

Biography

Kuss Quartett

Jana Kuss (violin)
Oliver Wille (violin)
William Coleman (viola)
Mikayel Hakhnazaryan (cello)



www.kuss-quartett.de

"Each sound, each phrase, each newly conceived repeat seemed to have been cleared of dust, re-examined and lovingly repolished," was the judgement of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* after a 2005 concert by the Berlin-based Kuss Quartet. The ensemble's readiness to experiment is manifest not only in its engagement with early and new music, but also in its interpretations of the standard quartet repertoire, informed by an awareness that – in their time – many of these works were groundbreaking in their impact.

Subtly, but distinctively charismatic, the Kuss Quartet is firmly established in the elite of the world's string quartets, having initially come to prominence in 2002 with first prizes from the Deutscher Musikrat and the Borciani String Quartet Competition in Reggio Emilia; a Borlotti-Buitoni award followed in 2003, as did the group's selection for the European Concert Hall Organisation's Rising Stars programme. The Kuss Quartet's schedule now features such venues as Carnegie Hall in New York, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, London's Wigmore Hall and, in its home city of Berlin, the Philharmonie. Its many festival engagements have included the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, Salzburg and Edinburgh.

While never compromising their high artistic standards, the members of the Kuss Quartet actively reach beyond the audience of chamber-music aficionados. They draw in new listeners by complementing innovative and creative programming with verbal commentaries – for instance in the ongoing series of concerts, *Explica*, staged at Hamburg's prestigious Laeishalle. In cooperation with Kulturradio, run by Berlin's regional broadcaster RBB, the Kuss Quartet regularly appears in the Watergate nightclub in the city's hip Kreuzberg area, performing composers like Ligeti and Lachenmann for an enthusiastic young audience before handing over to the evening's DJ. Other initiatives combine musical and literary art-forms, notably in regular collaborations with the distinguished German actor Udo Samel with whom they will be performing at the Rheingau Festival, and Beethovenfest Bonn amongst many other places. With their refreshing approach to the genre of the string quartet, and to its masterpieces, the players take the members of their audience on a fascinating voyage of discovery and rediscovery.

The breadth of the Kuss Quartett's repertoire is exemplified in the Sony BMG release *Bridges*, which, creating connections across the centuries, juxtaposes transcriptions of Renaissance composers (Lassus, Bennet, Dowland) with works by Adès, Kurtág und Stravinsky. After the success of this CD, another "composed programme" will be recorded, "Theme Russe", combining, among others, original works and transcriptions by Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, and Schnittke. This will be released on the celebrated English label Onyx Classics, with whom they began a recording relationship, starting with a CD released in March 2011 of Schubert and Berg.

Artistic partnerships have developed with such artists as Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Miklós Perényi, Kirill Gerstein, and Mojca Erdmann, with whom they will also be performing with in the 2011/12 season. In January 2012 the quartet will be a guest of the Camerata Bern, as both soloist and artistic directors during a week-long series of concerts.

2011/2012

**This biography is to be reproduced without any changes, omissions or additions,
unless expressly authorized by artist management.**