

## DANISH STRING QUARTET

**FREDERIK ØLAND**, violin  
**RUNE TONSGAARD SØRENSEN**, violin  
**ASBJØRN NØRGAARD**, viola  
**FREDRIK SCHØYEN SJÖLIN**, cello

**DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH**  
(1906-1975)

**String Quartet No. 3 in F Major, Op. 73**  
Allegretto  
Moderato con moto  
Allegro non troppo  
Adagio  
Moderato – Adagio

**W.A. MOZART**  
(1756-1791)

**Divertimento in F Major, K.138**  
Allegro  
Andante  
Presto

**IGOR STRAVINSKY**  
(1882-1971)

**Three Pieces for String Quartet**  
Danse  
Excentrique  
Cantique

**TURLOUGH O'CAROLAN**  
(1670-1738)

**Three Melodies (arr. Danish String Quartet)**  
Mabel Kelly  
Planxty Kelly  
Carolan's Quarrel with the Landlady

**INTERMISSION**

*Repertoire for the second half of the concert will be announced from the stage*

This performance sponsored by The Colorado Sun



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## DANISH STRING QUARTET

Celebrated for their “intense blend, extreme dynamic variation (in which they seem glued together), perfect intonation even on harmonics, and constant vitality and flow” (*Gramophone*) and renowned for the palpable joy they exude in music-making, the GRAMMY®-nominated Danish String Quartet has become one of today’s most in-demand classical quartets.

**FREDRIK  
ØLAND**, *violin*

**RUNE  
TONSGAARD  
SØRENSEN**, *violin*

**ASBJØRN  
NØRGAARD**, *viola*

**FREDRIK  
SCHØYEN  
SJÖLIN**, *cello*

The Quartet’s inventive and intriguing programming and repertoire choices have produced critically acclaimed original projects and commissions as well as sophisticated arrangements of Scandinavian folk tunes. In August 2024, the Quartet released their long-awaited third album of folk-inspired traditional and original tunes, *Keel Road*, on ECM. The release of *Keel Road* marks the Quartet’s tenth anniversary of exploring Scandinavian folk traditions, beginning with their 2014 album *Wood Works* and followed by *Last Leaf*.

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Kirshbaum Associates Inc.,  
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The Danish String Quartet is currently exclusive with ECM Records and has previously recorded for DaCapo and Cavi-Music/BR Klassik.

With a growing audience in North America, they embark on four tours this season that bring them to 24 cities in the US and Canada, beginning with major summer festivals, including Aspen and Tanglewood. Outside the US, they perform this season in Denmark, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Italy, and Greece. The Danish String Quartet continues to tour its ambitious DOPPELGÄNGER initiative, a multi-year commissioning project pairing world premieres by four composers with major quartets and quintets by Schubert.

The final disc in the Quartet’s five-disc PRISM series on ECM was released to great acclaim in April 2023, and *The New York Times* dubbed the collection “essential listening.” PRISM explores the symbiotic musical and contextual relationships between Bach fugues, Beethoven string quartets, and works by Shostakovich, Schnittke, Bartók, Mendelssohn, and Webern. The Quartet’s discography also reflects the ensemble’s special affinity for Scandinavian composers, with the complete quartets of Carl Nielsen and Adès, Nørgård and Abrahamsen.

The Quartet has been the recipient of many awards and appointments, including *Musical America's* 2020 Ensemble of the Year; the Borletti-Buitoni Trust; BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist; and a coveted spot in the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). In 2011, the Quartet were awarded the Carl Nielsen Prize, the highest cultural honor in Denmark.

The Danish String Quartet recently celebrated their 20th Anniversary in 2024, 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.  
[www.danishquartet.com](http://www.danishquartet.com).

**BORN:** September 25, 1906, St. Petersburg, Russia

**DIED:** August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia

**FIRST PERFORMANCE:** December 1946 (Moscow) by the Beethoven Quartet, to whom it is dedicated.

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** January 17, 2024, Pacifica Quartet

**DURATION:** 33 minutes

## NOTES

DMITRI

SHOSTAKOVICH:

STRING QUARTET

NO. 3 IN F MAJOR,

OP. 73

The Beethoven Quartet was one of the Soviet Union's most distinguished ensembles in the mid-20th century. They had been associated with Shostakovich since 1940 and had presented the premieres of nearly every major chamber composition he wrote. The violist Fyodor Druzhinin joined the Beethoven Quartet in 1964, succeeding his teacher Vadim Borisovsk. In conversations about the last string quartets, Druzhinin recalled:

Only once did we see Shostakovich visibly moved by his own music. We were rehearsing his Third Quartet. He'd promised to stop us when he had any remarks to make. Dmitri Dmitriyevich sat in an armchair with the score opened out. But after each movement ended, he just waved us on, saying, "Keep playing!" So we performed the whole Quartet. When we finished playing, he sat quite still in

silence like a wounded bird, tears streaming down his face. This was the only time that I saw Shostakovich so open and defenseless.

Why did this comparatively early quartet, written primarily in 1946, elicit such strong emotions in the composer nearly twenty years later? We know he wrestled with the piece while he was composing, yet he was satisfied upon its completion, writing to the Beethoven Quartet's second violinist, Vasily Shirinsky:

It seems to me that I have never been so pleased with one of my works as with this quartet. Probably I am mistaken, but for the time being this is exactly how I feel.

In Shostakovich's lifetime, this quartet acquired the nickname "War Quartet." When the Beethoven Quartet played the first performance in Moscow, on December 16, 1946, the program included the following subtitles for each movement:

- I. Calm unawareness of future cataclysm
- II. Rumbblings of unrest and anticipation
- III. The forces of war unleashed
- IV. Homage to the dead
- V. The eternal question: Why? And for what?

Shostakovich subsequently shunned these subtitles; still, they give one pause.

Like so many of his more personal compositions, this one was withdrawn shortly after its premiere. Within two years, the Zhdanov purge of 1948 had disgraced Shostakovich, along with numerous other composers and prominent artistic figures in the Soviet Union. Although the *Third Quartet* was not officially cited on Zhdanov's list of proscribed music, it became one of Shostakovich's so-called "unofficial" works. He had written no large-scale composition since his *Ninth Symphony* (1945). At nearly 33 minutes, this five-movement quartet clearly fell into the category of a major work. Shostakovich treated the quartet in places as if it were a symphonic ensemble. At the climaxes, particularly those in the third and final movements, the ensemble seems to be straining the confines of the quartet medium. Elsewhere, Shostakovich's

musical fabric is characteristically spare and transparent, often reducing the texture to a trio or even a duo.

The quartet opens with a sonata form movement in F major. Two diatonic, deceptively innocent themes flirt with that underlying element of irony that so often shadows Shostakovich's music. A series of brief *ritardandi* lend a pushmi-pullyu aspect to the music that subtly derails the forward momentum. The melodic emphasis is primarily in the first violin, but its part is not particularly virtuosic in this opening movement. Shostakovich introduces elements of canonic imitation in his exposition, expanding the counterpoint to a full double fugue in his development. A truncated recapitulation leads to a surprisingly energetic and forceful coda.

With its vigorous pace and spare textures, the *Moderato con moto* pairs a 3/4 time waltz with the insistence of a march. Repeated patterns refuse to relinquish their hold, even in the staccato middle sections. Not until the end of the movement does an element of individuality emerge in the cello's elegiac adagio close. The ensuing *Allegro non troppo* is a violent statement in G-sharp minor with abrupt switches between 2/4 and 3/4 time. In its military atmosphere, it foreshadows the musical reference to Stalin in Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony (which it preceded by several years). Ancestral dance rhythms are also at play here, but the overall impact of this movement is a damning indictment of the military.

Shostakovich's Adagio is the emotional heart of the quartet. It opens fortissimo with an extended unison passage for the lower three parts, answered by a more resigned, gentle duet for the two violins. The dichotomy between these two ideas sets up a dialogue that forms the narrative for the movement. Eventually, each lower part gets a solo turn with the principal theme, in the manner of a lament. The Adagio proceeds *attacca* to the finale, a *Moderato* in the home tonality of F major. The cello introduces the extended main theme, with pizzicato viola as accompaniment. The second theme seems straight out of a Prokofiev ballet: sweet, melodious, piquant, shadowed. As he works them out, Shostakovich slides between 2/4 and 6/8 time signatures, eventually building to a tremendous and agitated climax that alludes back to the tragedy of the slow movement. Presently he inverts the carefree principal theme of the opening movement. The

Third Quartet concludes with recitative-like, anguished cries from the first violin, soaring into the sky in harmonics before ending with pizzicato.

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WOLFGANG  
AMADEUS MOZART:  
DIVERTIMENTO IN F  
MAJOR, K.138

**BORN:** January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

**DIED:** December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** February 22, 1962, I Musici

**DURATION:** 12 minutes

Composed in 1772, this work is one of a set of three that Mozart wrote on the heels of his second Italian tour. Sixteen-year-old Wolfgang had created a sensation in Italy, working with the finest Italian singers, performing in various Italian courts, and receiving the Order of the Golden Spur from the Pope. Still more important was his exposure to important Italian composers such as Padre Martini and Niccolò Jommelli. It was inevitable that the sunny Italian temperament would manifest itself in Mozart's music, and in some respects, the three Divertimenti, K.136-138, are the embodiment of that spirit.

K.138 is misnamed as a divertimento. Though it is often performed by string orchestra, the score calls for first and second violins, viola, and bass. It finds its musical siblings among Mozart's early string quartets, rather than among the other divertimenti, which normally contain two minuets; this work has none. Mozart scholar Hans Keller calls the three divertimenti K.136-138 "quartet-symphonies," and the designation is apt, inviting the flexibility of either interpretation. The clarity of texture and the virtuosic character of the first violin part are perhaps better rendered by string quartet.

The F major divertimento opens in brisk triple meter. The first violinist dominates the melodic material. Despite his youth, Mozart had mastered both the string idiom and sonata form. His Andante features syncopations, counter melodies,

expressive suspensions, and more interesting accompaniment figures for the lower parts. K.138 concludes with a Presto in rondo form, with one episode in minor mode and another tip-toeing around with impish humor. This is entertainment music lifted to a higher plane.

**BORN:** June 17, 1882, Lomonosov, Saint Petersburg, Russia

**DIED:** April 6, 1971, New York, NY

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** February 3, 1993, Moscow Quartet

**DURATION:** 7 minutes

## IGOR STRAVINSKY: THREE PIECES FOR STRING QUARTET

After the three great ballets *Loiseau de feu* (1910), *Petrouchka* (1911), and *Le sacre du printemps* (1913), Stravinsky was moving away from the gigantic orchestras he had employed for those masterworks. Instead, he concentrated more on exploring the specific tone colors available to him within smaller chamber ensembles. His Three Pieces for String Quartet, composed in 1914, are an example. The title itself is a clue to the work. By not calling it a string quartet, Stravinsky was distancing himself from the string quartet tradition. Specifically, he avoided the notion of sonata form, with all its implications of tonal and structural organization.

All three pieces experiment with unusual methods of producing sounds on the string instruments. The first piece has frequent meter changes and misplaced accents. Repetition of melodic fragments and motivic patterns overlap to give it variety. In the second, Stravinsky explores changing tempos, with specific episodes of rapidly changing mood. The last one is different from the first two, more chorale-like.

These brief pieces leave one with a feeling of absence of dialogue. Each instrument follows its own path, beginning and ending at the same place via four independent routes. Stravinsky liked these pieces. He later transcribed them for a large orchestra, incorporating a fourth movement in the Spanish style. In that version, *Quatre Etudes pour Orchestre*, the work has been performed more frequently, but it is still a comparative rarity in concert.

TURLOUGH  
O'CAROLAN:  
THREE MELODIES  
(ARRANGED BY THE  
DANISH STRING  
QUARTET)

**BORN:** 1670, Nobber, Ireland

**DIED:** March 25, 1738, Roscommon, Ireland

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** Tonight marks the first performance of these works on our series.

**DURATION:** 8 minutes

The Irish harper (the proper name for a traditional Irish harp player) and composer Turlough O'Carolan spent most of his life as an itinerant musician. Blinded by smallpox at the age of 18, he was apprenticed to a harper with financial assistance from the wife of his father's wealthy employer. He began writing songs and lyrics in his early twenties and continued to do so for the rest of his life. About 200 of his songs have survived, though most are single line melodies; we do not know much about how he harmonized these pieces. He became sufficiently famous to have some of his songs published in 1724 in *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes*. Within five years of his death, an exclusive compilation of his songs was published. Today he is known as the last of the Irish bards.

O'Carolan's music fused the tradition of high Gaelic art with Irish vernacular music. Unlike most Irish harpers, he was keenly interested in classical music from the continent, particularly his Italian contemporaries. He almost certainly met the Italian violinist and composer Francesco Geminiani, who spent most of his adult career in the British Isles and died in Dublin. Some of O'Carolan's melodies and forms reflect the influence of Italian Baroque music. He favored fast tempi and dance rhythms. Many of them are titled with his patrons' names; he wrote them as tributes. The position of harper was valued in 18th-century Ireland, and O'Carolan was welcomed with warm hospitality by his affluent patrons. Their names live on through his musical legacy, and O'Carolan's physical likeness is preserved on the Irish £50 note.

"Mabel Kelly," a waltz, and "Planxty Kelly," a graceful tune in 6/8 meter, are two of seven pieces O'Carolan composed for



persons named Kelly. Mabel could have been the daughter of Laughlin Kelly of Lismoyle, in County Roscommon. “Planxty” is possibly a corrupted version of the Irish (Gaelic) toast *sláinte*, which means “good health.” O’Carolan may have used it to honor a generous host. “Carolan’s Quarrel with the Landlady” is a traditional Irish jig.

*Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2025*

## UPCOMING CONCERT

**BENJAMIN BEILMAN, VIOLIN**

**STEVEN OSBORNE, PIANO**

**THU, MAR 6, 2025 | 7:30 PM | GATES CONCERT HALL**



Scottish pianist Steven Osborne returns to FCM’s series, this time with violinist Benjamin Beilman. One of the youngest artists to be appointed to the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music, Beilman is the recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and a London Music Masters Award. Osborne’s numerous awards include The Royal Philharmonic Society’s Instrumentalist of the Year, two *BBC Music Magazine Awards*, and two *Gramophone Awards*.



The program includes Clara Schumann's Three Romances for Violin and Piano; Johannes Brahms's Sonata for Violin and Piano, No. 1 in G major, Op. 78; Lili Boulanger's Two Pieces for Violin and Piano; and César Franck's Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano.

*Tickets are \$50 each; \$15 for patrons under 30; and \$5 for students (with ID)*

## WE MET OUR MATCH!

This fall, the FCM Board of Directors challenged our patrons to generously donate to FCM by offering a \$10,000 match for new and increased donations received by December 31. We are happy to announce that we not only met but exceeded that goal, thanks to the generosity of the FCM community. These funds will help us continue to offer the best chamber music in the world, here in Gates Concert Hall. Thank you!

**THE FOLLOWING FRIENDS** have made gifts in the last 12 months. Your generous support is invaluable in assuring our continued standard of excellence. Thank you!

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# UPCOMING CONCERTS

## CHAMBER SERIES

**Benjamin Beilman, violin**  
**Steven Osborne, piano**  
Thu, Mar 6, 2025 | 7:30 pm

**Quartetto di Cremona**  
**Basil Vendryes, viola**  
Wed, Apr 9, 2025 | 7:30 pm

**Miró Quartet**  
**Steven Banks, saxophone**  
Wed, May 14, 2025 | 7:30 pm

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**MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES**  
**Koa String Quartet**  
Sun, Mar 9, 2025 | 12:00 & 1:00 pm  
(identical concerts)

**The Playground Ensemble**  
Sun, May 11, 2025 | 12:00 & 1:00 pm  
(identical concerts)  
Clyfford Still Museum  
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