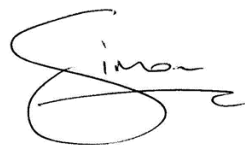


## GREETINGS from SIMON FRYER

How to follow the intensity of our celebrations of last season's 125th Anniversary? Not an easy task, but one that I think we have accomplished mightily! We begin our season with an unusual quartet: the Fauré Piano Quartett from Germany. This well-established and internationally recognised, quartet – violin, viola, cello, piano – tours regularly, performing in the world's most prestigious concert venues, and I feel fortunate that we are able to launch our season with such wonderful artists. The program, entitled *The Pleasure and the Spirit*, juxtaposes (in the company of Beethoven) two organist composers: Gabriel Fauré and Max Reger. Aaron Copland posited that "only the French can truly grasp Fauré's music and only the Germans, that of Reger"! I anticipate that this performance will prove him wrong as both composers lift us up with their sensual language.

In November we welcome the Tesla Quartet. This USA-based string quartet has developed a reputation for innovative projects and creative thinking, and presents a high-octane program including the latest WMCT commission from Canadian composer Kevin Lau. Alongside, this new work, we find the 3rd Quartet of female Polish composer and violinist Grazyna Bacewicz, a neo-classical work written in Paris where Bacewicz had taken refuge immediately following the Second World War. The program opens with Dvorák's beautiful love songs *Cypresses* and closes with the third of perhaps the most revolutionary works of Beethoven's middle period: the epic string quartets, Op. 59. Quite the journey and, through it, I expect the Tesla Quartet to reveal the full expanse of their extraordinary emotional scope.

-Simon Fryer, WMCT Artistic Director



The October 5th, 2023, concert  
**Fauré Quartett**

in memory of  
**Marlene Preiss**

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As a courtesy to others, please refrain from wearing perfume or other scents.  
Please turn off cell phones and other noise-making devices.  
No photography or recordings of any type during the performance.

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Please come and meet the artists on the stage following the concert.

Visit the artists' website at [www.faurequartett.de](http://www.faurequartett.de)

# PROGRAM for OCTOBER 5, 2023

Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Ludwig van Beethoven  
op. 16 (1770–1827)

- I. Grave - Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Andante cantabile
- III. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Piano Quartet no. 2 in A minor, Max Reger  
op. 133 (1873–1916)

- I. Allegro con passione
- II. Vivace
- III. Largo con gran espressione
- IV. Allegro con spirito

## INTERMISSION

Piano Quartet no. 2 in G minor, Gabriel Fauré  
op. 45 (1845–1924)

- I. Allegro molto moderato
- II. Allegro molto
- III. Adagio non troppo
- IV. Finale - allegro molto

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### *Tuning Your Mind Lecture:*

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### FAURE QUARTETT

Dirk Mommertz, piano; Erika Geldsetzer, violin;  
Sascha Frömbling, viola; Konstantin Heidrich, cello

The requirements have changed. Whoever is playing chamber music today can't be limited to the rules from decades ago. The 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 within just a few years. Dirk Mommertz (piano), Erika Geldsetzer (violin), Sascha Frömbling (viola) and Konstantin Heidrich (cello) 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 in TV shows *KIKA* or *Rhapsody in School*, getting children excited in chamber music. When they released their album *Popsongs* in 2009, there was a great deal of buzz in the press and audience. In the following year, the ensemble was awarded the ECHO Classic for their album *Classic Beyond Borders*, their second award after their recording of Brahms' piano quartets (Chamber Music recording of the year, 2008). 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. In 2006, they signed a contract with Deutsche Grammophon, promoting them to the Champions League of the classic music business. They made highly regarded benchmark-recordings with works by Mozart, Brahms, Mendelssohn and pop songs from Peter Gabriel and Steely Dan as well as works from Mahler and Richard Strauss (Sony Classical) on one album. Currently the quartet is releasing the world's first-ever recording of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Rachmaninov's *Etudes-Tableaux* in their own arrangements on the Berlin Classics label.

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 Munich. Moreover, they were Artistic Directors of Festspielfrühling Rügen and are 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. All these mosaics form a unique profile for this defining chamber music ensemble.

## NOTES for OCTOBER 5, 2023

The promotional material for the Fauré Quartett declares that they are a relatively unusual group that promotes lesser-known repertoire. At first glance I thought this a bold claim but leafing through the last 20 years of WMCT concerts reveals that the piano quartet is indeed an unfamiliar combination. In that time we have heard one dedicated group and apart from that only one work in the genre, performed by a piano trio with guest viola. That is in contrast to twenty one string quartets during the same period. So perhaps, as today's players say, they "can't be limited to the rules from decades ago. The expectations regarding the diversity of repertoire have changed."

We begin the concert with a name that is far from unknown. Nonetheless Beethoven was not greatly attracted to the piano quartet; he wrote three early pieces when he was still a young teenager in Bonn and the one piece that is on today's program. And even that is slightly unusual. Beethoven arrived in Vienna in 1792 with the aim of making his name as a composer and pianist. He studied with Haydn and later with Albrechtsberger, both relationships somewhat fraught. It was as a virtuoso pianist that he first became prominent in musical circles, noted especially for his audacious and sometimes unconventional improvisation, and many of his compositions from this period include the piano - he made his first appearance in the Imperial city playing his Bb Piano Concerto. In 1796 he made a concert tour to Prague and Berlin and the Op. 16 Piano Quartet dates from this time, or at least a first version of it does. The original composition was a quintet for piano with oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon, and this was performed for its dedicatee, Prince Joseph Johann Schwarzenberg, in 1797. Many writers have suggested that this work was modelled on Mozart's well-known piece for the same combination. Although Mozart's composition was



it with such words as melancholy, eerie, resigned, inward-looking. But she also quotes a contemporary response to its first performance which called it "one of the most rewarding of modern chamber music works." Today's performers promise that the "lush counterpoint and sometimes insane harmonic tempo" of this work will "lift up the listener." Damian Thompson, borrowing from Tovey once again, offers the best advice for us in approaching this work: just sit back and enjoy the ride ... and notice the boldness and wistfulness of the writing.

In 1924 the American composer Aaron Copland wrote an article about "A neglected Composer." This wasn't Max Reger, although he does mention him in passing, but Gabriel Fauré. He is quick to point out that the neglect of Fauré was only outside of France. His explanation for this, whether true or not, is ingenious: Fauré developed slowly, so that his most important works – those produced after he was fifty – coincided with the more startling innovations of Debussy. By this time critics, who knew his earlier pieces had him "nicely pigeon-holed as a composer of a sort of super-salon music," and ignored the later works. More recent writers have corrected this imbalance. Jean-Michel Nectoux has called him the most advanced composer of his generation in France, whose late works show an "increasing economy of expression, boldness of harmony and enrichment of polyphony [that] give his work of this period an authentic place in 20th-century composition." Within France, Fauré became a national institution during his lifetime and in 1922, he was honoured with a splendid public tribute at the Sorbonne, attended by all the most famous French artists and by the President.

The Second Piano Quartet was written in 1885-6, a couple of years after the composer married, and at a time when he was employed as choirmaster of La Madeleine in Paris. It was given its first performance with the composer at the piano in January of 1887 at the Société Nationale de musique, and published shortly afterwards. Robert Orledge claims that in this work the composer "announces his full artistic maturity" while for Copland, it shows Fauré in a "less carefree [mood], more serious, more profound" than in his earlier work for the same forces. The scherzo reminds Nectoux of Schubert's Erlkönig with its "headlong career through a night illuminated by occasional flashes." According to the composer, the opening of the slow movement was inspired by the bells that he used to hear of an evening in Cadirac, near his family home at Montgauzy.

*-John Mayo*

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