



FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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FAURÉ QUARTETT

DIRK MOMMERTZ, piano
ERIKA GELDSETZER, violin
SASHA FRÖMBLING, viola
KONSTANTIN HEIDRICH, cello

2:30 PM, Sunday, February 5, 2017
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific

VOLKER DAVID KIRCHNER POÈME FÜR KLAVIERQUARTETT (2005)
(b. 1942) "Echo und Narziss"
(Dedicated to Fauré Quartett)

RICHARD STRAUSS PIANO QUARTET NO. 1 IN C MINOR, OP. 13 (1885)
(1864–1949) Allegro
Scherzo: Presto – Molto meno mosso – Tempo I
Andante
Finale: Vivace

— INTERMISSION —

GABRIEL FAURÉ PIANO QUARTET NO. 1 IN C MINOR, OP. 15 (1883)
(1845–1924) Allegro molto moderato
Scherzo: Allegro vivo
Adagio
Finale: Allegro molto

FAURÉ QUARTETT appears by arrangement with
Marianne Schmocker Artists International
25 Madison Street, Huntington, NY 11743
(631) 479-0393 marianneschmockerartists@gmail.com
<http://www.faurequartet.de/en/the-quartet-en>

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ARTIST PROFILE



Whoever plays chamber music today can't be limited to the rules from decades ago. Expectations regarding the diversity of repertoire have changed, which creates room for ensembles like the **Fauré Quartett**, which has established itself as one of the world's leading piano quartets. The members of the quartet use the opportunities arising from these developments. They discover new sound fields in chamber music and perform compositions outside the mainstream repertoire.

They are visionary in their approach and highly regarded for their experiments and discoveries; be it performances with the NDR Big Band, collaborations with artists like Rufus Wainwright or Sven Helbig, appearances in clubs like the Berghain, Cocoon Club or "Le Poisson Rouge" in New York or TV shows in KIKA or "Rhapsody in School", getting children excited in chamber music. Other prizes include the German Music Competition, the ensemble prize from Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, international competition and recording awards, Music Prize Duisburg and Brahms prize Schleswig Holstein.

The musicians of the Fauré Quartett are pioneers in many ways. After they met during their studies in 1995 in Karlsruhe for the 150th anniversary of Gabriel Fauré, they quickly realized, that this combination offered new insights into undiscovered repertoire.

Worldwide tours raise their profile abroad and international masterclasses are part of their work with students. The members teach at the universities of Berlin and Essen. Moreover, they are Artistic Directors of "Festspielfrühling Rügen" as well as 'Quartet in Residence' at the University of Music Karlsruhe. During their tours, the musicians appear in the world's most important chamber music venues, including Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Berlin Philharmony, Teatro Colon Buenos Aires and Wigmore Hall London.

They have made highly regarded, benchmark recordings of works by Mozart, Brahms, and Mendelssohn. In 2010, the Fauré received the ECHO Classic award for their album "Classic beyond Borders." Their 2008 recording of Brahms' piano quartets was named Chamber Music Recording of the Year.

Chamber music, by its very nature, is a non-verbal, time-based art. It is not static like painting and not spatial like sculpture. Time elapses and we measure that passing through awareness of movement where the quality and character of that movement is what matters. In doing this, we employ many of the same terms used for other art forms, but apply them differently: color, form, line, idea, image, shape, or contour. For example, when we speak of form, we may refer to classical, standard, or sonata forms, and when relating color (timbre) we may describe brilliant, mellow or warm colors.

But what about “new” music that has less, little or nothing to do with time? How do we react to static “space” music that seems endless, without temporal changes or imposition of temporal patterns? In our apprehension of this music type, do we impose pattern where no temporal changes such as alternating dynamics, rhythm, colors, or pitch exist?

As Gustav replied to Alma when she asked him if he really liked Schönberg’s second quartet premier (received with typical Viennese intensity, including violent alterations in which the hostile elements prevailed and against which Mahler raised his voice in defense of Schönberg), “Actually no, but the younger generation is always right.”

Kirchner: Piano Quartet No. 1

Volker David Kirchner is a German composer and violist. He studied at the Peter Cornelius Conservatory in Mainz from 1956 to 1959 under Günter Kehr and Günter Raphael. Following this he studied with Bernd Alois Zimmermann at the Hochschule für Musik Köln from 1959 to 1963, and then under Tibor Varga at the Hochschule für Musik Detmold from 1964 to 1965. Kirchner played in jazz ensembles in Cologne, and played in several high-level ensembles as a violist, including the Radio Orchestra of Hessischer Rundfunk, now known as Frankfurt Radio Symphony in Frankfurt from 1966 to 1988. He moved to Mainz

and became a freelance composer in 1989. Invited by Walter Fink, he was the third composer featured in the annual Komponistenporträt of the Rheingau Musik Festival in 1992.

He has written works for musical theater, the Bavarian State Opera, Staatsoper Hannover, Katholikentag, and many others. Awards he has won include the 1994 Rheingau Musikpreis of the Rheingau Musik Festival and the 2007 Peter Cornelius Medal.

Lasting about ten minutes, this avant-garde work, dedicated to the Fauré Quartett, is soft and slow. Chords from the piano are decorated by the strings with varying figures, playing without vibrato. There are occasional eruptions of sound, which then disappear.

Strauss: Piano Quartet No. 1

Richard Strauss was not known for his chamber music, preferring instead to compose on a larger scale. However, in his youth he composed a string quartet, two piano trios, a few sonatas, and the piano quartet we hear today.

Strauss was the son of one of the finest horn players of the 19th century. Strauss senior insisted his son’s musical education be classical, based on Mozart and Mendelssohn as examples (he hated Wagner). But when Strauss junior left college at 19 and moved to Berlin to study music he found a new paradigm: Brahms. At this time Brahms was at the pinnacle of his career: his third symphony had just been premiered and he was starting his fourth, at the premier of which young Strauss and Brahms were fated to meet.

Strauss, as a teenager, began the Piano Quartet in C minor in the spring of 1884 and completed it on New Year’s Day 1885. The piece took first prize in the Tonkünstlerverein competition in Berlin against 23 other entries. Strauss took Brahms’ C minor Piano Quartet, Op. 60, which appeared 10 years earlier, as muse, using both Brahms’s key and movement structure. There is an

amazing fusion of temperaments in the piece: you can hear the dignity and soberness of Brahms melded to the fervor and impulsive brilliance of Strauss’s youth. This is a large piece of dark, sumptuous sound that develops its concepts with intense vitality.

The *Allegro* opens calmly, but soon bursts into a spirited surge of aggressive strength, still using the same theme. A second theme is wide and spacious, with unison strings and arpeggios on the piano. As the movement continues, so do the alternating tranquil and expressive moments conveying Strauss’ take on Brahms-like drama.

The *Scherzo* third movement has a Mendelssohn-like *presto* theme, evocative of nervous energy lightly restrained by a rocking lullaby-like trio. The fast dance returns and the movement ends with a dazzling *prestissimo*.

The slow *Andante* opens in the piano with a pensive, romantic respite from the earlier tension that is answered in the strings climbing to passionate heights. A second subject is introduced by the viola and the piano and strings end the movement with an interchange of harmonies redolent of the lushness of Brahms.

The *Finale* reprises the dramatic tension of the first two movements with piano and strings joining in syncopated rhythms. The cello proposes a serene contrasting theme, and (as in the first two movements) we hear alternating agitated and calm moods building to a sudden coda.

Strauss published this youthful quartet as Opus 13, but it would be his last in the style of Brahms. As he discovered Wagner, Strauss began to embark in a completely new musical direction of tone poems and operas that united soaring orchestral brilliance with vibrant pictorial ingenuity.

Faure: Piano Quartet No. 1

Gabriel Fauré's *Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor*, one of the two chamber works he wrote for the conventional piano quartet instrumentation, is among the composer's earliest chamber music compositions.¹ Fauré returned to Paris in 1871, following the Franco-Prussian war, and established himself in Parisian musical circles. Even though he was more deeply attached to the piano, he worked as an organist, first at Saint-Sulpice, then at the Madeleine, where he filled in for Camille Saint-Saëns, keeping his organist posts for income.

Even though written in a minor key, the piece is primarily positive in tone, yet with some intimations of the disturbing tumult of Fauré's life at the time of its composition. In 1877, after wooing her for five years, Fauré had finally become engaged to Marianne Viardot, daughter of the well-known singer Pauline Viardot. The arrangement continued for just over three months, with Marianne breaking it off to Fauré's significant anguish. It was in the summer of 1876, in the later stages of the relationship, that he began the quartet. He completed it in 1879, and revised it in 1883, completely rewriting the finale. The original finale appears to be lost.

The work is in the conventional layout of the genre, with four movements of approximately comparable extents.

The *Allegro molto moderato* first movement is in sonata form. The commentator Carl Dahlhaus refers to its "almost opulent cantabile and extreme refinement of texture." The opening theme, an energetic, robust melody, seemingly displaying an inspiration by Brahms, contrasts wonderfully with a subtle second theme

in which the off-beats are lightly stressed in a lyrical and winsome manner. The movement ends by recapitulating a final statement of the opening theme.

The *Allegro vivo* second movement, a playful scherzo, is one of Fauré's uncommon expert pieces. He generally shied away from brilliant instrumental display, but the Fauré scholar Jean-Michel Nectoux comments that here, "as in the *First Violin Sonata*, composed just before the quartet, the composer felt a brilliant scherzo necessary to preserve the balance of the whole work." The movement follows the traditional scherzo-trio-scherzo structure and consists of two themes in the scherzo sections and a third theme appears in the central trio section only. Listen as over time the strings introduce a languid melody that evolves into skipping, prancing clockwork.

After the high-spirited scherzo, the *Adagio* slow movement has a strong air of sadness, majesty and profundity. Koscho writes, "It is striking for its unsettled, lachrymose air, which Fauré prolongs through a combination of frustrated harmonic progressions and ascending melodic fragments." It is in conventional ternary form with the main melody giving way to a central theme before returning to end the movement. Beginning as a grave pavane, it develops into an emphatic yearning that then relaxes into a song-like mood that you might imagine Marlena Dietrich singing in an old black and white movie. The critic Stephen Johnson writes that the movement gives the listener "more than a hint" of Fauré's sadness at the events of 1877, though "the emotion is always nobly

restrained, with not even the slightest hint of self-indulgence."

The lively *Allegro molto* finale is a stormy, restive tour of rhythm based on two themes, the first referring back to themes earlier in the quartet, and the second tonally vague but reminiscent of a surge of optimistic success. The two themes are brought together to conclude the piece as you may hear a variety of styles, textures and moods.

There are several notable things concerning Fauré's First Piano Quartet which denote it to be a prominent turning point. Listen first for the complete confidence in the pleasing handling of sonata form, the particular craft in a bright and dramatic interchange of parts, the richness and character of its adroitly formed melodic fabric, and consistently proficient writing for piano. Also worth noting is the grouping of a highly sophisticated personal style with persuasive high spirits. The mournful excesses of Romanticism do not linger in this work, nor do the giddy and the prescribed. The first movement captures us by its assured merging of vitality and lyricism. The *Scherzo* surprises with a carefree, pizzicato *perpetuum mobile* caprice. The great *Adagio* reveals that deep emotion is not discordant with poise and classical clarity. And the mounting *Allegro molto* tops it all with a elegantly controlled major/minor shimmer of cheerfulness.

— notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

¹ Trivia question: How many of Fauré's chamber works do not include piano? Answer will be in April 23 program notes; be sure to attend the concert.

61ST SEASON 2016-2017

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2:30 PM Sunday, October 16, 2016

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2:30 PM Sunday, April 23, 2017

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