

The Artemis Quartet

Natalia Prishepenko – Violin

Gregor Sigl – Violin

Friedemann Weigle – Viola

Eckart Runge – Cello

High praise comes from a discriminating voice. In a critic written about the string quartet, the daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has stated that there are many good string quartets performing. However, among the very good quartets playing internationally, the “Artemis ensemble is the best.” The reason: “Ranging from Beethoven to Ligeti, their performances overflow with fullness of sound, delineated structure and unparalleled drama.”

The Berlin-based Artemis Quartet was founded at the Lübeck Musikhochschule in 1989. Walter Levin, the Emerson Quartet, the Julliard Quartet and the Alban Berg Quartet have been and remain important teachers and mentors for the quartet. Since 1994 the four players have performed as a professional ensemble, quickly gaining a reputation as one of the leading ensembles of their generation. The ensemble’s international stature was established by winning First Prizes at the ARD Competition in 1996 and soon thereafter First Prize at the Premio Borciani. Rather than pitch themselves into the tempting fast track of career success, the members of the Artemis Quartet instead immersed themselves in further study in 1998 the ensemble spent a year in residence with the Alban Berg Quartet in Vienna followed by a three month sabbatical at Berlin’s Wissenschaftskolleg. Their debut at the Berlin Philharmonie in June of 1999 marked the formal start of their career.

A new phase of the chamber group’s life began in July 2007 with Gregor Sigl and Friedemann Weigle becoming members of the string quartet. Their first appearances with their two new members included performances at the Salzburg Festival, the Schubertiade in Schwarzenberg, the Rheingau Musik Festival as well as Septembre Musical Montreux-Vevay.

Since 2004 the quartet’s series of concerts at the Berlin Philharmonie has met with high praise from critics and audiences alike. In addition to their busy schedule of concerts at all the most important concert venues in Europe, the US, Japan, South America and Australia, and numerous appearances at international festivals, the Artemis Quartet is also committed to teaching. One example of this vocation is their joint professorship in chamber music at Berlin’s Universität der Künste and their guest lectureship at the “Chapelle Reine Elisabeth” in Brussels.

From the outset, the Artemis Quartet has highly valued sharing the concert podium with leading concert artists. Most recently they were on a concert tour with Juliane Banse, Truls Mørk and Leif Ove Andsnes. Intensive study of contemporary music is also an important focus within the quartet’s repertoire. Composers such as Mauricio Sotelo (2004), Jörg Widmann (2006), and Thomas Larcher (in a work to be premiered in 2008) have composed works for the Artemis Quartet.

The Artemis Quartet appeared in a motion picture early in its career, playing in an EMI production in 1996 as guests of the Alban Berg Quartet in Bruno Monsaingeon’s feature-length documentary named after Schubert’s quartet of the same name – *Death and the Maiden*. Five years later the Artemis Quartet once again performed in another film by the renowned director. Monsaingeon’s 2001 documentary on Beethoven’s Grosse Fuge op.133 – *Strings Attached* – is at the same time an impressive portrait of the Artemis Quartet.

In recognition of the ensemble’s contribution to the interpretation of Beethoven’s music, the Verein des Beethoven-Hauses Bonn conferred honorary membership to the Artemis Quartet in 2003. In 2004 the quartet won the 23rd “Premio Internazionale Accademia Musicale Chigiana” in Siena, Italy.

In 2005 the Artemis Quartet signed an exclusive recording contract with Virgin Classics/EMI which will ultimately result in at least ten recordings over a period five years. Most recently a CD featuring string quartets by Janáček and Dvorák was released, to be followed in September 2007 with a new recording of Brahms and Schumann piano quintets with Leif Ove Andsnes. The first recording with the newest members of the ensemble will be a CD of works by Schubert including the Quintet for Two Cellos with Truls Mørk. Recordings by the Artemis Quartet previously on the Ars Musici label and now on Virgin Classics/EMI have been awarded the German Record Critics’ Award (Deutscher Schallplattenpreis) and Diapason d’Or. In October of 2006 the Artemis Quartet’s recording of the String Quartets, op. 95 & 59/1, was awarded Germany’s definitive Echo Klassik award for “Chamber Music Recording of the Year.”

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