



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*

For twenty years, the Sacconi Quartet have been captivating audiences with 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, the 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 and Quartet in Residence in Folkestone.

The Sacconis' prolific recording career covers a broad swathe of repertoire from Haydn to present day. Their latest album featuring world premiere recordings of works by Roxanna Panufnik includes the Sacconi's commission *Heartfelt*. Releases of recent years include premiere recordings of works by Panufnik, Jonathan Dove, Graham Fitkin and John McCabe. *In Damascus*, their album 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 album 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*.

In November the Sacconi celebrated twenty years of playing together, with a celebration birthday concert at Wigmore Hall. Firm advocates of new music, the programme featured the world premiere of their latest piece from Jonathan Dove, *On the Streets and In the Sky*. Over the last year they have also premiered Graham Fitkin's *Loosening* for saxophone and quartet (commissioned by the Sacconi), Nicola LeFanu's String Quintet and Robin Holloway's second Clarinet Quintet with Mark Simpson). They also continue to tour with *Beethoven in the Dark*, their immersive performance of Beethoven's op.131 quartet entirely from memory, in almost complete darkness.

As the result of a generous grant, the Sacconi Quartet are Quartet in Residence for the town of Folkestone and its surrounding areas. This is enabling creative collaborations with local artists and projects, and includes an embedded outreach programme, engaging with young string players in the town, and taking creative projects into harder to reach communities in the east side of Folkestone in particular. 2022 will see the fourteenth Sacconi Chamber Music Festival in Folkestone, which 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 2021, the quartet released an exclusive film of Jonathan Dove's *Out of Time* on Amazon with all proceeds going to Hands Up Foundation, a young and innovative charity that delivers aid directly and effectively to Syrians in need. They continue to support this charity with a forthcoming gala concert featuring *In Damascus* with Mark Padmore.

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, Britain's oldest music charity helping musicians in need, for which they are extremely grateful. Robin is indebted to Ellen Solomon for the use of his viola.

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