

“Personal and profound” (BBC Music Magazine): “With no ifs or buts, the ‘Schumanns’ are among the best quartets in the world” (SZ) and certainly “one of the most exciting string quartets of the present day.” (Fono Forum)

SCHUMANN QUARTETT

ERIK SCHUMANN (VIOLINE), KEN SCHUMANN (VIOLINE),
VEIT HERTENSTEIN (VIOLA), MARK SCHUMANN (VIOLONCELLO)

The Schumann Quartet has reached a stage where anything is possible, because it has dispensed with certainties. This also has consequences for audiences, which from one concert to the next have to be prepared for all eventualities: “A work really develops only in a live performance,” the quartet says. “That is ‘the real thing’, because we ourselves never know what will happen. On the stage, all imitation disappears, and you automatically become honest with yourself. Then you can create a bond with the audience – communicate with it in music.” This live situation will gain an added energy in the near future: Sharon Kam, Kit Armstrong, Anna Lucia Richter, Sabine Meyer, Katharina Konradi und Alexey Stadler are among the quartet's current partners.

Special highlights in the 2023/2024 season: In autumn 2023, the ensemble will perform the opening concert for the new hall at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin, perform at the Dvorak Prague International Music Festival, and give a concert in Linz in honor of the great patron Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge, among other events. In January 2024, they will perform two concerts of works by Aribert Reimann in Madrid on the royal Stradivari instruments and embark again on a U.S. tour that will conclude with a residency in New York City at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. They will also perform at the Philharmonie in Berlin and Essen, with Kit Armstrong and a Mozart project in Luxembourg and Cologne, as well as at the Wiener Konzerthaus and the SWR Festival in Schwetzingen.

Its album “Intermezzo” (2018 | Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Schumann und Reimann with Anna-Lucia Richter) has been hailed enthusiastically both at home and abroad and received the award “Opus Klassik” in the category quintet. In 2020 the quartet has expanded its discography with “Fragment” and his examination of one of the masters of the string quartet: Franz Schubert. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the radio, the quartet will dedicate itself to a very special project: An album of pieces around and from 1923. Together with the Bavarian Radio, they will record works by Alban Berg, Leoš Janáček, Ernst Krenek and Aaron Copland.

The three brothers Mark, Erik and Ken Schumann have been playing together since their earliest childhood – meanwhile violist Veit Hertenstein completes the quartet. The four musicians enjoy the way they communicate without words. Although the individual personalities clearly manifest themselves, a common space arises in every musical work in a process of spiritual metamorphosis. The quartet's openness and curiosity may be partly the result of the formative influence exerted on it by teachers such as Eberhard Feltz, the Alban Berg Quartet, or partners such as Menahem Pressler.

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Awards, CD releases – it is always tempting to speculate on what factors have led to many people viewing the Schumann Quartet as one of the best in the world. But the four musicians themselves regard these stages more as encounters, as a confirmation of the path they have taken. “We really want to take things to extremes, to see how far the excitement and our spontaneity as a group take us,” says Ken Schumann, the middle of the three Schumann brothers. They charmingly sidestep any attempt to categorise their sound, approach or style, and let the concerts speak for themselves.

And the critics approve: “Fire and energy. The Schumann Quartet plays staggeringly well [...] without doubt one of the very best formations among today’s abundance of quartets, [...] with sparkling virtuosity and a willingness to astonish” (Harald Eggebrecht in Süddeutsche Zeitung).*

Erik Schumann plays on a violin by Joseph Guarneri filius Andrea from 1690, kindly made available to him by the Guadagnini Foundation Stuttgart.

Ken Schumann plays an old Italian violin from the mid-18th century, kindly made available to him privately.

Veit Hertenstein plays a viola by Pietro Giovanni Mantegazza from 1767, a generous loan from a private source.

Mark Schumann plays a cello by Giovanni & Francesco Grancino from 1680, generously loaned to him by MERITO Sit Vienna.

**Quotes taken from an interview with journalists from the classical music magazine VAQuotes taken from an interview with journalists from the classical music magazine VAN (van-magazin.de)*

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