced when her religious perspective fell apart. Sifting through the ruins, she built a new faith paradigm and found deeper spirituality and inner peace. Each painting in the series traces the steps of her journey from trusting follower to a questioning believer, through a terrible sadness and eventually, transcendence.

Margaret Morrison is a Professor of Art and Area Chair of Drawing and Painting in the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia. She has been represented by Woodward Gallery since 1995. Her solo exhibition, Paradigm Shift, was featured at the Lyndon House Art Center in 2023. She was awarded Best in Show at ArtFields 2023 Fine Art Exhibition and Competition. Her paintings are currently in Picture This, traveling to art museums throughout Georgia.

Monday-Friday, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm



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