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Jeremy Geffen

Words cannot express my pleasure in welcoming you to this afternoon's concert with the brilliant Danish String Quartet, returning to campus for the first of two concerts this season. Today the DSQ launches an exciting new endeavor, the *Doppelgänger* project—four programs (over three seasons), each pairing a Schubert string quartet with a new work co-commissioned by Cal Performances. For today's visit, Schubert's profound, probing final Quartet in G Major (D. 887) is matched with its musical "double," a new piece by Danish composer Bent Sørensen, winner of the prestigious 2018 Grawemeyer Award. Bringing new work to today's audiences is central to Cal Performances' mission and I couldn't be happier that you could join us for what promises to be a memorable concert;

it's wonderful that we can gather together again, listening to great music under the same roof!

When the pandemic forced Cal Performances to close its doors in March 2020, no one could have imagined what lay ahead. Since then, we've witnessed a worldwide health crisis unlike any experienced during our lifetimes, an extended period of political turmoil, recurring incidents of civil unrest and racially motivated violence, and a consciousness-raising human rights movement that has forever—and significantly—changed how each of us views social justice in our time.

Of course, the pandemic remains with us to this date and future challenges—including many adjustments to "normal" procedures and policies—can certainly be expected. I encourage you to check Cal Performances' website regularly for the most current information regarding our COVID-19 response. First and foremost, I assure you that there is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our audience, artists, and staff. (And I remind one and all that proof of vaccination is mandatory today, as is protective masking throughout the event.)

Our season continues this month with audience favorites, the brilliant *Takács Quartet* (Oct 17) and our old friends at *Pilobolus* dance company (Oct 21–22), and our full schedule offers more of the same, packed with the kind of adventurous and ambitious programming you've come to expect from Cal Performances. In particular, I want to direct your attention to this year's *Illuminations*: "Place and Displacement" programming, through which we'll explore both loss and renewal, disempowerment and hope, while seeking paths forward for reclaiming and celebrating vital cultural connections that can fall victim to political and social upheaval.

Please take the opportunity to explore the complete schedule through our website and season brochure and begin planning your performance calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

Throughout history, the performing arts have survived incredible challenges: periods of war, economic collapse, and, yes, terrible disease. And if it will take time for us—collectively and individually—to process the events of the past 18 months, I'm certain that the arts have the power to play a critical role as we come to terms with what we have experienced and move together toward recovery.

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you during the coming year.

Cal Performances is back. Welcome home!

Jeremy Geffen

Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances





Not to Be Reproduced, 1937, by René Magritte

Seeing Double

The *Doppelgänger* Project

by Thomas May

*Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe—
Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt*

*(It horrifies me when I see his face
The moon reveals my own likeness)*

These chilling words from one of the poems in Heinrich Heine's *Buch der Lieder* of 1827 depict the uncanny moment of recognition in "Der Doppelgänger." Franz Schubert set this text to music the following year—shortly before his death—as part of a collection that was published posthumously under the title *Schwanengesang* ("Swan Song"). Jeremy Geffen, executive and artistic director of Cal Performances, likens the song to "a *Twilight Zone* episode in four minutes."

Heine actually left this poem untitled to intensify the degree of shock and surprise when the narrator realizes he is seeing his own *Doppelgänger*, whereas Schubert clues us in to the troubled emotional atmosphere with the

ominous chord sequence heard at the outset. Here, already, is an example of the process of responding to and amending a source that we might call "doppelganging," in the spirit of the Danish String Quartet's (DSQ) ambitious *Doppelgänger* project, an initiative that combines late chamber masterpieces by Schubert with new commissions by four contemporary composers. Cal Performances, which has joined the project as a co-commissioner, is presenting these four programs over the course three seasons.

The fuzziness around the German word *Doppelgänger* is intentional. On the one hand, the term is used simply to refer to a harmless lookalike (a person who can even be sought out online via image recognition apps). But the mythic implications reach deep into the psyche, providing an obsessive trope for the Romantics (the coining of the German term is attributed to the novelist Jean Paul, later a favorite of Mahler). The notion of deceptively identical appearances that can disguise polarities opens up

yet another dimension embedded within the concept. One of Schubert's own friends described the composer as having "a double nature—inwardly a kind of poet and outwardly a kind of hedonist."

"I think everybody has an idea of what a *Doppelgänger* is," says DSQ violist Asbjørn Nørgaard. "It can be a very mystical term filled with images and history and philosophy, but it's also something that is a very physical thing." Similarly, through its commissioning of the four composers, the DSQ wanted to give ample leeway to each to interpret for themselves how to respond or react to the Schubert work with which they have been paired. "We've only created the framework and want to see some sort of inspiration going back and forth between the two. They might quote the Schubert piece or they might write something completely different. We don't know how they will respond to the challenge."

For example, Danish composer Bent Sørensen wrote his contribution, which launches *Doppelgänger's* Berkeley concerts on October 10, as a counterpart to the vast expanse of the String Quartet in G major of 1826, Schubert's final work in the genre. He incorporates *Doppelgänger*-like gestures into his new score—a product of the pandemic lockdowns—right down to the Schubertian title.

Later this season (April 29), Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski (born 1970), a student of Kaija Saariaho and the late Louis Andriessen, will present her new quartet responding to Schubert's String Quartet in D minor from 1824, popularly known as *Death and the Maiden*. Next season brings Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir's commission juxtaposed with the A minor Quartet of 1824 (*Rosamunde*), and

Thomas Adès will round out the series in 2023–24 with a piece that reacts to Schubert's String Quintet in C major from 1828.

What was the criterion for choosing the commissioned composers? "It was very hard because on one side we wanted composers we like to work with, who have a musical language that we like; but we also wanted something new, something different," observes Nørgaard. While the members of the DSQ have burished their reputation as excitingly fresh and insightful interpreters of the classical canon, commissions for *Doppelgänger* offer a way to open up new horizons. "Each of the new pieces will be a challenge, because there's going to be a different 'language' each time."

The DSQ's new undertaking, Geffen explains, also resonates with an important aspect of the Cal Performances mission: "It is incumbent on any arts organization to move the repertoire forward, to create those works that in 50 years will be considered canonical. So this project very much aligns with Cal Performances, which has a history of taking risks in supporting new work. I appreciate so much the curiosity of our audience, as well as the fact that the DSQ are using their platform to lift up contemporary composers."

Geffen adds: "Schubert, during his lifetime, heard relatively few of his works played and did not have the benefit of fame as a composer to launch performances. It is inconceivable—and humbling—that someone who died so young could have such a deep understanding of the complexities of the human experience."

Thomas May is a writer, critic, educator, and translator. Along with essays regularly commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony, the Juilliard School, and other leading institutions, he contributes to the New York Times and Musical America and blogs about the arts at www.memeteria.com.

PROGRAM NOTES BY THOMAS MAY

Schubert Meets Sørensen

"I have yet to hear an unconvincing performance from them in any repertoire," says Jeremy Geffen, executive and artistic director of Cal Performances, of the Danish String Quartet, the remarkable ensemble that made its debut nearly 20 years ago at the 2002 Copenhagen Summer Festival. It was as a member of the advisory board for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's series spotlighting young artists that Geffen first encountered the group. "Every member of the panel put their pencil down in astonishment," he recalls. "The way they played the first movement of Beethoven's Op. 127 made us feel this is simply how it's supposed to go."

But the DSQ are not content to merely keep performing the landmarks of the repertoire in isolation—even if, as violist Asbjørn Nørgaard puts it, "it's still quite an event every time you perform the Beethoven cycle or the late Schubert quartets, because they are such huge creations of art and contain so many emotions." *Doppelgänger* constructs a bold new framework for four of Schubert's most significant chamber music masterpieces by presenting each in dialogue with a new work commissioned, respectively, from four contemporary composers (see *Seeing Double* on pp. 6–8). This afternoon's performance juxtaposes one of Schubert's most monumental scores with a brand-new work created during the pandemic lockdown by the Danish composer Bent Sørensen. Launching the ambitious *Doppelgänger* project in the United States, it is the first of four interrelated programs that the DSQ will present at Cal Performances over three seasons.

The String Quartet in G major is an especially fitting place to start. This last of Schubert's 15 completed quartets stands out not only as one of his towering achievements but as a high point in the history of the genre. On top of that, the G major Quartet can be seen to hold a curiously *Doppelgänger*-like position in itself, according to Nørgaard, in relation to Beethoven's visionary Op. 131 Quartet in C-sharp minor. Both composers were at work on "these two cornerstones

of the string quartet during almost the same months in 1826," he points out. "And they were composed in the same city, too—geographically, within one kilometer of each other."

The unique aura of Beethoven's last quartets, so little understood by his contemporaries, cast a spell over Schubert. Legend holds that he requested a special private performance of Op. 131 just days before his premature death in 1828—the year following Beethoven's own death—and was moved to exclaim: "After this, what is left for us to write?" Bent Sørensen, for his part, recalls being deeply impressed by Schubert's G major Quartet from the first time he heard it at a young age. Sørensen knew that he wanted to call his new piece *Doppelgänger* from the beginning, even before the process of composing it. But the relation of his work to the Schubert is complex, for *Doppelgänger* is, he emphasizes, "a piece completely independent of Schubert."

Life's Unpredictability:

Schubert's Quartet Swan Song

Schubert had been a prolific writer of string quartets when he was a teenager. But these early efforts were mostly trial works or were intended for the comfortable ritual of domestic music-making: a string quartet made up of family members fond of playing for themselves and friends, with the composer joining in as violist (the same "insider view" preferred by Mozart). Apart from a projected quartet in 1820 (only one movement of which, known as the *Quartettsatz*, was completed, even though it is known as his Quartet No. 12), Schubert composed no more string quartets until 1824, when he produced the first two of his final three quartets in close succession: *Rosamunde* (No. 13) and *Death and the Maiden* (No. 14).

Another pause followed, and in June 1826—over an astoundingly short period of 10 days—Schubert wrote the String Quartet No. 15 in G major, which carries no nickname. It was not performed in public during the composer's remaining two years of life and was the last of the final three to be published, appearing in 1851; indeed, all of Schubert's quartets, save the *Rosa-*

munde, were published posthumously. It is of the same vintage as Schubert's expansive Piano Sonata in G major, D. 894, which he completed in October of 1826; he is also believed to have completed the "Great" Symphony in C major in the spring or summer of that year. In each of these works, Schubert seems intent on pursuing new, daring, ambitious paths.

The extended proportions of the quartet, as well as the muscular style of its string writing (resulting in notably "big" sonorities), give the composition a sense of symphonic scope. The opening movement, above all, is enormous. Its duration can vary considerably, depending on whether the exposition repeat is followed and, of course, on tempo choices. Overall, the movement "may be regarded as epic or novelistic—in the sense used by Theodor W. Adorno in his book on Mahler," wrote the musicologist Carl Dahlhaus.

The most immediately striking gesture is the modal ambiguity introduced in the very first measures, with their sudden shift from major to minor. This shift, more than any thematic "cell," is the kernel of the G major Quartet and its signature—indeed, the signature of Schubert's unique sensibility. Given the contemporaneity of Beethoven, together with the magnetic influence the older composer wielded over Schubert, many commentators have compared and contrasted the significance of such modal opposition as used by both composers. Beethoven, in his "heroic" mode, deploys it with a clear narrative purpose to trace a pattern of "victory" over the troubling implications of the minor. His Fifth Symphony, for example, might be characterized as "optimistic" in the most basic sense that the future is revealed to improve over the past. But Schubert repeatedly equivocates between the modes. Unlike the intensification Beethoven requires, the feeling is closer to the unpredictability of real life.

The Andante is particularly disturbing in its dislocations of the lovely elegy in E minor with which it begins. Schubert's writing here at times verges on an avant-garde attitude. As in the first movement, tremolos are a significant part of the texture. The sense of agitation that these tremolos stir up puzzled Dahlhaus, who

wrote that it "hardly seems suited to the idea of epic composure."

If the lighter scoring of the Scherzo seems to provide mere relief, its contrasting trio merits special attention as the work's rare oasis of composure—not epic, to be sure, but soul-restoring. It gives the modal oscillation between major and minor, which returns full force in the finale, an even fiercer, more unsettling character. Like the corresponding movement of the D minor Quartet, *Death and the Maiden*, this one assumes the aspect of a wild tarantella, the frenzied dance from southern Italian folklore.

Overall, comments Nørgaard, performing the late Schubert quartets alters the perception of time for the DSQ and audience alike. "Somehow you get stuck in this rabbit hole of time where you don't know whether you have played one minute or eight hours." He contrasts this effect with a very different sense of time that Beethoven engenders. "It is because Schubert's writing is repetitive, with the same melodies coming back over and over again, in slightly different ways, with slightly different colorings. And it's a different feeling to play this music compared to all other string quartets that we have performed."

"A Soft *Doppelgänger*"

Bent Sørensen's New Commission

A widely performed composer from Northern Europe, Bent Sørensen (born in 1958, of the same generation as Esa-Pekka Salonen) is fond of the image of an "enigma" to describe the role of influences from the past: "something hits an enigma inside me and melts into it," he remarked in an interview for Bachtrack.com. Sørensen was Festival Composer at the Bergen International Festival in 2007; in 2018 he received the Grawemeyer Award, one of the most coveted prizes in contemporary music, for the triple concerto *L'isola della Città* ("The Island in the City").

The introspective, refined, meditative qualities of Sørensen's style, with its delicate, micro-tonal brushstrokes, are often noted. These do not preclude undertakings on a large canvas, such as *Sounds Like You* (2008), a "play for choir, orchestra, audience, and actors" and the

recent *St. Matthew Passion* (2019; premiere delayed to this past spring), which bears a sort of *Doppelgänger* relation to J.S. Bach's milestone work.

As a fellow resident of Copenhagen, Sørensen frequently encounters the DSQ and admires their talent for internalizing a piece of music according to the unique sound and style they have developed. "Whether they play Schubert or a piece by me, they bring in something which is *their music*. Instead of just playing what I have written, they actually recreate the piece." *Doppelgänger* continues a collaboration with the DSQ that has included *Dancers and Disappearance* (2018) for accordion and quartet and performances of the 2013 piano quintet *Rosenbad – Papillons*. The DSQ gave the world premiere of *Doppelgänger*—delayed by the pandemic—just last month in Amsterdam.

Doppelgänger marks Sørensen's return to the string quartet *per se* after a long hiatus. His previous four works in the genre were all written for the Arditti String Quartet, between 1984 and 1993. The composer explains that he welcomed the prospect of returning to "just four staves in front of me"—he prefers to write out his scores by hand—after completing the *St. Matthew Passion* and his Second Symphony (2019). He wrote *Doppelgänger* between late autumn of 2019 and late spring of 2020, mostly in 2020. But he is careful about how he character-

izes the ways in which the pandemic may have influenced the piece. "I thought to myself that I had to finish my string quartet before the pandemic might take me or somebody else close to me." Is that experience somehow contained in the music? "It would be easy to say: 'yes.' But I think inspiration comes from inside. It doesn't come out in the music, it goes into you, where there is something that is always the same. And then it becomes a part of the music."

Yet Sørensen does refer to himself as an "autobiographical composer. Which means that when I write music, I think my personal and even private life becomes a part of it. When I look through the score, all the memories are there, like a diary of my life. I can remember that I was insecure about the beginning and changed it many times, or the light from the window when I thought about a certain part." There may, for example, be traces of "a certain loneliness" when his only musical experiences after a day spent composing were of hearing his wife—the pianist Katrine Gislinge—practicing at home for concerts that ended up being canceled.

The major-to-minor shadowing that opens Schubert's last quartet especially haunted Sørensen, and he begins *Doppelgänger* with the same gesture. The piece contains what he calls "a lot of clean G major and G minor chords," which are confronted with "a certain resistance." These are merely one of multiple *Doppelgänger*

After my very first premiere with professional musicians in 1981, I had a very inspiring conversation with the cellist in the ensemble who had performed my piece: "You should listen to the great G major quartet by Schubert," he said. So, I did that, and since then the piece has been one of "my" pieces; and that is probably why I immediately said, "It has to be the G major quartet," when the Danish String Quartet asked me to compose a piece in some way referring to one of the late Schubert quartets.

It became *Doppelgänger*—and not only because of a kind of relationship to the quartet by Schubert; indeed, the only traces of Schubert in my piece are some recurring clean and

pure G major chords, often transformed—as in the Schubert quartet—to G minor. The title *Doppelgänger* refers more to what is going on *inside* the music—inside the quartet.

The piece is in two movements, and between the movements and inside each of them there are musical mirrors. Shadows of music arrive and create new contours. A fugue emerges, and later, when it is played backwards, the fugue can be seen from behind. Here, I was thinking of Schubert and his struggle with writing fugues. A figsht I took on....

Doppelgänger is dedicated to the Danish String Quartet.

—Bent Sørensen



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elements in his quartet. The composer refers to Schubert's struggles with fugue writing, for example, which led him to incorporate his own take on contrapuntal writing. Musical ideas return like ghostly *Doppelgänger*s, sometimes backwards. Moreover, the work (lasting about 24 minutes) is designed as a pair of movements; the second, smaller in proportion, begins with a very slow chorale-like texture that hints at what has come before. But if the Romantic and psychological concept of the *Doppelgänger* can suggest "something terrifying—we know this aspect from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*," says Sørensen, "my piece is more like a soft *Doppelgänger* and is not scary."

Speaking a few weeks before the world premiere, while he and his colleagues were still rehearsing *Doppelgänger*, Nørgaard observed that the new piece posed fascinating challenges with its long developmental sections and continual alteration of the pulse. "After a while of doing that, the feeling is almost the same as after performing 50 minutes of Schubert. Somehow Bent Sørensen hits the same state of mind, by a different path of manipulating time, as Schubert." To round out the program, the DSQ return to Schubert with their own arrangement of the song "Der Doppelgänger," published posthumously as the second-to-last of the 14 songs gathered in the 1828 collection *Schwanengesang*.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Among today's many exceptional chamber music groups, the Grammy Award-nominated **Danish String Quartet** continuously asserts its preeminence. The quartet's playing reflects impeccable musicianship, sophisticated artistry, exquisite clarity of ensemble, and, above all, an expressivity inextricably bound to the music. The recipient of many awards and prestigious appointments—including *Musical America's* 2020 Ensemble of the Year and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust—the Danish String Quartet was named in 2013 as BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists and appointed to the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two).

In 2021–22, the Danish String Quartet introduces *Doppelgänger*, an ambitious four-year international commissioning project. *Doppelgänger* pairs world premieres from four renowned composers—Bent Sørensen, Lotta Wennäkoski, Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, and Thomas Adès—with four major works from the masterful chamber music repertoire of Schubert. The first commission, composed by Bent Sørensen and inspired by Schubert's Quartet in G Major (D. 887), received its premiere in Amsterdam earlier this year.

In addition to performances of the *Doppelgänger* project, the Danish String Quartet gives over 20 performances throughout North America during the 2021–22 season. Highlights

include debuts at the University of Georgia, Virginia Tech's Moss Arts Center, Shriver Hall, and Virginia Arts Festival; return trips to Boston's Celebrity Series, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Ensemble Music Society of Indianapolis, Chamber Music Cincinnati, and University of Washington's Meany Hall; and a tour of Florida. European highlights include tours of Denmark, France, Germany, and Amsterdam.

Violinists Frederik Øland and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen and violist Asbjørn Nørgaard met as children at a music summer camp, where they played soccer and made music together. In 2008, the three Danes were joined by Norwegian cellist Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin. Their latest album, *Prism III* (ECM)—featuring Beethoven's String Quartet No. 13, Op. 131, Bartók's String Quartet No. 1, and Bach's Fugue in C-sharp minor, BWV 849 from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*—was released in March 2021.

For more information, visit www.danish-quartet.com.

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