

“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)

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## SCHUMANN QUARTETT

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ERIK SCHUMANN (VIOLINE), KEN SCHUMANN (VIOLINE),  
MATTHEW McDOWELL (VIOLA), MARK SCHUMANN (VIOLONCELLO)

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The Schumann Quartet has reached a stage where anything is possible, because it has let go of certainties. That includes the audience, 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.” In the near future, their live performances will be enriched by collaborations with artists such as Andreas Ottensamer, Kit Armstrong, Anna-Lucia Richter, Sabine Meyer, Katharina Konradi, Sharon Kam, and Alexey Stadler.

Highlights of the 2025/2026 season include performances in prestigious venues such as the Musikverein Vienna, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, the Muziekgebouw Amsterdam, the Cologne Philharmonie, and the Konzerthaus Dortmund. The quartet will also appear at renowned festivals including the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Mozartfest Bath, and the String Quartet Festival of the Heidelberger Frühling – to name just a few.

In February, the third edition of their project “Expedition Mozart” with Kit Armstrong will take place, featuring concerts in Salzburg and La Chaux-de-Fonds. The season concludes with a chamber music tour alongside Lisa Batiashvili in July 2026.

The quartet’s third album, *Intermezzo* (2018), featuring works by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Robert Schumann, and Aribert Reimann – recorded in collaboration with soprano Anna-Lucia Richter – was praised nationally and internationally, and received the 2019 Opus Klassik Award in the category of Chamber Music Recording. In 2020, the ensemble expanded its discography with *Fragment*, a powerful exploration of the work of one of the great masters of the string quartet: Franz Schubert.

To mark the 100th anniversary of radio broadcasting, the quartet undertook a unique project: in autumn 2023, they released an album entirely dedicated to the music of the year 1923. Created in collaboration with Bayerischer Rundfunk, the much-praised recording features works by Alban Berg, Leoš Janáček, Paul Hindemith, and Aaron Copland.

The three brothers Mark, Erik and Ken Schumann have been playing together since their earliest childhood – meanwhile violist Matthew McDowell completes the quartet. The four musicians enjoy the way they communicate without words, and although the individual personalities clearly manifest themselves, a common space arises in every musical work in a process of spiritual

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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.

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 the violin “Auer, Benvenuti” by Antonio Stradivari, Cremona 1699, kindly loaned by a German foundation.

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

Matthew McDowell plays on a viola made for him by Frédéric Chaudière in 2025.

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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## 2025/2026

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