

Biography | September 2025

Florian Donderer | violin
Annette Walther | violin
Xandi van Dijk | viola
Thomas Schmitz | violoncello

Performances of unsparing expressivity, intimacy and vitality are hallmarks of the Signum Quartett, pairing music making of the subtlest order with playing of the highest intensity. The dramatic composition of their programmes is innovative and distinct, being realised with uncompromising perfection in interpretations of effortless transparency.

The quartet has been a welcome guest at the Wigmore Hall London, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Philharmonie de Paris, Konzerthaus Vienna, Philharmonie Cologne, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, the Carnegie Hall and at the BBC Proms, with partners such as Nils Mönkemeyer, Dominique Horwitz, Jörg Widmann, Daniel Ottensamer, Nicolas Altstaedt and Elisabeth Leonskaja.

The Signum Quartett's discography is a testament to their stylistic range: Next to standard works of the quartet literature, they have recorded works by Wolfgang Rihm, Thomas Adès, Jörg Widmann and Kevin Volans. Their recording of Erkki-Sven Tüür's second string quartet "Lost Prayers" for ECM was rewarded Classical Album of the Year at the Estonian Music Awards 2021.

With the CD "Lebensmuth", the Signum Quartett completes its Schubert cycle for PENTATONE. This recording was awarded the Opus Klassik in 2024. The first album "Aus der Ferne" (Diapason D'Or, Opus Klassik) received several awards. "Ins stille Land" continues the cycle and deepens the exploration of the fascinating connection between string quartet and Lied. In 2025, ECM released "A Dark Flaring" with compositions by South African composers from eight decades.

In 2015, the quartet launched its innovative social media project #quartweet, where composers of all ages and abilities are invited to tweet a short quartet of 140 notes or less on Twitter. The project has received much media attention and was featured on Deutschlandfunk, BBC In Tune and BR U-21. Contributing composers include Bruno Mantovani, Grawemeyer Award winners Brett Dean and Sebastian Currier and Pulitzer Prize winner Caroline Shaw.

In 2022, the quartet established its Bremen-based project *SIGNUM open space*, supported by *Neustart Kultur*. This is a space for rehearsals, recordings, workshops and education initiatives as well as an interactive exchange with the public. Additionally, interdisciplinary projects such as exhibitions, readings, dance and seminars on body awareness with renowned lecturers are offered.

In this open space, the Signum Quartett, whose violist is a native of South Africa, has also brought the history of South Africa to Bremen to mark the 30th anniversary of the end of apartheid: the ensemble has commissioned compositions from predominantly black South African composers such as Abel Selaocoe, Thandi Nthuli and Neo Muyanga, some of whose works also contain Jazz and Pop music as well as traditional African stylistic elements. These works are performed on tours worldwide and will be recorded.