

**“Is there a typical Cuarteto Casals sound? Definitely. It is characterized by a maximum, extremely delicate penetration of the score and a multi-layered sound that always has something fluorescent, glassy.”**

Alexander Dick, Badische Zeitung, September 2022

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## CUARTETO CASALS

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VERA MARTÍNEZ MEHNER (VIOLIN), ABEL TOMÀS (VIOLIN),  
JONATHAN BROWN (VIOLA), ARNAU TOMÀS (CELLO)

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### Biography

Founded in 1997 at the Escuela Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Cuarteto Casals celebrated their 25th anniversary in the past season 2022/2023. Since its foundation and the award of first prizes at the International String Quartet Competition in London and the International Johannes Brahms Competition in Hamburg, literally the whole world has been able to convince itself that the Cuarteto Casals, with its distinctive tonal language and brilliance, is one of the best string quartets in the world. They are now an irreplaceable part of many concert and chamber music series in Europe, North America and Asia, and have been the artistic directors of the Barcelona String Quartet Biennale since 2020.

In the upcoming season 2023/2024, concerts featuring their anniversary program “Bach – The Art of the Fugue” are planned again: e.g. as part of their Asian tour in Tokyo in November 2023, in Madrid at the Auditorio Nacional de Música (CNDM) or at the Paris Philharmonie in January 2024. “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? 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.”

Further highlights of this season include a residence in Valladolid with performances of John Adams *Absolute Jest* – a unique piece for String Quartet and orchestra (which premiered 2012 in San Francisco) – that has been presented in Spain by the Quartet already in the past season, as well as a Shostakowich cycle at the l’Auditori in Barcelona. Further great concerts will take them to Paris, Rome, Amsterdam and Helsinki, as well as to Switzerland: among others to Geneva, Lugano and Basel.

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 20<sup>th</sup> Century greats

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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 250<sup>th</sup> 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 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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## 2023/2024

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