

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley

Danish String Quartet

Frederik Øland, *violin*
Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, *violin*
Asbjørn Nørgaard, *viola*
Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin, *cello*

with

Johannes Rostamo, *cello*

PROGRAM

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828) Cello Quintet in C major, D. 956 (1828)
Allegro ma non troppo
Adagio
Scherzo. Presto – Trio. Andante sostenuto
Allegretto

INTERMISSION

THOMAS ADÈS (b. 1971) *Wreath*—for Franz Schubert
for string quintet (2024, Bay Area Premiere,
Cal Performances Co-commission)

SCHUBERT “Die Nebensonnen” from *Winterreise*, D. 911
(1827)
(Lied arranged for string quintet by
the Danish String Quartet)

*Thomas Adès Wreath—for Franz Schubert was commissioned by the
Danish String Quartet with the support of Cal Performances, Carnegie Hall, Vancouver Recital Society,
UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures, Flagey, and Muziekgebouw aan't IJ.*

The Danish String Quartet has recorded for ECM, DaCapo, and CAVI-Music/BR Klassik.

Worldwide Representation: Kirshbaum Associates Inc.

Major support for this performance is provided by The Bernard Osher Foundation.

This performance is made possible, in part, by Diana Cohen and Bill Falik.

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Seeing Double

The *Doppelgänger* Project Reaches its Conclusion

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)*

Chillingly, these words from Franz Schubert's song *Der Doppelgänger*, taken from Heinrich Heine's 1827 *Buch der Lieder*, depict the uncanny moment of recognition. Franz Schubert set this text to music in 1828—shortly before his death—as part of a collection that was published posthumously under the title *Schwannengesang* (“Swan Song”). Jeremy Geffen, executive and artistic director of Cal Performances, likens the song to “a *Twilight Zone* episode in four minutes.”

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

to the troubled emotional atmosphere with the ominous chord sequence heard at the outset. Here, already, is a phase in the process of responding and remaking a source that we might call “*Doppelgänger*,” in the spirit of the Danish String Quartet's (DSQ) ambitious *Doppelgänger* Project, an initiative that reconsiders four of Schubert's greatest chamber music compositions in the context of newly commissioned works, each given a program of its own.

The fuzziness around the term *Doppelgänger* is intentional. On the one hand, the word is used simply to refer to a harmless lookalike (a person who can even be sought out online via image recognition apps or who can be conjured via rapidly evolving AI technology). But the mythic implications of this phenomenon reach deep into the psyche, providing an obsessive trope for the Romantics. (The novelist Jean Paul, a favorite of Mahler, has been credited with coining the term.)



Not to Be Reproduced, 1937, by René Magritte

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." *Doppelgängers* typically involve seeing double, but the uncanniness can be multiplied further. In the 23rd song of his lieder cycle *Winterreise* from 1827, the composer sets Wilhelm Müller's poem "Die Nebensonnen," in which the sun is not only doubled by tripled: the Wanderer-protagonist sees three phantom suns in the sky and ends by longing for the dark.

"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, in the process of commissioning 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 only created the framework. They might choose to quote the Schubert piece or they might write something completely different. We didn't know beforehand how they would respond to the challenge."

Indeed, the responses turned out to be remarkably varied in strategy and character. The DSQ launched their cycle in the fall of 2021 with a contribution by the Danish composer Bent Sørensen (born in 1958), in whose Schubertian title, *Doppelgänger*, they found a name for the entire project. Sørensen intentionally incorporated *Doppelgänger*-like gestures into his score—a product of the pandemic lockdowns—in his reaction to Schubert's vast final work in the genre, the String Quartet in G major of 1826 (D. 887).

Pige, by the Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski (born in 1970 and a former

student of the late Kaija Saariaho and Louis Andriessen), presented a more politically oriented reflection on its counterpart: Schubert's best-known quartet, *Death and the Maiden* (D. 810, from 1824). The Danish word *pige* is an equivalent to *Mädchen* or "maiden" and points to the new perspective Wennäkoski brought to her piece. Referring to the dialogue between Death and the young girl in the song from which Schubert drew for the slow movement of his D minor Quartet, she said: "I wanted to include the young girl's song in my piece, whereas Schubert uses only Death's song."

In April 2023, the DSQ continued the reverse-chronological sequence of late Schubert quartets with a program combining the A minor Quartet, D. 804 (*Rosamunde*), written earlier in 1824, with *Rituals* by Anna Thorvaldsdóttir (born in 1977). The Icelandic composer's response to the DSQ's commission represents the opposite end of the spectrum: instead of commenting on or countering the Schubert, Thorvaldsdóttir opted for no explicit engagement at all, adapting her unique sonic language and use of atmosphere to the string quartet medium. Yet whether by coincidence—or as still another manifestation of the uncanny tendency for *Doppelgängers* to appear where you least expect them—her use of repetition in shifting contexts seemed to echo what Nørgaard calls "the ritualistic repetition of gestures" in the *Rosamunde* Quartet.

The fourth commissioned work, which concludes the project this month, is actually not for string quartet. Instead, Thomas Adès (born in 1971) opted to write a string quintet titled *Wreath*—for Franz Schubert, featuring a second, "double" cello, just as Schubert does in one of the several towering masterpieces of his final year, the String Quintet in C major, D. 956. The DSQ had already recorded Adès's inaugural work in the string quartet genre on their first album for ECM (*Arcadiana*), but when they invited him to take on the commission, he was at-

tracted to the ways in which the second cello in the String Quintet takes on identities as “lead singer, commentator, and umpire.”

Looking back over the years that the DSQ has devoted to this international touring project, Nørgaard explains that the original impetus was to move beyond the limiting framework of the stereotypical string quartet program, with its predictable line-up of warhorses and curiosities that have no compelling connection (or, as an attempted alternative, programs relying on “obscure musicological links that no one really perceives as a whole”). He believes the practice of commissioning pairings between Schubert and contemporary composers with whom the DSQ feels a strong link has been illuminating for the familiar and new repertoire alike.

The *Doppelgänger* Project, according to Jeremy Geffen, resonates with 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.”

“Each way of responding to the challenge has been valid and interesting on its own terms,” concludes Nørgaard. While Sørensen offered an “aural response” to the sonorities of Schubert’s final Quartet in G major, Wennäkoski immersed herself “in the discourse about diversity and equal rights” and Thorvaldsdóttir decided to develop her own gestural language without obvious responses to her Schubert “companion.” “So each ended up in quite different places”—as Adès undoubtedly will show he has done when *Wreath*—for Franz Schubert is performed before its first audiences this spring.

Other ensembles have already been following in DSQ’s wake and presenting the new works in other contexts. “It’s not ‘our’ music anymore,” Nørgaard says, “and now all of this is fair play. Since we completed our Beethoven cycle, we haven’t played a single Beethoven quartet. There’s so much other music that we want to play and explore.”

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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

Doppelgänger Project Part IV: Schubert and Adès

With this performance, the Danish String Quartet (DSQ) completes the epic, internationally touring *Doppelgänger* Project that it first brought to Cal Performances in the fall of 2021. (See p. 15b for an overview.)

Juxtaposing four newly commissioned works with chamber music milestones by Franz Schubert, the DSQ’s journey began with a pairing of the String Quartet in

G major (D. 887) with Danish composer Bent Sørensen’s *Doppelgänger* Quartet; proceeded with Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski’s *Pige* as a contemporary commentary on and deconstruction of its Schubertian companion, *Death and the Maiden* (String Quartet in D minor, D. 810); and continued last season with Anna Thorvaldsdóttir’s *Rituals*, which shared the bill with the String Quartet in A minor, D. 804 (*Rosamunde*).



This evening's culminating program involves a shift in genre from string quartet to string quintet. Curiously, it coincides with the geographical shift from commissioned composers who hail from Scandinavian countries to the London-born Thomas Adès. After the DSQ broached the idea of the commission with Adès, the ensemble's violist Asbjørn Nørgaard recalls, the composer expressed a preference to respond to Schubert's String Quintet in C major, D. 956, rather than to one of his string quartets. In particular, the unique sound of the two cellos that gives the quintet its sonic signature awakened Adès' curiosity.

The result is the latest creation from one of the world's most-sought-after composers: *Wreath*—for Franz Schubert. "I am most grateful to the great Danish String Quartet for giving me the time and encouragement to realize and develop this new path in my work," Adès writes in the freshly completed score.

Schubert's C major Quintet from 1828 is the last, chronologically, of the four chamber music works by the short-lived Austrian composer chosen for the *Doppel-*

gänger commissions. Performing this widely ranging score "always feels a bit like a special event," says Nørgaard—not least because of the need to invite a guest artist who can adapt to the intricate chemistry developed over years by the regular ensemble. The Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra's principal cellist Johannes Rostamo, who does the honors, was an obvious choice, since he has long been good friends with the DSQ and even studied in the same class in Stockholm with the group's cellist, Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin (as a Norwegian, the DSQ's sole non-Dane).

"He's such a good fit for us, because he has the same ideas of how you rehearse and create sound, how you act around other people," says Nørgaard. He jokingly adds that the two cellists even share an eerie resemblance—another instance of the inescapable *Doppelgänger* phenomenon.

As a coda to the program and the *Doppelgänger* journey, the members of the DSQ continue their practice of presenting the ensemble's own arrangement for string quartet of a Schubert *Lied* that has a special relevance. "Die Nebensonnen" from the song

cycle *Winterreise*, manifests yet another example of Schubert's command of the uncanny—the frisson of recognition that lies at the heart of any *Doppelgänger* encounter.

“It’s All There”:

Schubert’s Epic String Quintet

The late-period Quintet in C major looms large not only within Schubert’s creative career but within the chamber music literature overall. The work dates from his final summer—part of an astonishing creative outpouring that included the final trilogy of piano sonatas and the song cycle *Schwanengesang* (*Swan Song*). Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to resist “swan song” associations with this music, although Schubert, who had been suffering for years from the effects of syphilis, could not have predicted the sudden decline in health that precipitated his death in November 1828.

The Quintet draws together the finest aspects of Schubert’s musical explorations from his last years: the expansive, epic scope of the *Great C* major Symphony and the final piano sonatas, the reassuring intimacy of music-making among friends, and the eagerness to experiment with harmonic horizons and ambiguities—tendencies that anticipate priorities for the Romantic era.

“It really does stand apart from the rest of the literature,” according to Asbjørn Nørgaard. “It’s all there. The String Quintet is full of everything, from the simplest, most banal gestures to the biggest statements of humanity and life. And it’s all nonverbal, so everybody can find their own space inside of this piece.”

Like so many of Schubert’s masterpieces, the Quintet remained unknown for decades after the composer’s death in 1828. It was not premiered until 1850 and then published in 1853. Unlike his beloved Mozart’s default choice for string quintet scoring, which was to add a second viola, Schubert opted for an extra cello and the corresponding textural expansion of the low range.

While Luigi Boccherini had pioneered the two-cello quintet, Schubert gives all five voices “virtually equal prominence,” as the musicologist Robert Winter observes.

The opening music only *sounds* like a slow introduction but is already part of the vast first movement. From the uneasy stasis of this beginning, Schubert generates a fascinating tension. The dramatic first theme is followed by a second theme of radiant loveliness introduced by the two duetting cellos—the unique “doubling” that captivated Adès and inspired his impulse to write a string quintet.

The ambitiously proportioned first movement covers a wide emotional range, alternating between passages of desperate urgency and unhurried leisure. Schubert at times conjures the image of a traveler driven by curiosity who is keen to explore a new landscape. The coda recombines the static opening with the dramatically driven main theme. Overall, the familiar tonality of C major is imbued with an ambiguously resonant ambience. Instead of the straightforward brightness typically associated with this key, unanswered enigmas prevail.

The Adagio continues on a similarly big scale. The principal melody, one of Schubert’s most ravishing creations, is enchantingly accompanied by first violin and second cello to create a nocturne-like atmosphere. A sharp mood swing leads to the passionately wrenching central section, in which Schubert shifts the tonality by a half-step and from major to minor (E major to F minor). When the serene opening theme returns, it absorbs something of the intervening restlessness.

The third movement abounds in contrasts. The fast and aggressive Scherzo section slows and veers from triple to duple meter for an Andante trio that has been linked to a disguised funeral march. As with the Adagio’s turbulent middle section, the key is pushed up by a half-step (from C to D-flat). The earthy, dance-like main theme

of the finale acquires an unexpectedly agitated minor cast before it settles into the major. In the final pages, the ensemble rallies in an effort to dispel the pervading clouds of ambiguity. But Schubert inserts a jarring harmonic surprise just before he allows the players to alight on a single, unison C.

A Blooming *Wreath*: Thomas Adès' New String Quintet

When they initially conceived the idea for the *Doppelgänger* Project, Nørgaard recalls, Thomas Adès was the first composer who came to mind on their “must-have” list. But because of his heavily booked calendar, Adès had to be scheduled as the final commission. This new work is part of an especially busy year. The composer’s *Aquifer*, an orchestral work celebrating Sir Simon Rattle’s inaugural season leading the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, was just premiered in March, following Adès’ engagement conducting the Paris premiere of his opera *The Exterminating Angel*. At the February Grammy Awards, Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s recording of his three-part ballet score *Dante* won in the Best Orchestral Performance category.

The Danish String Quartet has felt an affinity for the music of Adès ever since they took first prize at the London International String Quartet Competition in 2009. One requirement of the competition was to play a contemporary piece: for this slot, they chose Adès’ first work for string quartet from 1994, *Arcadiana*, which they subsequently recorded on their debut album for the ECM label (2016).

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“We had never heard about Thomas Adès before the London competition,” says Nørgaard, “but then we fell in love with his music.” In 2015, Adès won the Léonie Sonning Music Prize, Denmark’s most prestigious music award (which boasts a list of predecessors including the likes of Stravin-

sky, Britten, Bernstein, and Shostakovich), and he has expressed his own attraction to Scandinavian music as a composer and conductor alike.

Adès has engaged with the legacy of Schubert on multiple fronts. Also an acclaimed pianist, he plays the keyboard parts on a recording that pairs his Piano Quintet from 2000 with Schubert’s *Trout* Quintet (with the Arditti and Belcea Quartets, respectively). Adès also teamed up with Ian Bostridge for the tenor’s third recorded account of *Winterreise*, a live recording made in 2018 at Wigmore Hall in London.

The kernel for the single-movement *Wreath*—for Franz Schubert was the unique sonority created by the second cello’s presence among the standard quartet soundscape—another instance of a *Doppelgänger*, perhaps? Adès exploits the radically different textures that strings create when they are bowed versus plucked, dividing the ensemble into a trio of violin, viola, and cello playing with the bow (*arco*) and a duo of first violin and second cello as the outer frame encircling them with pizzicato sounds throughout. At the same time, the quintet is subdivided into three groups of players: violins 1 and 2 (1), viola (2), and cellos 1 and 2 (3), such that groups 1 and 3 are instructed to “co-ordinate with each other, loosely but appreciably.” All five musicians should play always with great rubato, “always very tenderly and calm.”

Wreath is characterized by an extraordinary flexibility and fluidity of rhythmic execution, with a range of “6 to 14 beats” specified for each bar. Adès’ score specifies “free sections within each bar where the initial figure is optionally repeated, between zero and roughly five times.” In addition, “bracketed pauses on the penultimate figure in each bar ... should always be observed, even if slightly. If a player needs to wait, they play more repeats, and/or extend the pause; if they need to speed up, they play no, or fewer, repeats and shorten the pause.” As a



result, the total duration can range from a quarter to a half-hour.

Thomas Adès has provided the following commentary:

Wrath—for Franz Schubert is a single-movement work for string quintet. The central string trio of violin, viola, and cello play *arco* throughout, a gradually unfolding “lifespan” of entwined “blooms.” The outer violin and cello outline them in *pizzicato*. The players are loosely co-ordinated, but within specific boundaries, so that within certain limits no two performances would be the same, and the duration is flexible: between 15 and 30 minutes, depending on the players, or maybe the weather.

The inescapable relation to Schubert’s double-cello quintet will be clear, especially to its slow movement. At a recent (devastating) performance of it I was fascinated over again by the role of the second cello—at once lead singer, commentator, and umpire.

I am most grateful to the great Danish String Quartet for giving me the time and encouragement to realize and develop this new path in my work.

Mock Suns

The last of Schubert’s sets of lieder to be published as a group, *Schwanengesang*, actually includes a song titled “Der Doppelgänger,” in which the singer/narrator is horrified to see an image of himself reliving his torment over lost love. But in *Winterreise* from 1827—the composer’s final group of lieder actually intended as a unified cycle—implicit *Doppelgängers* also haunt the premises. Some commentators interpret the final song, “Der Leiermann” (“The Hurdy-Gurdy Man”) as a double for the protagonist Wanderer.

Another hidden *Doppelgänger* emerges in the penultimate song from *Winterreise*, “Die Nebensonnen” (“Mock Suns”), an arrangement of which for string quartet concludes the DSQ’s years-in-the-making *Doppelgänger* Project. The song describes the phenomenon of phantom suns in the sky—“extra” light sources that might symbolize the beloved’s eyes, now revealed as deceptive and false. The Wanderer concludes that after “the best two” suns have set, the third should follow, leaving him “happier in the dark.”

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The Grammy-nominated Danish String Quartet continues to assert its preeminence among the world's finest string quartets. Celebrated for its "intense blend, extreme dynamic variation (in which the members seem glued together), perfect intonation even on harmonics, and constant vitality and flow" (*Gramophone*) and renowned for the palpable joy they exude in music-making, the Danish String Quartet has become one of today's most in-demand classical quartets, performing to sold-out concert halls around the world. The Danish Quartet celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2022–2023, having formed when violinists Frederik Øland and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen and violist Asbjørn Nørgaard were teenagers under the mentorship of Tim Frederiksen of Copenhagen's Royal Danish Academy of Music. In 2008, the three Danes were joined by Norwegian cellist Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin.

The Danish Quartet's inventive and intriguing programming and repertoire choices have produced critically acclaimed original projects and commissions as well as popular arrangements of Scandinavian folk music. This season, the quartet completes its *Doppelgänger* Project, an ambitious four-year international commissioning project pairing world premieres from four composers—Bent Sørensen, Lotta Wennäkoski, Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, and Thomas Adès—with late major chamber works by Schubert. Each season, the quartet has performed a world premiere on a program with its *Doppelgänger*—the Schubert quartet or quintet that inspired it—culminating this evening in the premiere of a new quintet by Adès, after the String Quintet in C Major. The *Doppelgänger* pieces are commissioned by the Danish String Quartet with the support of Cal Performances, Carnegie Hall, UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures, Vancouver Recital Society, Flagey in Brussels, and the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam.

Last summer, the quartet performed at Ravinia and at Tanglewood's Seiji Ozawa Hall. The 2023–2024 season sees them on tour in 18 cities in the USA and Canada and venues in Norway, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Brussels, Italy, and their home of Denmark.

The Danish String Quartet's most recent recording project is PRISM, a series of five discs on ECM New Series that explores the symbiotic musical and contextual relationships between Bach fugues, Beethoven string quartets, and works by Shostakovich, Schnittke, Bartók, Mendelssohn, and Webern. The final disc, PRISM V, was released to great acclaim last spring, with *The Strad* praising the quartet's "refined, coherent and erudite performances, which combine an exhilarating sweep with minute attention to details of phrasing and timbre." The quartet's discography reflects the ensemble's special affinity for Scandinavian composers, with the complete quartets of Carl Nielsen (Dacapo, 2007 and 2008) and Adès, Nørgård, and Abrahamsen (their debut on ECM in 2016). They also released two discs of traditional Scandinavian folk music, *Wood Works* (Dacapo 2014) and *Last Leaf* (ECM 2017), which was chosen as one of the top classical albums of the year by NPR, Spotify, and the *New York Times*.

The quartet takes an active role in reaching new audiences through special projects. In 2007, they established the DSQ Festival, which takes place in intimate and informal settings in Copenhagen. In 2016, they inaugurated a concert series, Series of Four, in which they both perform and invite colleagues to appear.

The Danish String Quartet has been the recipient of many awards and appointments, including *Musical America's* 2020 Ensemble of the Year and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust. The quartet was named in 2013 as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist and appointed to the Bowers Program

(formerly CMS Two). The Quartet was awarded the 2010 NORDMETALL-Ensemble Prize at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany, and, in 2011, received the Carl Nielsen Prize, the highest cultural honor in Denmark.

www.danishquartet.com.



Finnish cellist **Johannes Rostamo** is a versatile musician, interested in all forms of musical communication, from early Baroque to contemporary music, from jazz to folk music.

He has served as principal cellist of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra since 2008 and as professor of cello at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm since 2022.

Rostamo also has an active career as soloist, chamber musician, and Baroque musician. In addition, he is the artistic leader of the early-music ensemble Orfeus Barock Stockholm, which conducts a concert series in Grünewaldsalen, Stockholm.

Rostamo enjoys creating projects such as *CelloCelloCello*, a solo endeavor where he presents the timeline of his instrument from the 17th century until contemporary music of today, combining both the Baroque and modern cello.

He is also a founding member of the chamber music concept Stockholm Syndrome Ensemble, which experiments with the concert form itself and collaborates with musicians and artists of all genres. Since 2011, this acclaimed group has had concert series in Stockholm and their albums *Moveable Feast* (Channel Classics) and *Voices of Angels* (BIS) were both received with highest praise. His recording with Orfeus Barock Ensemble playing C.P.E. Bach's A minor Cello Concerto received a Swedish Grammy nomination.

During the summer season, Rostamo is also a recurrent guest at several major chamber music festivals throughout Europe. As an orchestra soloist, he appears regularly with orchestras in the Nordic countries.

Apart from his work in Stockholm, Rostamo is often invited to work as a guest cellist in orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Les Siècles (Paris), Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and Camerata Bern. In addition, he is a regular guest in the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

Rostamo studied music in Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, and at the ECMA (European Chamber Music Academy) with professors Heikki Rautasalo, Torleif Thedéen, Truls Mörk, Frans Helmerson and Hatto Beyerle. In addition he has studied Baroque cello with Emmanuel Balssa, Bruno Cocset and Gaetano Nasillo.

He plays a cello built by Antonio Stradivari in Cremona 1698, generously loaned to him by Conni Jonsson. His Baroque cello is built by Lockey Hill in London 1770.