

Celebrity Series is now VIVO PERFORMING ARTS

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FRI FEB 27 8PM
NEC'S JORDAN HALL

Danish String Quartet

Frederik Øland violin

Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen violin

Asbjørn Nørgaard viola

Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin cello

Alfred Schnittke String Quartet No. 2

Moderato

Agitato

Mesto

Moderato

Jonny Greenwood Suite from *There Will Be Blood*

Oil

HW/Hope of New Fields

Future Markets

Prospectors Quartet

Detuned Orchestra

INTERMISSION

Maurice Ravel String Quartet in F Major, M. 35

Allegro moderato - Très doux

Assez vif - Très rythmé

Très lent

Vif et agité

*This evening's program will run approximately 90 minutes,
including intermission.*

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

An Aaron Richmond Recital

Endowed by Nancy Richmond Winsten and the late Dr. Joseph Winsten

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 2 [1980] Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998)

The Russian composer Alfred Schnittke received his earliest musical training in Vienna, while his father served there as a translator. After graduating from the Moscow Conservatory in 1958, he made waves with the explosive oratorio *Nagasaki*, and despite receiving an official rebuke from the government-aligned Union of Composers, he managed to sustain a career by scoring state-sponsored films and teaching. In his original music, he navigated the constraints on Soviet composers by honing a “polystylistic” sound that borrowed freely from music of just about any style and era, from the holiest church music to the bawdiest songs.

Schnittke composed the String Quartet No. 2 as a memorial tribute to Larissa Schepitko, a filmmaker and friend who had recently died in a car accident at the age of 41. “Her death was a hard blow for me,” Schnittke wrote, “as it was for everyone who knew her.” Keeping with his tendency to engage with pre-existing music, he infused this emotionally wrenching quartet with Russian Orthodox chant, noting that “Russian church music of the 16th-17th centuries was quite peculiar thanks to its dissonant heterophony.”

Suite from *There Will Be Blood* [2007, arr. 2018] Jonny Greenwood (b. 1971)

Growing up in Oxford, England, Jonny Greenwood played recorder in Baroque ensembles and viola in a student orchestra. He taught himself guitar and keyboards to play in a band with his older brother and other local musicians, and that band—Radiohead—blasted onto the alternative rock scene with their debut single “Creep,” propelled by the edgy guitar work of the 20-year-old Greenwood.

Radiohead became a global sensation, driven in part by Greenwood’s vast sonic palette that grew to include string sections, synthesizers, and every guitar sound imaginable. He began to develop his own solo career on the side,

scoring a documentary for the first time in 2003 and composing his first orchestral works in 2005. He caught the attention of the filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson, who invited Greenwood to compose the score for *There Will Be Blood* in 2007, launching one of the great film collaborations of the 21st century. Just as Alfred Hitchcock leaned on Bernard Hermann's music to ratchet up the psychological tension, Greenwood's raw and atmospheric scores have become indispensable in Anderson's expansive films, including his latest, *One Battle After Another* (which could very well win Greenwood his first Oscar, after two previous nominations).

In 2018, Greenwood arranged portions of the *There Will Be Blood* soundtrack as a concert suite, in versions for string orchestra and quartet. The most striking departure from concert music conventions comes in the section labeled *Detuned Orchestra*, which, Greenwood explained in a program note, "requires the lowest string of each instrument to be detuned by approximately one octave. The string should not be too slack, a note should sound when the string is bowed. That note will be of a wavering, unpredictable pitch—this is deliberate! The string should be slack enough that when a note sounds, increasing the bowing pressure makes the pitch rise dramatically."

String Quartet in F Major, M. 35 [1903]

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Maurice Ravel, meticulous yet hot-headed, took after both of his parents, a Swiss engineer and a Basque peasant. Even though he was raised in Paris, Ravel was a perennial outsider who got himself expelled from the Paris Conservatory once as a piano student in 1895, and then again in 1900 after he returned as a composer and wouldn't follow the rules for writing a proper fugue. His five consecutive rejections in the prestigious Rome Prize competition became something of a public scandal, and even his own teacher, Gabriel Fauré, piled on when he labeled Ravel's final submission "a failure." The submitted piece was none other than the String Quartet in F Major, which has long since taken its rightful place as a cornerstone of the quartet repertoire.

One musician who recognized the power of Ravel's quartet was Debussy, who wrote to his younger colleague, "In the name of the gods of music and in my own, do not touch a single note you have written in your Quartet." Ravel's quartet in fact shares many traits with Debussy's own string quartet from a decade earlier, in the way they both develop thematic connections that link the separate movements.

Ravel's String Quartet opens with a sweet theme from the first violin, split into two balanced phrases—a promising start for a competition entry. It only takes five measures, though, for the harmonies to abandon the home key, while the

telltale melody glides over mystical whole-tone sequences and Eastern-tinged minor modes.

A close kin of the opening melody returns as the basis of the second movement, marked “rather lively, very rhythmic.” The plucking textures and modal harmonies transport this scherzo-like statement to the realm of a Flamenco dance, reflecting Ravel’s fascination with his mother’s native Spain.

The central melody of the “very slow” third movement, introduced by the muted viola, is a drawn-out variant of the same unifying theme. The motive returns yet again as a secondary figure in the finale, but first the quartet presents music that lives up to the “lively and agitated” tempo marking. Having worked through this provocative material, the quartet rises to a bright F-major chord, reaching the conclusive home key in a manner contrary to everything Ravel learned in a classroom.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Grammy[®]-nominated **Danish String Quartet** continue to assert their preeminence among the world’s finest string quartets. 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 Danish String Quartet has become one of today’s most in-demand classical quartets, performing to sold-out concert halls around the world.

The Quartet’s inventive and intriguing programming and repertoire choices have produced critically acclaimed original projects and commissions as well as sophisticated arrangements of traditional folk tunes. In August 2024, the Quartet released their long-awaited third album of folk-inspired traditional and original tunes, *Keel Road*, on ECM. Comprising 14 tracks, all arranged by the Danish String Quartet, *Keel Road* is a retracing of musical pathways across the North Sea, from Denmark and Norway to the Faroe Islands, England, and Ireland. The release of *Keel Road* marked the Quartet’s tenth anniversary of exploring Scandinavian folk traditions, beginning with their 2014 album *Wood Works* and followed by *Last Leaf* (ECM 2017); both *Last Leaf* and *Keel Road* were chosen as one of the top classical albums of the year by NPR and the *New York Times*.

With a growing audience in North America, they embark on three tours this season that bring them to 22 cities in the US and Canada. They perform at prestigious series including Washington Performing Arts, San Francisco Performances and UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures in California, Carnegie Hall in New York, the University Musical Society in Ann Arbor, Vivo Performing

Arts in Boston, and the Schubert Club in St. Paul, Minnesota. Outside the US, they perform this season in Denmark, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, and Brazil.

The Danish Quartet's April US Tour in 2026 features longtime collaborator, the Danish National Girls' Choir in their first coast-to-coast tour together. Violist Asbjørn Nørgaard describes the choir as highly original, with "an almost tangible power" that makes them the perfect partner for the bold visions of the Quartet. The wide-ranging program includes a new co-commissioned work by David Lang, *in wildness*, to receive its U.S. premiere on April 10 at the University of California-Santa Barbara and its New York premiere at Carnegie Hall on April 17. The program also includes music by Caroline Shaw, Lotta Wennäkoski, and Schubert as well as traditional and original tunes arranged by the Quartet. The Danish String Quartet also plan two more tours in November 2025 and February 2026. Showcasing their dynamic artistry and inventive programming, the Quartet present a rich mix of classical masterworks—including pieces by Beethoven, Ravel and Stravinsky, among others—paired with their own original compositions and arrangements (from *Keel Road* and elsewhere).

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 (Dacapo, 2007 and 2008) and Adès, Nørgård & Abrahamsen (their debut on ECM in 2016).

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. They have 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 the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). In 2011, the Quartet were awarded the Carl Nielsen Prize, the highest cultural honor in Denmark, and in June 2025, the Léonie Sonning Music Prize – the first ensemble to receive what is one of the most prestigious awards in classical music (including a gift equivalent to approximately \$150,000 USD).

The Danish 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.

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

Vivo Performing Arts & the Danish String Quartet

The Danish String Quartet made their Boston debut with Vivo Performing Arts (then Celebrity Series) in November 2013 and appeared again in January 2017 and January 2023. During the pandemic, they made a memorable virtual appearance by recording a performance in an ancient lighthouse in Denmark. They make their fourth in-person appearance today.