Friday, January 28, 2022, 7:30 PM

DANISH STRING QUARTET

Moss Arts Center
Street and Davis Performance Hall
Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre
DANISH STRING QUARTET

Chaconne in G minor
   I. Andante espressivo - Allegro molto moderato
   II. Assai agitato
   III. Adagio Molto
   IV. Finale. Allegro molto vivace - Quasi Trio

String Quartet in A Major, op. 41, no. 3

INTERMISSION

Folk Tunes

Danish String Quartet (arr.)
With the restoration of the Stuart kings to the English throne in 1660, a long period of cultural devastation wrought by austere Puritan rule came to an end, and composers like Henry Purcell, born the previous year, brought about a musical renaissance. So beloved was Purcell in his own day that he was immortalized as Orpheus Britannicus in a collection of his music published shortly after his death, and Charles II’s poet laureate, John Dryden, eulogized him in a famous ode, writing, “The Heav’nly Quire, who heard his Notes from high,/Let down the Scale of Musick from the Sky:/They handed him along,/And all the way He taught, and all the way they Sung.”

Purcell was born and died in the London precinct of Westminster, and was buried in the Abbey. His career began as a chorister in the Chapel Royal, and he remained a court and abbey musician his entire life, serving both as organist and as court composer under Charles II. Among his duties at the court was the composition of pieces for the Twenty Four Violins of the King, a string band that played for public functions, as well as for the king’s Private Musick, small consorts of strings that played in the intimacy of the monarch’s apartments.

During the same period, Charles encouraged the revitalization of English theatre, and Purcell contributed an increasingly large and important body of “incidental” music to accompany dramatic productions. Such music usually comprised an overture and a series of dance pieces, which could also be detached from the stage and played in concerts. Purcell’s Chaconne, or Chacony, in G minor dates from around 1680, and may have been performed not only in Charles’s private concerts but also in the theatre.

The chaconne was one of the genres whose structure depended on a repeating bass line, or “ground,” and Purcell was undoubtedly the greatest master of ground-bass composition. The bass line in this work is eight bars long; it descends from G via a chromatically-inflected span of a fourth, and lingers in mid-octave before continuing its descent to the next G. Purcell’s skill in handling this device lies largely in the deftness with which he weaves the counterpoint of the upper voices in seamless overlap and conjunction with the bass, so that it remains imperceptible and never monotonous. It is nonetheless a striking effect when the bass drops out, as it does here in two instances, and the upper voices maintain their dialogue alone. Shortly after one of these moments the bass enters alone with a compelling solo line that is then taken up by the others, and woven back into the musical fabric.

This elegant little work, long silent, was re-discovered in the 20th century not
long after the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of Purcell’s death in 1945. Benjamin Britten, who identified with Purcell as a fellow theatre composer, was captivated by Purcell’s music and launched a project to “realize” a large chunk of it by fleshing out its bass and treble parts into fuller harmonic scorings. Though Britten concentrated primarily on Purcell’s songs, arranging some 45 of them from Orpheus Britannicus and other sources, he also produced new versions of several instrumental works, including in 1948 this chaconne. Purcell’s writing for strings is supple and idiomatic, and Britten’s arrangement of this work into a full four-part texture has made it accessible for performance by string quartets and chamber orchestras.

—Kathryn L. Libin © 2021

STRING QUARTET IN A MAJOR, OP. 41, NO. 3
Robert Schumann

Early in 1842 Robert Schumann accompanied his wife Clara, a virtuoso pianist, on one of her periodic concert tours through northern Germany and Denmark. However, suffering from one of his periodic depressions and perhaps even jealous of the attention and accolades showered upon his wife, he returned home alone to Leipzig and threw himself into a study of counterpoint, particularly the string quartets of Mozart and Haydn and Beethoven’s late quartets. In the earliest days of their marriage the Schumanns had immersed themselves in a study of Bach, and now they played through classical quartets together at the piano when she returned home.

All of this seems to have been preparing Robert for the next phase of his compositional career, which would be devoted to chamber music. In June and early July he completed two string quartets, and wrote the third, in A major, in a brief burst of energy between July 8 and 22. By the end of the year he had also completed a piano quintet and a piano quartet. The three quartets, published in 1848 as op. 41, are in the closely related keys of A minor, F major, and A major, suggesting that Schumann may have envisioned them being performed together as a set. He dedicated them to his friend and colleague Felix Mendelssohn, then conductor of Leipzig’s Gewandhaus orchestra, as well as a seasoned composer of string quartets and other chamber music.

The A-major quartet opens with a sigh, a falling fifth embroidered by the first violin, passed down to the cello, and then uttered a final time, unadorned and without accompaniment, before being launched briskly into the primary theme of the movement. Schumann’s finest lyricism emerges in the second theme, unfolded in the high range of the cello with a delicately offbeat
accompaniment. The second movement is cast in the kind of double-variations framework that Haydn and Schubert enjoyed, with a restless agitation dominating the first sections. But the adagio variation reminds us that F-sharp minor can be tender as well as agitated, offering a lovely canon between the first violin and viola. The longest movement of the quartet is the third, an adagio molto in D that presents an expressive, rising melody within a dense texture that is abruptly fragmented by an insistent, martial dotted rhythm. By the end of the movement the fragments are re-assembled and brought back into harmony. In the finale the most compelling feature may be its rhythmic verve, and one senses again the presence of Haydn in offbeat chords and particularly a quasi trio section with open fifths evoking the pastoral drone of bagpipes.

—Kathryn L. Libin © 2021

FOLK TUNES
Danish String Quartet, arr.

Folk Tunes features pieces from two Danish String Quartet recordings: Wood Works (2014), a collection of the group’s favorite melodies from Nordic folk music, and Last Leaf, which took its initial inspiration from an unusual Christmas hymn, Now Found Is the Fairest of Roses, first published in 1732 by Danish theologian and poet H.A. Brorson.

Of Wood Works the quartet writes, “In the forests of southern Sweden we find Lasse. He is a traveling fiddler and he provides the music for festive occasions. Lasse is poor, so he will play you some music if you give him a meal. As he can’t afford new strings for his violin, he tunes the ones he has down to make them last slightly longer. His claim to fame is a waltz he is always playing; a little melody that people enjoy dancing to. Sometimes Lasse plays it to himself while sitting alone in his wooden shed.

“Up in Norway a young man has just returned from his Grand Tour of Europe. While passing through the Rhineland, he picked up a very popular dance that everyone danced in the elegant salons. He doesn’t know the name of the dance, so he simply calls it a ‘Reinlender.’ Wanting to introduce it to his friends, he writes a couple of tunes to accompany the new dance.

“Folk music is the music of all the small places. It is the local music, but as such it is also the music of everywhere and everyone. Like rivers, the melodies and dances have flowed slowly from region to region: Whenever a fiddler stumbled on a melody, he would play it and make it his own before passing it on. You don’t own a folk tune, you simply borrow it for a while.
“We have borrowed and arranged a selection of tunes that are all very close to our hearts. We perform them as a string quartet, one of the most powerful musical vehicles we know of. The string quartet is a pure construct: Four simple instruments made of wood. But in all its simplicity the string quartet is capable of expressing a myriad of colours, nuances and emotions—just like folk music. Our idea is to marry these two simple but powerful things; the folk music and the string quartet. Normally the string quartet has been reserved for the classical masters. Now we want to see what happens when we let the Nordic folk music flow through the wooden instruments of the string quartet.

“Does it work? We hope so. And remember: We simply borrowed these tunes. They have already been returned.”

Of Last Leaf, the quartet writes, Now Found Is the Fairest of Roses is “set to a mysterious, dark melody: Brorson had chosen an old Lutheran funeral choral to accompany his Christmas hymn, elegantly showing how life and death are always connected. From here we embark on a travel through the rich fauna of Nordic folk melodies until returning to Brorson in the end. It is a journey that could have been made in many different ways, but we believe that we returned with some nice souvenirs. In these old melodies, we find immense beauty and depth, and we can’t help but sing them through the medium of our string quartet. Brorson found the fairest of roses, we found a bunch of amazing tunes—and we hope you will enjoy what we did to them.”
Among today’s many exceptional chamber music groups, the Grammy-nominated Danish String Quartet continuously asserts its preeminence. The quartet’s playing reflects impeccable musicianship, sophisticated artistry, exquisite clarity of ensemble, and, above all, an expressivity inextricably bound to the music, from Haydn to Shostakovich to contemporary scores. Performances bring a rare musical spontaneity, giving audiences the sense of hearing even treasured canon repertoire as if for the first time, and exuding a palpable joy in music-making that have made the quartet enormously in-demand on concert stages throughout the world. The recipient of many awards and prestigious appointments, including Musical America’s 2020 Ensemble of the Year and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, the Danish String Quartet was named in 2013 as BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists and appointed to the the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two).

This season the Danish String Quartet introduces Doppelgänger, an ambitious four-year international commissioning project. Doppelgänger pairs world premieres from four renowned composers—Bent Sørensen, Lotta Wennäkoski, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, and Thomas Adès—with four major works from the masterful chamber music repertoire of Schubert. Each season, the Danish String Quartet will perform a world premiere on a program with its doppelgänger—the Schubert quartet or quintet that inspired it—culminating in the premiere of a quintet by Adès, after the great String Quintet in C Major. The Doppelgänger pieces are commissioned by the Danish String Quartet with the support of Carnegie Hall, Cal Performances, UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures, Vancouver Recital Society, Flagey in Brussels, and Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam. The first commission, composed by Bent Sørensen and inspired by Schubert’s quartet in G Major (D.887), premiered in 2021.

In addition to performances of Doppelgänger, the Danish String Quartet gives over 20 performances throughout North America in the 2021-2022 season. Highlights include debuts at the University of Georgia, Virginia Tech’s Moss Arts Center, Shriver Hall, and Virginia Arts Festival; return trips
to Boston’s Celebrity Series, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Ensemble Music Society of Indianapolis, Chamber Music Cincinnati, and University of Washington’s Meany Hall; and a tour of Florida. European highlights include tours of Denmark, France, Germany, and Amsterdam.

As part of a multi-year residency, the Danish String Quartet brought a series of five concerts, which mirror the programs in the quartet’s ongoing recording project with ECM New Series, *Prism*, to La Jolla Music Society in November 2019. Each *Prism* program is an exploration of the symbiotic musical and contextual relationships between Bach fugues, Beethoven string quartets, and works by Shostakovich, Schnittke, Bartók, Mendelssohn, and Webern, forming an expertly curated musical evolution within each individual program and across the entire *Prism* repertory. *Prism I*, the first disc of this five-album project for the ECM label, was released in September 2018 and garnered a Grammy nomination in the category of Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for the group’s recordings of Beethoven’s op. 127 in E-flat Major, Bach’s Fugue in E-flat Major (arranged by Mozart), and Shostakovich’s final string quartet, no. 15 in E-flat minor. *Prism II* was subsequently released in September 2019 to rave reviews, including a five-star review from *BBC Music Magazine*, “Best Classical Music of 2019” from *New York Times*, and “Classical Music You Must Hear” from Apple Music. *Prism III*—featuring Beethoven’s String Quartet no. 13, op. 131; Bartók’s String Quartet no. 1; and Bach’s Fugue in C-sharp minor, BWV 849, from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*—was released in March 2021.

The Danish String Quartet returned to North America in the 2019-2020 season as one of the most prominent musical voices in the monumental celebrations of Beethoven’s 250th year. With two sweeping North American tours, the quartet engaged its expansive audience in programming centered around the towering Beethoven string quartets, as well as many important works which inspired, and were inspired by, these revered giants of the classical canon. The quartet returned to Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center as the featured string quartet performing the entire Beethoven cycle over the course of six concerts in February 2020. The quartet performed the cycle again for the Schubert Club in St. Paul, Minnesota, in November 2021.

The group takes an active role in reaching new audiences through special projects. In 2007 it established the DSQ Festival, which takes place in an intimate and informal setting at Copenhagen’s Bygningskulturens Hus. The 2020 DSQ Festival featured an array of meticulously curated programs, including such guests as violinist Malin William-Olsson, cellist Andreas Brantelid, and pianist Marianna Shirinyan. In 2016 it inaugurated a new music festival, Series of Four, in which the quartet both performs and invites
colleagues—the Ebène Quartet and mandolin player Chris Thile, among others—to appear at the venerable Danish Radio Concert Hall. Concerts this season featured collaborations with iconic Scandinavian artists, including Andreas Brøntelid, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, and the Danish National Girls Choir.

Since its debut in 2002 the Danish String Quartet has demonstrated a special affinity for Scandinavian composers, from Carl Nielsen to Hans Abrahamsen, alongside music of Mozart and Beethoven. The quartet’s musical interests also encompass Nordic folk music, the focus of Wood Works, an album of traditional Scandinavian folk music, released by Dacapo in 2014. As a follow-up, the Danish String Quartet released Last Leaf for ECM, an album of traditional Scandinavian folk music. This recording was one of the top classical albums of 2017, as chosen by NPR, Spotify and the New York Times, among others.

Named artist-in-residence in 2006 by the Danish Radio, the quartet was offered the opportunity to record the Nielsen string quartets at the Danish Radio Concert Hall. The two CDs, released in 2007 and 2008 on the Dacapo label, garnered enthusiastic praise for their first recordings—“these Danish players have excelled in performances of works by Brahms, Mozart, and Bartók in recent years. But they play Nielsen’s quartets as if they owned them,” noted the New York Times. In 2012 the Danish String Quartet released a recording of Haydn and Brahms quartets on the German AVI-music label, for which they also received critical notice. “What makes the performance special is the maturity and calm of the playing, even during virtuosic passages that whisk by. This is music-making of wonderful ease and naturalness,” observed the New York Times. Subsequently, the group recorded works by Brahms and Robert Fuchs with clarinetist Sebastian Manz, released by AVI-music in 2014, and in 2017, an album with music of Thomas Adès, Per Nørgård, and Abrahamsen, the quartet’s debut on ECM.

The Danish String Quartet has received numerous citations and prizes, including first prize in the Vagn Holmboe String Quartet Competition and the Charles Hennen International Chamber Music Competition in the Netherlands, as well as the Audience Prize at the Trondheim International String Quartet Competition in 2005. In 2009 the Danish String Quartet won first prize in the 11th London International String Quartet Competition, now known as the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet competition, and returns to the celebrated London concert hall frequently. The quartet was the awarded the 2010 NORDMETALL-Ensemble Prize at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany, and in 2011, it received the Carl Nielsen Prize, the highest cultural honor in Denmark.

Violinists Frederik Øland and Rune Tonsgaard Sørenson and violist Asbjørn
Nørgaard met as children at a music summer camp where they played soccer and made music together. As teenagers, they began the study of classical chamber music and were mentored by Tim Frederiksen of Copenhagen’s Royal Danish Academy of Music. In 2008 the three Danes were joined by Norwegian cellist Fredrik Schøyen Sjølin. For more information, please visit danishquartet.com.

The Danish String Quartet performed as part of the spring 2021 HomeStage series. This is the quartet’s first in-person performance at the Moss Arts Center.

Tell Us What You Think!

We’d love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Memphis Jookin’: The Show featuring Lil Buck on Thursday, March 17, 2022.

bit.ly/danish-feedback
Go Deeper

According to Broadway World, the Danish String Quartet’s most recent album Prism III: Beethoven/Bartók/Bach “shows how the radiance of Bach’s fugues is refracted through Beethoven’s quartets to illuminate the work of later composers.” Do you hear a similar thread of influence in tonight’s program? If not, what unifies the Danish String Quartet’s program for you?

Engagement Events

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 2022

WORKSHOP: VIRGINIA TECH STRING PROJECT
Students in grades 3-4 who participate in this School of Performing Arts community enrichment program were treated to a brief, private performance and direct instruction from members of the Danish String Quartet.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2022

MASTER CLASS
Members of the Danish String Quartet listened to performances by Virginia Tech string students and provided coaching tailored to students’ strengths and areas for development.

POST-PERFORMANCE Q&A
Following the performance, the Danish String Quartet will answer audience questions.

Special thanks to John Irrera, Alan Weinstein, Virginia Tech String Project, and Molly Wilkens-Reed
In the Galleries

NAMWON CHOI: THE SHAPE OF DISTANCE
Thursday, January 27-Saturday, March 26, 2022
Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Based in Savannah, Georgia, Namwon Choi’s vivid monochromatic blue landscapes compress distance and invite an intimate perspective. Trained in traditional Korean painting, Choi’s multi-perspectival, geometric, and finely detailed depictions of scenic byways evoke poetic ideas of time, transition, and states of in-betweenness.

SHIN-IL KIM: IN BETWEEN FIVE COLORS
Thursday, January 27-Saturday, March 26, 2022
Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen ’71 Reception Gallery

Based in Seoul, Korea, Shin-il Kim explores the limitations of language to make video sculptures and animations that shift between perception and reality. With light and color, Kim builds form from the negative spaces of characters and the gaps between lines. Language becomes a barrier to seeing, and its absence reveals meaning under the surface of knowledge.

GALLERY HOURS
Wednesday-Friday, 10 AM-5 PM
Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at megh79@vt.edu.
Land Acknowledgement

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People’s homeland and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that legislation and practices like the Morrill Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands, both locally and in western territories.

We understand that honoring Native Peoples without explicit material commitments falls short of our institutional responsibilities. Through sustained, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the Tutelo/Monacan Peoples and other Native Nations, we commit to changing the trajectory of Virginia Tech’s history by increasing Indigenous student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying course offerings, and meeting the growing needs of all Virginia tribes and supporting their sovereignty.

We must also recognize that enslaved Black people generated revenue and resources used to establish Virginia Tech and were prohibited from attending until 1953. Through InclusiveVT, the institutional and individual commitment to Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, we commit to advancing a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

Health and Wellness

The Moss Arts Center adheres to the guidelines of the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Tech in its operations, including protocols for distancing, face coverings, and cleaning and sanitation. Our status may change according to changes in university operating procedures. Find the most up to date information at artscenter.vt.edu/visit.

We ask patrons to do their part in keeping our community healthy. If you feel unwell, please stay home.
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2022 MOSS ARTS CENTER
SPRING PERFORMANCES

Thurs., Feb. 3-Fri., Feb. 4, 7:30 PM  
CIRQUE MECHANICS  
*Birdhouse Factory*

Wed., Feb. 23, 7:30 PM  
BALLE'r HISPÁNICO  
*Noche de Oro*

Tues., March 1, 7:30 PM  
Broadway in Blacksburg  
RENT  
The 25th Anniversary Farewell Season of Love Tour

Thurs., March 17, 7:30 PM  
MEMPHIS JOOKIN': THE SHOW  
Featuring Lil Buck

Tues., March 22, 7:30 PM  
THE MOTH MAINSTAGE

Thurs., March 24, 7:30 PM  
CHONTADELIA

Thurs., March 31, 7:30 PM  
EDGAR MEYER AND THE SCOTTISH ENSEMBLE

Fri., April 8, 7:30 PM  
Sat., April 9, 4 and 7:30 PM  
BURGERZ  
BY TRAVIS ALabanza

Thurs., April 14, 7:30 PM  
KRISTIN CHENOWETH  
For the Girls

Tues., April 19, 7:30 PM  
SARAH CHANG, violin

Fri., April 22-Sat., May 14, 8:30-11 PM  
CRAIG WALSH’S MONUMENTS

Sat., April 23, 7:30 PM  
CHOIR! CHOIR! CHOIR!

Thurs., April 28, 7:30 PM  
THE TALLIS SCHOLARS

Programs are subject to change.
Wednesday, February 23, 7:30 PM

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Thursday, March 17, 7:30 PM

MEMPHIS JOOKIN’: THE SHOW

Featuring Lil Buck

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2nd annual Souper Bowl Challenge
Saturday, February 5, 2022
Featuring soup from 5 local restaurants!
Tickets available now at www.vtymca.org

2021 Highlights at the Y

*Expanded the Meals on Main program to 7 distribution sites where we serve 5 days’ worth of meals & snacks to more than 250 community youth every week – that’s more than 65,000 meals & snacks each year!

*Launched the region’s 1st annual International Welcome Week, in tandem with other communities across the nation, to welcome new immigrants to our community as well as celebrate our neighbors who hail from international locales.

*Resumed our on-site after school programs where our Virginia Tech student leaders serve as positive role models and mentors to MCPS students

SUSTAINABILITY AT THE Y

Did You Know

Are Alkaline Batteries Toxic? Can you toss them in the Trash?
According to the EPA, it is perfectly acceptable to throw away single use alkaline batteries. They contain manganese, steel and zinc, all of which are naturally occurring metals that pose no threat to the environment.

Recycle your rechargeable batteries, CFLs and ink cartridges at the Town of Blacksburg Recycling Station inside the Y Thrift Shop.