

"We need the inspiration
from the audience"

QUATUOR ÉBÈNE

PIERRE COLOMBET (VIOLIN), GABRIEL LE MAGADURE (VIOLIN),
MARIE CHILEMME (VIOLA), RAPHAËL MERLIN (VIOLONCELLO)

said Raphaël Merlin in an interview with the NZZ in Spring 2020, this was one of the central ideas of their "Beethoven Around the World" project. Between May 2019 and January 2020 the quartet recorded Beethoven's 16 string quartets in a worldwide project on 6 continents. With this complete recording, the four celebrated their 20th stage anniversary, which they then crowned with performances of the complete string quartet cycle in major European venues such as the Philharmonie de Paris or the Alte Oper Frankfurt. Invitations from Carnegie Hall New York, the Verbier Festival and the Vienna Konzerthaus were also on the agenda.

After studies with the Quatuor Ysaÿe in Paris as well as with Gábor Takács, Eberhard Feltz and György Kurtág, the unprecedented and outstanding success at the 2004 ARD Music Competition followed, marking the beginning of the Quatuor Ébène's rise to fame, which resulted in numerous other prizes and awards. For example: In 2005 the quartet was awarded the Belmont Prize of the Forberg-Schneider Foundation, in 2007 it was prizewinner of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, and in 2019 - as first ensemble ever – it was honored with the Frankfurt Music Prize.

In addition to the traditional repertoire, the quartet also dives into other styles ("A string quartet that can easily morph into a jazz band" New York Times, 2009). What began in 1999 as a distraction in the university's practice rooms - improvising on jazz standards & pop songs - has become a trademark of Quatuor Ébène. To date the quartet has released 3 albums in these genres, Fiction (2010), Brazil (2014) and Eternal Stories (2017). The free approach to various styles creates a tension that is beneficial to every aspect of their artistic work. The complexity of their oeuvre has been greeted enthusiastically by audiences and critics.

Quatuor Ébène's albums, with recordings of Bartók, Beethoven, Debussy, Haydn, Fauré and the Mendelssohn siblings, have received numerous awards, including Gramophone, BBC Music Magazine and the Midem Classic Award. In 2015 & 2016 the musicians have dedicated themselves to the theme "Lied". They participated in the album "Green (Mélodies françaises)" by Philippe Jaroussky and released a Schubert album with Matthias Goerne (arrangements for string quartet, baritone and double bass by Raphaël Merlin) and the Schubert String Quintet with Gautier Capuçon.

With their charismatic playing, their fresh approach to tradition and their open engagement with new forms, the musicians have been successful in reaching a wide audience of young listeners and in conveying their talent in regular master classes at the Paris Conservatoire. In January 2021, the quartet was commissioned by the University of Music and Performing Arts in Munich to establish a string quartet class as part of the newly founded „Quatuor Ébène Academy“. Since autumn 2020, Raphaël Merlin is professor of chamber music in Munich.

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After close to 21 years of constant touring, the quartet has taken a sabbatical and will be back on stage in October 2021 with concerts at the philharmonic halls of Luxembourg, Paris, Berlin & Cologne as well as Carnegie Hall in New York, and the Vienna Konzerthaus, to name just a few. With their colleagues of the Belcea Quartet, the four will form an octet and will be touring with Mendelssohn and Enescu.

Instruments & bows

Pierre Colombet is playing two violins: a 1717 Antonio Stradivari violin kindly loaned by a generous sponsor through the Beares International Violin Society and a 1736 Matteo Goffriller violin generously loaned by Gabriele Forberg-Schneider as well as a bow by Charles Tourte (Paris, 19th century) also loaned by Gabriele Forberg-Schneider.

Gabriel Le Magadure is playing two violins: a fine violin by Giuseppe Guarneri Del Gesù (from the period 1728-1730) loaned by the Beares International Violin Society and a violin from around 1740 with a Guarneri label loaned by Gabriele Forberg-Schneider. He plays a bow by Dominique Pecatte (ca.1845) loaned by Gabriele Forberg-Schneider.

Marie Chilemme is playing a viola by Marcellus Hollmayr, Füssen (1625) loaned by Gabriele Forberg-Schneider, prior possession of Mathieu Herzog.

Raphaël Merlin is playing two cellos: an instrument by Carlo Tononi, Venice (approx. 1720) loaned by the Beares International Violin Society and an instrument by Andrea Guarneri (1666/1680) from Cremona also generously loaned by Gabriele Forberg-Schneider.

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