

„Overwhelming, sensational, at the moment peerlessly good”

Martin Wilkening, Berliner Zeitung, January 2018

CUARTETO CASALS

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Biography

Founded in 1997 at the Escuela Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Cuarteto Casals is celebrating their 25th anniversary in the season of 2022/2023. The anniversary program “Bach – The Art of the Fugue” is linked to essential questions of a string quartet: “When should the identity of the individual cede to the needs of the collective? Are we one or are we four? To examine this issue at its root, we have chosen to celebrate our anniversary by returning to the most profound examination of musical counterpoint in Western history: Bach’s ‘The Art of the Fugue’. Four parts, no instrumentation specified, no indications of how to execute the notes and one great enigma: how four distinct voices can retain their individuality while together creating a coherent whole.” This program will be performed e.g. at Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, the Berlin Konzerthaus, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Konserthus Stockholm and at the Heidelberger Frühling.

Another highlight of the anniversary season includes performances of John Adams *Absolute Jest* – a unique and rarely played piece for String Quartet and orchestra (which premiered 2012 in San Francisco) – in Bilbao and Alicante. Furthermore, Cuarteto Casals will play a three-concerts cycle at Wigmore Hall in London in June 2023, they will perform at the Festival de Canaria in January 2023, play concerts at Konzerthaus Dortmund, Philharmonie Luxembourg and Auditorio Nacional de Música CNDM in Madrid and will tour the US in February 2023.

Since winning First Prizes at the London and Brahms-Hamburg competitions, Cuarteto Casals has been a repeated guest at the world’s most prestigious concert halls including Carnegie Hall, Philharmonie Cologne, Cité de la Musique Paris, Schubertiade in Schwarzenberg and Concertgebouw Amsterdam, among many others around the world. Since September 2020, the quartet is artistic director of the String Quartet Biennale Barcelona.

The quartet has compiled a substantial discography with the harmonia mundi label, including to date 16 CD’s, with repertoire ranging from lesser known Spanish composers Arriaga and Toldrá to Viennese classics Mozart, Haydn, Schubert and Brahms, through 20th Century greats Debussy, Ravel and Zemlinsky, as well as a live Blue-Ray recording of the complete Schubert quartets for Neu Records. In May 2020, to coincide with the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth, the third box-set of a three-volume recording of his quartets was released on the harmonia mundi label; all three volumes received great critical acclaim. In September 2021, the second album featuring Mozart’s “Haydn Quartets” was released – together with the first CD from 2014, the series “Dedicated to Joseph Haydn” is now complete. “The Strad” writes about the new

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release: "Above all this remarkable group plays with a sensitivity of phrase, dynamic and texture that sets new standards in this much-recorded repertoire. [...] A superlative disc."

A prize from the prestigious Burletti-Buitoni Trust in London enabled the quartet to begin a collection of matching Baroque and Classical period bows which it uses for works from Purcell through Schubert, refining its ability to distinguish between diverse musical styles. In addition, the quartet has been profoundly influenced by its work with living composers, especially György Kurtág, and has given the world premiere of quartets written by leading Spanish composers, including a new concerto for string quartet and orchestra by Francisco Coll, premiered with the Orquesta Nacional de España.

In recognition of its unique contributions to the cultural life within Catalunya and throughout Spain, Cuarteto Casals has been acknowledged as cultural ambassadors by the Generalitat of Catalunya and the Institut Ramon Lull, as well as the Ministerio de Cultura. Past awards include the Premio Nacional de Música, the Premi Nacional de Cultura de Catalunya and the Premi Ciutat Barcelona. The quartet performs yearly on the extraordinary collection of decorated Stradivarius instruments in the Royal Palace in Madrid.

Cuarteto Casals often appears on television and radio throughout Europe and North America, and in addition to giving much sought-after masterclasses, is quartet in residence at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Den Haag and at the Escola Superior de Musica de Catalunya in Barcelona, where all four members reside.

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