

Gringolts Quartet, String Quartet

Biography

Ilya Gringolts, violin
Anahit Kurtikyan, violin
Silvia Simionescu, viola
Claudius Herrmann, violoncello

A passionate, committed account that seems to employ 360 degrees of expressive technique. There's a wealth of characterisation within this richly unified, bronze-dark ensemble. A deep-dug, chunky tone, often quite rugged, is offset by moments of intense sweetness, as well as great delicacy and refinement. Besides being beautifully balanced and transparent, some of the softest passages acquire an 'innigkeit' (introspection) that can make you hold your breath. BBC Music Magazine, Jessica Duchon, 9 July 2024 (about the CD with string quintets by Brahms)

A lively, intense dialogue between the eras - that is a fundamental concern of Ilya Gringolts, one of the outstanding violinists of his generation and primarius of the Gringolts Quartet. Founded in 2008, the string quartet stands for a luminous, unified and at the same time extremely differentiated ensemble sound: glowing, dense, warmly shining like bronze and gold, with maximum expressive effect, then again mercurially agile and dynamic, transparent and audible down to the smallest detail. The Gringolts Quartet's interpretations are characterised by great musical maturity and impressive technical superiority, which is never superficial but always at the service of the music.

The international ensemble - Ilya Gringolts has Russian roots, violinist Anahit Kurtikyan comes from Armenia, violist Silvia Simionescu from Romania and cellist Claudius Herrmann from Germany - is based in Zurich and has made a name for itself in major concert halls and at major international festivals. The four musicians were already friends through many chamber music encounters before the quartet was founded and have played together in various formations; Claudius Herrmann and Anahit Kurtikyan played together in the renowned Amati Quartet Zurich. In recent seasons, the quartet has performed at the Salzburg Festival, the Lucerne Festival, the Edinburgh Festival, the Verbier Festival and the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, among others; It also performs regularly in internationally renowned concert halls such as the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, the Wigmore Hall London, the Philharmonie Luxembourg, the Stockholm Konserthuset, the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, the St Peter's Philharmonie, L'Auditori Barcelona, the Sociedad Filarmónica de Bilbao, Lugano Musica and the Società di Concerti in Milan.

The quartet maintains musical partnerships with renowned artists such as Jörg Widmann, Andreas Ottensamer, Malin Hatelius, James Boyd, Christian Poltéra, Katia Skanavi and Alexander Lonquich. The musical encounter with the American pianist Leon Fleisher (1928 - 2022) has enriched the quartet in a lasting way. Just as important to the four musicians as the classical repertoire is the performance of contemporary music, including works by Heinz Holliger, Valentyn Silvestrov, György Kurtág, Marc-André Dalbavie, Jörg Widmann and Lotta Wennäkoski.

The quartet can also be heard regularly in quintet formations - currently with both Brahms and Mozart string quintets. The Brahms quintets with the sought-after Finnish violist Lilli Maijala have been released by BIS in June 2024 and already received rave reviews, while the Mozart quintets will be recorded with the renowned American violist Lilly Francis on period instruments and gut strings for the Outhere label. The quintet will also be touring Italy in this formation. Other highlights of this season include performances by the quartet at the Turku Music Festival, the Settimane Musicali di Ascona, the Mizmorim Chamber Music Festival in Basel and the Heidelberger Frühling.

The Gringolts Quartet first attracted attention with its exquisite CD recordings of works by Schumann and Brahms. The series of awards began in 2012 with the ECHO Klassik for the first recording of Walter Braunfels' quintets together with cellist David Geringas. The recording of the quintets by Glazunov and Taneyev with cellist Christian Poltéra received the Diapason d'Or in 2016. The CD with octets by Mendelssohn and Enescu, released jointly with Meta4 on BIS in 2017, was honoured with the German Record Critics' Quarterly Award.

The Gringolts Quartet is also known for its outstanding Schoenberg expertise: a recording of the String Quartets Nos. 2 and

4, praised by the press as a 'reference recording', was released by BIS in 2017. The second volume with Schoenberg's Quartets Nos. 1 and 3, released in 2022, was awarded a Diapason d'Or.

All members of the Gringolts Quartet play on rare Italian instruments: Ilya Gringolts plays a Stradivarius 'ex-Prové', Cremona 1719, Anahit Kurtikyan a Camillo Camilli violin, Mantua 1733, Silvia Simionescu a Jacobus Januarius viola, Cremona 1660 and Claudius Herrmann a Maggini cello, Brescia 1600. Incidentally, Prince Golitsyn, a great admirer of Beethoven, was once the first to play the composer's last commissioned string quartets on this instrument.

2024/25 season

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