



# Danish String Quartet

2023/24 SEASON



Dear Friends,

I am so pleased to welcome back the Danish String Quartet for their third appearance on our stage with a program that showcases their remarkable talent and provides a striking example of how genre boundaries are evolving in the world of music today. If you were fortunate enough to witness violinist Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen's performance with Dreamers' Circus just a few weeks ago on our Performances Up Close series, you already have a taste of the boundless range and breathtaking artistry that this ensemble embodies. Their ability to blur boundaries, most notably between classical and folk music, is remarkable.

In this program, you will hear a fusion of Scandinavian folk music paired with the court dance that inspired Purcell's kaleidoscopic variations, the gypsy-inflected spirit of one of Haydn's early quartet masterpieces, and a poignant musical tribute by Shostakovich in memory of his first wife. This program serves as a powerful reminder of the deep humanity at the core of all music.

Time and again, the Danish Quartet has demonstrated an exceptional down-to-earth sensibility combined with an extraordinary unity of sound that firmly places them among the world's finest string quartets and among our favorite presentations.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marna Seltzer", written in a fluid, cursive style.

Marna Seltzer  
Director of Princeton University Concerts

Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 7:30PM • Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

## DANISH STRING QUARTET

**Frederik Øland** Violin

**Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen** Violin

**Asbjørn Nørgaard** Viola

**Fredrik Sjölin** Cello

### HENRY PURCELL

(1659–1695)

Chacony in G Minor, Z. 730,  
*arr. Benjamin Britten*

### JOSEPH HAYDN

(1732–1809)

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 20, No. 3  
Allegro con spirito  
Minuetto: Allegretto  
Poco adagio  
Finale: Allegro di molto

### DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

(1906–1975)

String Quartet No. 7 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 108  
Allegretto  
Lento  
Allegro—Allegretto

### INTERMISSION

### DANISH STRING QUARTET

Folk music arranged and announced from the stage  
by the Danish String Quartet



# About the Program

*By Lucy Caplan © 2023 • Program Annotator*

*Lucy Caplan is Assistant Professor of Music at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a winner of the Rubin Prize for Music Criticism.*

Old and new converge in this evening's program by the Danish String Quartet, which juxtaposes celebrated quartets by Haydn and Shostakovich with two reworkings: Britten's arrangement of Purcell's kinetic Chacony, plus the group's own reimaginings of Scandinavian folk songs. The quartets by Haydn and Shostakovich, composed nearly two centuries apart (in 1772 and 1960, respectively), might be thought to bookend the heyday of the string quartet genre. But the group's attention to Purcell's seventeenth-century music, as well as to a longstanding Scandinavian folk tradition, further broaden the program's scope. In liner notes for *Wood Works*, their 2014 recording of folk music, the quartet's members observe that "like rivers, the melodies and dances have flowed slowly from region to region. Whenever a fiddler stumbled on a melody, he would play it and make it his own before passing it on. You don't own a folk tune, you simply borrow it for a while." This openminded spirit might apply to classics of the string quartet genre as well—borrowed and lovingly adapted by various ensembles as they pass through time.

## **Henry Purcell, Chacony in G Minor, Z. 730, arr. Benjamin Britten (c. 1678; arr. 1947–48, rev. 1963)**

Raising a precocious child, Benjamin Britten's mother imagined that he would become heir to a great Germanic tradition: Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Britten. The composer found himself drawn to a different lineage, becoming immersed in the work of the English composer Henry Purcell. He realized and arranged dozens of Purcell's compositions, embracing music he thought to be suffused with "clarity, brilliance, tenderness, and strangeness."

The Chacony in G Minor fits the bill. Oriented around a repeated ground bass—eight bars which inch downwards before rising at the close—this music is both mournful and genteel. Composed for an ensemble of viols, it retains aural echoes of the chaconne's dynamic roots as a Latin American dance, but it also speaks to Purcell's interest in the dramatic rhetorical modes of contemporary French opera. It moves through a series of eighteen variations, most of which are propelled forward by elegant dotted rhythms. After the ground bass is tossed around the ensemble, the piece concludes with a hushed variation, bringing the work to a tender and sensitive close.

### Joseph Haydn, String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 20, No. 3 (1772)

The six quartets of Haydn's Opus 20 series are sometimes referred to as the "Sun Quartets," but that cheery nickname (which derives from an illustration printed on the first edition's cover) seems not quite right for this minor-key work, which is characterized by an ardent intensity, rapid-fire shifts in mood, and off-kilter rhythms. The spiky leaps of the first movement's opening bars soon melt into a softer second theme, but the movement retains a sense of unpredictability throughout: chromatic asides, *subito* dynamic changes, and moments at which the entire ensemble abruptly grinds to a halt. The minuet that follows has an appealing simplicity, its four voices moving smoothly toward a *perdendosi* cadence which sets up a strikingly lovely trio. In the warmly majestic third movement, the cello's swirling sixteenth notes anchor a shimmering hymn-like figure in the upper voices. The unsettled character of the first movement returns in the fourth, similarly replete with sudden stops and starts.

In addition to its stormy mood, this quartet—along with its counterparts in the Opus 20 series—is notable for its truly multivocal writing. While Haydn's earlier quartets tended to foreground the first violin, in these works the four instruments have a more equal status. All four players share in the creation of musical meaning, facilitating the breadth and depth of emotion that the quartets of this series collectively express.

### Dmitri Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 7 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 108 (1960)

Shostakovich's seventh string quartet is a work of taut brevity: three concise and interconnected movements, comprising just thirteen minutes of music. It is also a work of mourning, dedicated to the memory of the composer's first wife, Nina, who died unexpectedly in 1954. Shostakovich seems to have distilled his grief to its essential parts. While the quartet is small in scale, its emotional range is vast, and it is held together by a cyclic architecture in which themes from the first movement reappear in the third—less a journey forward than an everlasting loop.

At the quartet's outset, a jittery question in the first violin—voiced in a pattern of two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth—is answered by an iteration of the "knocking" motif so pervasive in Shostakovich's work. Lurching between an anxious F-sharp minor and calmer passages in E-flat major, the movement is made even more unstable by sporadic shifts in meter; the momentary calm at the movement's end feels surprising, even unearned. The second movement, a spooky *lento*, features muted instruments whose repeated, arpeggiated figures have an anesthetic effect, lulling the listener into an unconscious realm. A sharp return to reality occurs at the beginning of the third

movement, with a frenetic fugue of ever-increasing volume and intensity. The jittery motif from the first movement suddenly reappears, this time voiced by the entire group. To close, the quartet swerves into a slightly off-balance waltz, interrupted by eerie knocking rhythms and sharp pizzicato as it fades into the darkness.

### Arrangements of Scandinavian Folk Songs

After traversing several centuries of music for string quartet, this program concludes with a selection of the Scandinavian folk songs that have become a hallmark of the Danish String Quartet's repertory. In contrast to the predominantly written compositional history of the string quartet, these songs have been preserved largely through a combination of print and oral tradition. (The group has recorded everything from a wedding tune from the Faroe Islands, to a dance which was published in an eighteenth-century Danish collection but is also well-known throughout the British Isles, to a Polish-style *polska* which was written down in a Danish fiddler's 1768 notebook.) Made to be adapted, reworked, shared, and danced to, they are more like gifts than possessions. Or, in the ensemble's words, "It is the local music, but as such it is also the music of everywhere and everyone."

**FREE  
FOOD!**

## PRINCETON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: COME TO INTERNOSHIN'!

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# About *the* Artists



## DANISH STRING QUARTET

The GRAMMY®-nominated Danish String Quartet celebrated their 20th anniversary in 2022-2023, having formed when violinists Frederik Øland and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen and violist Asbjørn Nørgaard were teenagers under the mentorship of Tim Frederiksen of Copenhagen's Royal Danish Academy of Music. In 2008, the three Danes were joined by Norwegian cellist Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin.

The Quartet's inventive and intriguing programming and repertoire choices have produced critically acclaimed original projects and commissions, as well as popular arrangements of Scandinavian folk music. This season, the Quartet will complete its *DOPPELGÄNGER* series, an ambitious four-year international commissioning project pairing world premieres from four composers—Bent Sørensen, Lotta Wennäkoski, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, and Thomas Adès—with late major chamber works by Schubert. Each season, the Quartet has performed a world premiere on a program with its *doppelgänger*—the Schubert quartet or quintet that inspired it—culminating in 2024 in the premiere of a quintet by Thomas Adès, after the Schubert String Quintet in C Major.

The 2023-2024 season sees them on tour in eighteen cities in the United States and Canada and venues in Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Brussels, Italy, and their home of Denmark.

The Danish String Quartet's most recent recording project is *PRISM*, a series of five discs on ECM New Series that explores the symbiotic musical and contextual relationships between Bach fugues, Beethoven string quartets, and works by Shostakovich, Schnittke, Bartók, Mendelssohn, and Webern. The final disc, *PRISM V*, was released to great acclaim in April



2023. The Quartet’s discography reflects the ensemble’s special affinity for Scandinavian composers, with the complete quartets of Carl Nielsen, Thomas Adès, Per Nørgård, and Hans Abrahamsen. They also released two discs of traditional Scandinavian folk music, *Wood Works* and *Last Leaf*, which was chosen as one of the top classical albums of the year by NPR, Spotify, and *The New York Times*. A third folk recording is planned for release in 2023 on ECM.

The Quartet takes an active role in reaching new audiences through special projects. In 2007, they established the DSQ Festival, which takes place in intimate and informal settings in Copenhagen. In 2016, they inaugurated a concert series, Series of Four, in which they both perform and invite colleagues to appear.

The Danish String Quartet has been the recipient of many awards, including Musical America’s 2020 Ensemble of the Year and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust. The Quartet was named in 2013 as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist and appointed to the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). The Quartet was awarded the 2010 NORDMETALL-Ensemble Prize at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany, and in 2011 received the Carl Nielsen Prize, the highest cultural honor in Denmark. This is the ensemble’s third appearance on the Princeton University Concerts series.



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**APPLY TODAY!**

*The Admit All program is supported by  
the generosity of Reba Orszag, Pamela  
Patton, and Eric White.*



**We are happy to thank all of our staff and volunteers for their support.**

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## 2023-2024 Princeton University Concerts Committee

The first concert in what is known today as Princeton University Concerts was presented on October 29, 1894, thus establishing one of the oldest continuous series of musical events in the country. From 1894 to 1914, the “Ladies Musical Committee” presented concerts by the Kneisel Quartet. After 1914, the programs diversified. In 1929, the Ladies Committee became the Princeton University Concerts Committee—a town and gown group of interested and knowledgeable music lovers—which has guided the University Concerts to date.

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Presenting the world's leading classical musicians at Princeton University since 1894, Princeton University Concerts aims to enrich the lives of the widest possible audience. We are grateful to **Dan Trueman**, Chair and Professor of Music, and the **Department of Music** for its partnership in and support of this vision. For more information about the Department and its vibrant student- and faculty-led programming, please visit [music.princeton.edu](https://music.princeton.edu).

# SUPPORT US

Supporting Princeton University Concerts is critical to our future. Ticket sales cover less than half of the cost of presenting the very best in world-class music. Remaining funds come, in part, from our generous endowment, left to PUC by the Ladies' Musical Committee in 1929. We remain eternally grateful for the support of the Philena Fobes Fine Memorial Fund and the Jesse Peabody Frothingham Fund.

Other support comes from donors like you. We are grateful to the individuals whose support at all levels ensures that musical performance remains a vital part of Princeton, the community, and the region.

**If you wish to make a donation to Princeton University Concerts**, please call us at 609-258-2800, visit [puc.princeton.edu](http://puc.princeton.edu), or send a check payable to Princeton University Concerts to: Princeton University Concerts, Woolworth Center, Princeton, NJ 08544.

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# THANK YOU!

We are deeply grateful for the support we have received and thank all of our donors and volunteers. The list below acknowledges gifts of \$100 or more, received between May 1, 2023 and October 30, 2023. If you see an error or would like to make a change in your listing, please contact the Concert Office at 609-258-2800.

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In addition to the donors above, we gratefully acknowledge Reba Orszag, Pamela Patton, and Eric White for their generous support of Admit All, our new ticket access program.

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## PLANNED GIVING

Planned gifts made to Princeton University Concerts carry on the vision of an extraordinary group of ladies who founded the series. We are grateful to the individuals below who will continue this legacy and will help shape the series' future for years to come. To inquire about planned giving opportunities, or if you have already included Princeton University Concerts in your plans, please contact Marna Seltzer in the Princeton University Concert Office at 609-258-2800.

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# 23/24

## SEASON



◀ **GOLDA SCHULTZ**  
Soprano

### CONCERT CLASSICS

Thursday, October 12, 2023 | 7:30PM  
**CHANTICLEER VOCAL ENSEMBLE\***

Thursday, November 2, 2023 | 7:30PM  
**DANISH STRING QUARTET**

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD\* Piano**

Thursday, February 15, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**ISABELLE FAUST Violin**  
**JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS Cello**  
**ALEXANDER MELNIKOV Piano**

Thursday, March 7, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**HAGEN STRING QUARTET**

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**JONATHAN BISS Piano**  
**MITSUKO UCHIDA Piano**

Monday, April 8, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**GOLDA SCHULTZ\* Soprano**  
**JONATHAN WARE\* Piano**

Thursday, May 2, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**DORIC STRING QUARTET\***

### PERFORMANCES UP CLOSE

Sunday, October 8, 2023 | 3PM & 6PM  
**DREAMERS' CIRCUS\* Violin, Cittern, Accordion**

Thursday, October 26, 2023 | 6PM & 9PM  
**THÉOTIME LANGLOIS DE SWARTE\* Baroque Violin**  
**JUSTIN TAYLOR\* Harpsichord**

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 | 6PM & 9PM  
**JEAN RONDEAU\* Harpsichord**

Thursday–Sunday, January 18–21, 2024  
**MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA** in virtual reality

### RICHARDSON CHAMBER PLAYERS

Sunday, November 19, 2023 | 3PM: *Les Six*  
Sunday, March 24, 2024 | 3PM: *A French Afternoon*

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Thursday, February 1, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**BRAD MEHLDAU Piano**

Thursday, February 8, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON Piano**

### HEALING WITH MUSIC

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 | 7:30PM  
**SULEIKA JAOUAD\* Writer**  
**JON BATISTE\* Musician**  
Healing from Cancer through Music

Sunday, March 3, 2024 | 3PM  
**DANCE FOR PD®** A Mark Morris Dance Group Program  
Exploring the intersection of music, dance, and  
Parkinson's Disease.

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 | 7:30PM  
**JONATHAN BISS Piano**  
**ADAM HASLETT\* Writer**  
Anxiety, Depression, and Music

### ALL IN THE FAMILY

Featuring *The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center*

Saturday, October 14, 2023 | 1PM & 3PM  
**CMS KIDS** sensory-friendly program for ages 3–6

Saturday, March 16, 2024 | 1PM  
**ADVENTURES IN CHAMBER MUSIC** for ages 6–12

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Join us for concert-related events, many of  
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\*Princeton University Concerts debut

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