



## Sacconi Quartet

### String Quartet

"An exceptional ensemble... a unanimous sense of musical breath and a meticulous attention to detail." Musical Opinion

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Ben Hancox *violin*      Hannah Dawson *violin*      Robin Ashwell *viola*      Cara Berridge *cello*

The award-winning Sacconi Quartet are recognised for their unanimous and compelling ensemble, consistently communicating with a fresh and imaginative approach. Performing with style and commitment, the quartet are known throughout the world for their creativity and integrity of interpretation. Formed in 2001, their four founder members continue to demonstrate a shared passion for string quartet repertoire, infectiously reaching out to audiences with their energy and enthusiasm. The Sacconi enjoy a busy international career, performing regularly across the world, at Europe's major venues, in recordings and on radio broadcasts. The Sacconi are Quartet in Association at the Royal College of Music.

The Sacconis' prolific recording career has covered an extremely broad selection of repertoire. In 2020 they will record a new disc of works by Roxanna Panufnik for Signum Classics, with guest artists Charles Owen, Roderick Williams, Nicholas Daniel and Amy Harman. The disc will also feature a brand new commission which the Sacconi will premiere at their Folkestone Festival in May 2020. 2017 saw the release of three new CDs by the Sacconi Quartet. *In Damascus*, their CD of music by Jonathan Dove including *In Damascus*, commissioned by the quartet, and featuring Mark Padmore and Charles Owen, hit the Classical Top Ten, and was chosen as one of Gramophone Magazine's Recordings of the Year: "This important release cannot be recommended too highly". Their complete recording of Graham Fitkin's string quartets was given rave reviews on Radio 3's Record Review, in Gramophone Magazine and in The Strad. Their CD of three quintets by John McCabe featured the composer on piano in *The Woman by the Sea*, horn player David Pyatt in the *Horn Quintet* written for Pyatt and the Sacconis, and Roderick Williams in *Silver Nocturnes*.

The 2019-20 season sees the quartet make their debuts in Russia (with Peter Donohoe), Mexico (with Freddy Kempf) and Lebanon (Al Bustan Festival). They return to the Wigmore Hall for three concerts, perform two UK tours, perform at festivals including Swaledale, Canterbury, Monkstown, Egerton and Lakeside Chamber Music, and perform with pianist Angela Hewitt in Italy. They also continue their performances of Dove's *In Damascus* with Mark Padmore and Robin Tritschler, as well as giving several performances of their inimitable *Beethoven in the Dark*. Firm advocates of new music, the Sacconi will also give the world premieres of new quartets by Judith Bingham (Kings Place), Roxanna Panufnik (Folkestone) and John Woolrich (Little Missenden Festival). Future commissions and premieres include Jonathan Dove, Graham Fitkin and Nicola LeFanu.

2020 will see thirteenth year of the Sacconi Chamber Music Festival in Folkestone, featuring a programme of Russian piano quintets with Peter Donohoe, collaborations with David Campbell and musicians from the Royal College of Music, and the World Premiere of their commission from Roxanna Panufnik. The Sacconi Festival is now firmly established among the UK's major chamber music festivals and attracts audiences from far and near for its vibrant atmosphere and dynamic programming.

In Summer 2015 the quartet launched HEARTFELT, their most innovative project to date. A radical re-interpretation of Beethoven's iconic String Quartet in A minor opus 132, HEARTFELT pushed the boundaries of chamber music through combining sound, light and touch, for a truly unique performance in which audience members connected with each performer's heartbeat through holding robotic 'hearts'. Developed in a unique collaboration with robotics designers Rusty Squid and lighting designer Ziggy Jacobs-Wyburn, and funded by Arts Council England, HEARTFELT received 4-star reviews from The Guardian and The Independent,

and was described by the latter as “a powerful way to experience the visceral physicality of Beethoven’s profound thanksgiving”. [www.heartfelt.org.uk](http://www.heartfelt.org.uk)

The name Sacconi Quartet comes from the outstanding twentieth-century Italian luthier and restorer Simone Sacconi, whose book *The Secrets of Stradivari* is considered an indispensable reference for violin makers. Ben Hancox plays a 1932 Sacconi violin and Robin Ashwell a 1934 Sacconi viola, both made in New York. Hannah Dawson plays a 1927 Sacconi violin made in Rome, and Cara Berridge plays a Nicolaus Gagliano cello from 1781. Ben, Hannah & Cara have all been generously loaned these instruments by the Royal Society of Musicians, a charity which helps musicians in need, for which they are extremely grateful. Robin is indebted to Ellen Solomon for the use of his viola.

The Sacconi Quartet celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the 2021-22 season.

**February 2020**

*Please do not use this biography if it is more than three months old. If this biography is to be edited down, please retain the last paragraph.*