

Castalian String Quartet

Biography

Sini Simonen, violin
Daniel Roberts, violin
Ruth Gibson, viola
Steffan Morris, cello

...a feisty group, with a real personality and strong interpretative ideas. Ensemble and balance were always spot-on. The Guardian, 8/1/2020

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 have recently been announced as the first Hans Keller String Quartet in Residence at the University of Oxford and are Artist-in-Residence at the Wigmore Hall in their home city of London.

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. The ensemble was named Young Artist of the Year at the 2019 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards.

Recent debuts include New York’s Carnegie Hall, the Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie, Paris Philharmonie and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. 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 clarinetist Michaels Collins for a Brahms and Schumann series in the 2019-20 season. Their next Wigmore Hall cycle will feature all three quartets by Benjamin Britten. The quartet often appears at festivals such as Spoleto USA, Aldeburgh, North Norfolk, Cheltenham, East Neuk, Lockenhaus and Heidelberger Frühling. Recent and upcoming premieres include works by Charlotte Bray, Edmund Finnis, Mark Simpson, Simon Rowland-Jones and Sir Mark-Anthony Turnage.

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.”

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, Irish violist Ruth Gibson teaches yoga and the Welshmen, second violinist Daniel Roberts and cellist Steffan Morris, get overly emotional about rugby.

Season 2022/23

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