

# Chaos String Quartet

“Beauty of tone, vitality and textural clarity” - The Strad

“Stunningly accurate playing... an impressive debut” - BBC Music Magazine

“... a whole universe of sounds” - Bachtrack

“...in addition to technical perfection, a great unconditionality and freedom of expression” -  
Süddeutsche Zeitung

Founded in Vienna in 2019 on the principles of ‘chaos’ in art, science, and philosophy, the **Chaos String Quartet** has swiftly made its mark on the international music stage.

Comprising musicians from Germany, Hungary, Italy, and the Netherlands, the quartet was selected as BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists for 2023-2025. Through this scheme they frequently record for BBC Radio 3 and perform at some of the UK's most renowned festivals and concert halls, including Wigmore Hall, Cheltenham Music Festival, Britten Pears Arts, and the Norfolk and Norwich Festival.

Even before their triumph at the International String Quartet Competition Bad Tölz, the ensemble had won multiple awards at major competitions. These include the Joseph Haydn Chamber Music Competition in Vienna (including the Audience Prize), ARD Competition in Munich, and Second Prize, along with the award for best interpretation of Kaija Saariaho's work “Terra Memoria” (with Saariaho herself as a jury member) at the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition. They have also been awarded various prizes at the Rimbotti Competition and Bartók World Competition in Budapest.

Their debut CD, featuring works by Haydn, Hensel, and Ligeti, received widespread critical acclaim from outlets like *BBC Music Magazine*, *Le Monde*, *Orchestergraben*, and *Ritmo*, and was nominated for the ‘Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik’.

Contemporary music holds a special place in the Chaos String Quartet's repertoire. They regularly perform works by composers such as György Kurtág, Kaija Saariaho, Helmut Lachenmann, Rebecca Saunders, Dobrinka Tabakova, and Francesca Verunelli. Several composers have written and dedicated works specifically for them, including Diego Conti's “Une étoile dansante” (2023) and Alessio Elia's “Voids of Inequality” for string quartet and clarinet, which premiered at the Schwetzingen Mozartfest in October 2024. Additionally, they have collaborated with composer and sound painter Samu Gryllus, creating improvisational transitions for their concert program “Chaos” and working on improvisations inspired by Beethoven's Quartet Op.131 for their debut at the Beethoven Festival in Bonn. In March 2025, they will premiere a new work by Errollyn Wallen, co-commissioned by the BBC and the Henry Barber Trust.

Beyond their classical and contemporary performances, the quartet is committed to making string quartet repertoire more accessible. Their project “*Free the Franz*”—a collaboration with jazz saxophonist István Grensó to reinterpret Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden”—has been particularly rewarding.

Under the mentorship of Prof. Johannes Meissl (Artis Quartet) in Vienna through the ECMaster program, the ensemble also completed postgraduate studies at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole under the guidance of the Cuarteto Casals. They have received further musical insights from esteemed artists such as Eberhard Feltz, András Keller (Keller Quartet), Oliver Wille (Kuss Quartet), and Helmut Lachenmann.

The Chaos Quartet is a member of the ‘MERITA’ project and was selected for the 'New Austrian Sound of Music' program, which has taken them to perform in Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Turkey.

Characterized by their powerful communication, thoughtful musical and stylistic exploration, and an original selection of repertoire, the quartet is frequently invited to prestigious festivals such as the Schwetzingen SWR Festival, Mozartfest Würzburg, Les Musicales de Normandie, Davos Festival, Ravenna Festival, Lockenhaus Festival, Wien Modern, Hitzacker Music Festival, Heidelberg Streichquartettfest, and the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival.

Highlights of the 2023/24 season include debuts at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Wigmore Hall in London, Bozar in Brussels, Schönberg Centre, and Musikverein in Vienna. Looking ahead to the 2024/25 season, the quartet will debut at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, return to Wigmore Hall and the Musikverein, and embark on tours in North America and China.

Susanne Schäffer plays a violin by Carlo Giuseppe Testore (c. 1711) on loan from the MERITO String Instruments Trust and Bas Jongen plays a cello by Hendrick Jacobs (Amsterdam, 1696), kindly loaned to him by the Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation (NMF).