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2017-18
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DANISH STRING QUARTET

Frederik Øland, violin | Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, violin
Asbjørn Nørgaard, viola | Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin, cello

Feb. 18, 2018 | 3:00 p.m. | Beall Concert Hall

String Quartet no. 1 in A minor

Lento
Allegretto
Allegro vivace

Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

Folk Music from Nordic Countries

Selections to be announced from the stage

INTERVAL

String Quartet in F major op. 59, no. 1

Allegro
Allegretto
Adagio molto e mesto
Theme Russe: Allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

*THE DANISH STRING QUARTET HAS RECORDED FOR ECM,
DACAPO, AND CAVI-MUSIC/BR KLASSIK*

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are subject to change.*

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in historic Beall Concert Hall.



ERICA TRIO
Sept. 30 | 3:00 p.m.



**DALI QUARTET
WITH OLGA KERN**
Oct. 21 | 3:00 p.m.



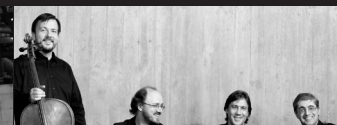
**AKROPOLIS
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Nov. 18 | 3:00 p.m.



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ZEMLINSKY QUARTETS**
Feb. 3 | 3:00 p.m.



SMETANA TRIO
Feb. 24 | 3:00 p.m.



**BORODIN QUARTET +
VADYM KHOLODENKO**
March 17 | 3:00 p.m.



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Final 2017-18 CONCERT

SIMONE DINNERSTEIN, PIANO
SUN., Mar. 18, 2018 | 3PM

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Embodying the quintessential elements of a chamber music ensemble of the highest caliber, the Danish String Quartet has established a reputation for their integrated sound and technical and interpretive talents matched by an infectious joy for music-making and “rampaging energy” (*The New Yorker*). Since making their debut in 2002 at the Copenhagen Festival, the musical friends have demonstrated a passion for Scandinavian composers, who they frequently incorporate into adventurous contemporary programs, while also giving skilled and profound interpretations of the classical masters. *The New York Times* selected the quartet’s concerts as highlights of 2012 and 2015, praising “one of the most powerful renditions of Beethoven’s Opus 132 String Quartet that I’ve heard live or on a recording, and “the adventurous young members of the Danish String Quartet play almost everything excitingly.”

The Danish String Quartet’s expansive 2017-2018 North American season includes more than 30 performances across 17 states. The ensemble gives debut performances at numerous renowned venues, such as Bravo! Vail and Ravinia summer festivals, Cleveland Chamber Music Society, Santa Fe Pro Musica, Oregon Bach Festival, and San Francisco Performances, among others. Further

season highlights include returns to the Mostly Mozart Festival, UW World Series at Meany Hall in Seattle, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Philadelphia and Buffalo Chamber Music Societies. This season, the Quartet features a richly satisfying array of diverse repertoire which includes both giants of the string quartet canon—Bartok, Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, and Mozart—with lesser-performed works by Sibelius, Schnittke, and Jörg Widmann.

The Quartet's recent debut recording on ECM Records features works of Danish composers Hans Abrahamsen and Per Nørgård and English composer Thomas Adés and received five stars from The Guardian, praised as “an exacting program requiring grace, grit and clarity and the Danish players sound terrific. . . It's a sophisticated performance.” The recording debuted at #16 on the Billboard Classical Chart and continues to earn international acclaim. In addition to their commitment to highlighting Scandinavian composers, the Danish String Quartet derive great pleasure in traditional Nordic folk music. Their next album will be released in September 2017.

In 2009, the Danish String Quartet won First Prize in the 11th London International String Quartet Competition, as well as four additional prizes from the same jury. This competition is now called the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition and the Quartet has performed at the famed hall on many occasions. The ensemble received the 2010 NORDMETALL-Ensemble Prize at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany and, in 2011, won the prestigious Carl Nielsen Prize. The Danish String Quartet received the 2016 Borletti Buitoni Trust provided to support outstanding young artists in their international endeavors, joining a small, illustrious roster of past recipients.

centers on an unusual fugal passage introduced by the second violin. At the conclusion of the movement, the opening subject returns to drive to a massive climax marked by huge chords and slashing power. While this music is clearly conceived for string quartet, both in sonority and technique, it is exactly this sort of powerful climax that earned these quartets the nickname “symphony quartets.”

A curious feature of this quartet is that all four movements are (more or less) in sonata form. The second, *Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando*, has an unusual shape, alternating scherzando sections with trios. The opening rhythm—announced by the cello and consisting of only one note, a recurring B-flat—underlies the entire movement; this figure—one repeated note—particularly infuriated many early performers and listeners. The main theme itself, an oddly asymmetrical figure, appears in the fourth measure and takes up some of this rhythm.

The heartfelt third movement is built on two ideas: a grieving opening theme announced by the first violin (Beethoven marks it *mesto*: “sad”) and a steadily-rising melody first played by the cello. The movement comes to a close as a quasi-cadenza for violin leads without pause to the finale, marked *Thème russe*. Here is the Count's “Russian theme,” a folk melody played by the cello under a sustained violin trill. The blazing final movement is based primarily on this theme, and its energy level matches the power of the first two movements. Beethoven offers a final recall of this theme—at a very slow tempo—just before the *Presto* rush to the close.

*Program notes by Eric Bromberger
of the University of Chicago*

today as the “Razumovsky Quartets,” were so completely original that in one stroke they redefined the entire paradigm of the string quartet. These are massive works—in duration, sonority, and dramatic scope—and it is no surprise that they alienated their early audiences. Only with time did Beethoven’s achievement in this music become clear. Trying to take the measure of this new music, some early critics referred to the Razumovsky quartets as “symphony quartets,” but this is misleading, for the quartets are genuine chamber music. But it is true that what the *Eroica* did for the symphony, these quartets—and the two that followed in 1809 and 1810—did for the string quartet: they opened new vistas, entirely new conceptions of what the string quartet might be and of the range of expression it might make possible.

Schuppanzigh’s quartet is reported to have burst into laughter at their first reading of the Quartet in F Major, convinced that Beethoven had intended a joke on them. When Schuppanzigh complained about the difficulty of this music, Beethoven shot back: “Do you think I worry about your wretched fiddle when the spirit speaks to me?”

The *Quartet in F Major, Opus 59, No. 1* is, at forty minutes, one of the longest of Beethoven’s quartets, and its opening *Allegro* is conceived on a gigantic scale. The movement springs to life with its main theme rising powerfully in the cello under steady accompaniment and then taken up by the first violin. This is an extremely fertile subject, appearing in many guises and giving the movement much of its rhythmic and melodic shape. It is entirely characteristic of Beethoven that this theme, which will unleash so much strength and variety across the span of the movement, should be marked *dolce* on its first appearance. There is no exposition repeat—the music seems to repeat, but Beethoven is already pressing forward—and the development

String Quartet no. 1 in A minor

Béla Bartók

The year 1907, when he was 26, was a crucial time both personally and professionally for Béla Bartók. In January, he was appointed to the faculty of the Budapest Academy of Music as teacher of piano, and he soon became recognized as one of Hungary’s most talented keyboard virtuosos and pedagogues. By 1907 he had begun to establish himself as a composer and a folk music researcher, though his original works to that time, largely under the sway of late German Romanticism, had not yet revealed his distinctive creative personality. He was then also much occupied with thoughts of Hungarian nationalism (he even eschewed business suits for a short period in favor of traditional peasant dress), and the manner in which the music he was documenting on his research trips through the Transylvanian countryside could be most effectively incorporated into his original works.

The String Quartet No. 1, Bartók’s first published chamber work and his earliest generally recognized masterpiece, is an important document of that formative time in his life. Though certainly touched by elements of programmatic autobiography (Ernö Lendvai found in it “first descent-then ascent. The entire work possesses a dramatic [progression] because the ‘return to life’ [Kodály’s description of the finale] is brought about by catharsis, a purifying fever”), the Quartet is, above all, a purely musical record of the profound evolution of Bartók’s stylistic language from its Germanic, Romantic origins to its mature basis in the quintessential elements of Hungarian folk song. Elliott Antokoletz paired it with Strauss’ *Elektra*, also completed in 1909, as “epitomizing late Romantic music on the threshold of a new chromatic idiom.”

The first movement is a darkly emotional essay grown from the harmonic richness of Wagner’s *Tristan*, and not unrelated to the ripe Expressionism of Schoenberg’s 1899 *Verklärte Nacht*. The Quartet

begins with a close canon in slow tempo on a lamenting theme, whose imitative technique was probably influenced by the fugue that opens Beethoven's C-sharp minor Quartet, Op. 131. Formal contrast is provided by the movement's central section, based on a descending theme in worried rhythms (marked "very impassioned") initiated by the viola above a drone in the cello. (As a means of unifying the overall structure of the Quartet, the opening interval of this melody—a falling half-step—serves as the germ from which the themes of the two later movements grow.) A return of the opening canon, floating high in the violins, rounds out the movement's form. An inconclusive harmony leads without pause to the next movement.

The form of the spectral *Allegretto* is related to Classical sonata-allegro with three themes: a falling melody of short phrases introduced by the second violin after a hesitant introduction; a flowing waltz-like strain given by the inner strings above an ostinato murmur from the cello and first violin; and a quiet, subdued motive accompanied by pizzicato notes from the cello. After a tightly woven development section, however, the themes are recapitulated not in their expected order, but in reverse, a technique that creates a structural symmetry (1-2-3-development-3-2-1) for which Bartók showed great fondness in many of his later compositions.

It is in the finale that Bartók moved beyond the extended Romantic style of the earlier movements toward the characteristic compositional idiom, grown from the distinctive melodic leadings and fiery dance rhythms of Hungarian folk music, that informs his greatest works. The movement is introduced by a prelude paragraph in which the cello makes bardic pronouncements that are separated by excited punctuations from the upper strings. The main part of the movement is a sort of modern sonata-rondo whose structural demarcations are often blurred by the

continuous thematic working-out. The movement's second theme, however, a folkish tune similar to the one on which Kodály based his "Peacock" Variations of 1939, is placed in high relief by its slow tempo and Impressionistic trilled accompaniment. (Bartók was much interested in the music of the new French composers during the work's composition. He purchased a copy of Debussy's String Quartet in October 1907.) Though the First String Quartet is among the earliest of Bartók's works to exhibit the stylistic gestures that were to place him among the great composers of the modern era, it is music of undeniable personality and remarkable artistic vision and craftsmanship.

*Program notes by Dr. Richard E Rodda
Case Western Reserve University
and the Cleveland Institute of Music*

String Quartet in F major op. 59, no. 1 Ludwig van Beethoven

Count Andreas Kyrillovich Razumovsky, the Russian ambassador to Vienna, was an amateur violinist and a string quartet enthusiast who had studied with Haydn. When he commissioned a set of three string quartets from Beethoven in 1805, he could not possibly have known what he would receive in return. Beethoven had at that time written one set of six quartets (published in 1801 as his Opus 18), cast very much in the high classical mold as set out by Haydn and Mozart. Doubtless Razumovsky expected something on this order, and he provided Beethoven with some Russian themes and asked that he include one in each of the three quartets. The count further assisted the composer by putting at his disposal the count's own string quartet, led by Beethoven's friend Ignaz Schuppanzigh. Beethoven worked two years on these quartets, completing them in 1806 and publishing them two years later.

The three quartets Beethoven published as his Opus 59, known