

Castalian String Quartet

Biography

Sini Simonen, violin
Daniel Roberts, violin
Natalie Loughran, viola
Steffan Morris, cello

The 'Castalians' captivated with earthy dark timbres. With passion, they threw themselves into the despair of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's last quartet Op. 80 as well as into two movements from Jean Sibelius' "Voces intimae"... What an entertaining, stimulating, witty evening!

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Harald Eggebrecht, 4/4/2022

The Castalian String Quartet is taking the international chamber music scene by storm. Gaining renown for interpretations "full of poetry, joy and sorrow, realised to such perfection" (The Observer), they are the first *Hans Keller String Quartet in Residence* at the University of Oxford and were named *Young Artist of the Year* at the 2019 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards. In August 2023, they premiered Mark-Anthony Turnage's new string quartet *Awake* at the Edinburgh International Festival, followed by the Belgian and Netherlands premieres at de Singel Antwerp and the Concertgebouw Amsterdam.

Formed in 2011, the quartet studied with Oliver Wille at the Hochschule für Musik, Hannover, before being selected by the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2016. They were awarded First Prize at the 2015 Lyon International Chamber Music Competition and in 2018 were recipients of the inaugural Merito String Quartet Award and Valentin Erben Prize, and a prestigious Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship.

Recent debuts include New York's Carnegie Hall, the Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie and Paris Philharmonie. In 2018, they recorded Haydn's Op.76 quartets for the Wigmore Live label and were joined by pianists Stephen Hough and Cédric Tiberghien, violist Isabel Charisius and clarinettist Michaels Collins for a Brahms and Schumann series in the 2019-20 season. The last two seasons at Wigmore Hall had a focus on the quartets by Benjamin Britten and Bela Bartok, the current season will feature late quartets by Schubert. The quartet often appears at festivals such as Spoleto USA, Aldeburgh, North Norfolk, Cheltenham, East Neuk, Lockenhaus, Kuhmo and Heidelberger Frühling. Recent and upcoming premieres include works by Charlotte Bray, Edmund Finnis, Mark Simpson, Simon Rowland-Jones and Francesco Antonioni. In the 2024/25 season, the Castalian String Quartet will make its debuts at Konzerthaus Berlin, Concertgebouw Bruges and in the chamber music cycles of Unione musicale Turin and Helsinki Seriös amongst others.

The Castalian String Quartet's 2022 release *Between Two Words* (Delphian Records), presenting music by Orlando di Lasso, Thomas Adès, Ludwig van Beethoven and John Dowland, was given a double five-star review as BBC Music Magazine's *Album of the Month*: "this outstanding disc offers listeners a true philosophical journey...a series of intricately connected works, each performed with rare beauty and originality by a quartet at the height of its powers...[the *Heiliger Dankgesang* from Beethoven Op. 132] is nothing short of a revelation in its lucidity of line and sheer beauty of sound." Eleanor Alberga's *Tower* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Thomas Kemp was released in May 2024 on Resonus Classics.

The quartet's name is derived from the Castalian Spring in the ancient city of Delphi. According to Greek mythology, the nymph Castalia transformed herself into a fountain to evade Apollo's pursuit, thus creating a source of poetic inspiration for all who drink from her waters. Committed to inspiring a diverse audience for classical music, the Castalians have performed everywhere from the great concert halls to maximum security prisons and even the Colombian rainforest. When not on stage, Finnish first violinist Sini Simonen bags Munros, American violist Natalie Loughran mixes mean cocktails and the Welshmen, second violinist Daniel Roberts and cellist Steffan Morris, get overly emotional about rugby.

2024/25 season

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