



BELINFANTE QUARTET

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ABOUT US

Olivia Scheepers, violin
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The Belinfante Quartet formed in The Netherlands in 2016, inspired by the life and work of Dutch cellist and activist Frieda Belinfante. They draw on and celebrate the international nature of their members who are from The Netherlands, Spain, Scotland and England and are known for their inspirational and fun programming style.

The quartet love performing and building communities of music lovers. They also undergo research into overlooked quartets and especially seek to work with today's composers, having commissioned several works to date, including by Dutch composers Athur Klaassens and Malthilde Wantenaar and in 2024 are working with British talent Rhiannon Randle.

The quartet's Debut CD *Ellipse* with 7 Mountain Records was nominated for a 2023 Edison Classical Music Award. In 2022 the quartet were delighted to receive the Ensemble Of The Year Award from Le Dimore del Quartetto.

"Music contains all in sublime form. All human emotions are expressed; love, bliss, resignation, death. It can all be expressed by music. It is all within us. We make it, we compose it, we perform it."

– Frieda Belinfante

Improvisation, collaborations and new music are things the quartet love. Past collaborations have included with pianist Nino Gvetadze, Urban Dance group Static and visual artist Jordi Cárdenas. They recently featured in a UK Channel 4 documentary about the life of Frieda Belinfante, presented by Stephen Fry, released in 2023.

ARTISTIC PROJECTS



The quartet believe in inspiring programming, led by the music they love. Audiences often compliment their pre-concert talks; interactive performances; integrated theatre works and inclusion of improvisation in their events. We love concert halls, but our flexible formation means that we find inspiration by playing in unusual spaces - from art galleries to pubs, to amphitheatres!

Looking for an event? Talk to the quartet members about your community and we'll find the best programme for you.

Believing in the music we love, the quartet have Artistic Projects each season, to offer communities to engage with string quartet music from around the world, and to share stories and cultures. See what we've been working on over the next few pages.

Our projects align to our values of working with composers; illuminating overlooked quartets; creating new string quartet repertoire by looking at traditional music and celebrating the wealth of the history of string quartet music.

Have a musical request? Do get in touch to find out our full repertoire.



PARALLEL 40



Growing up on the island of Menorca, our cellist Pau learned about a concept which made a big impression on him: the 40th Parallel North Line of Latitude. "An imaginary line connecting Menorca to faraway places in the World."

Parallel 40 is an ode to discovery and connection, collecting and arranging music from many different countries and regions found along the 40th Parallel North Line of Latitude. Starting in Menorca and heading east, for a full turn around the globe, we will discover music from Menorca, Italy, Greece, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, North Korea, China, Japan, the US, Portugal and Spain.

We have been busy arranging traditional music from several places on the Parallel, as well as finding many original compositions for String Quartet. The aim of *Parallel 40* is to create new repertoire for String Quartet and simultaneously discover music from all over the globe. By doing so, we wish to connect people, their stories and their different cultures and inspire our audiences through vivid, musical storytelling.

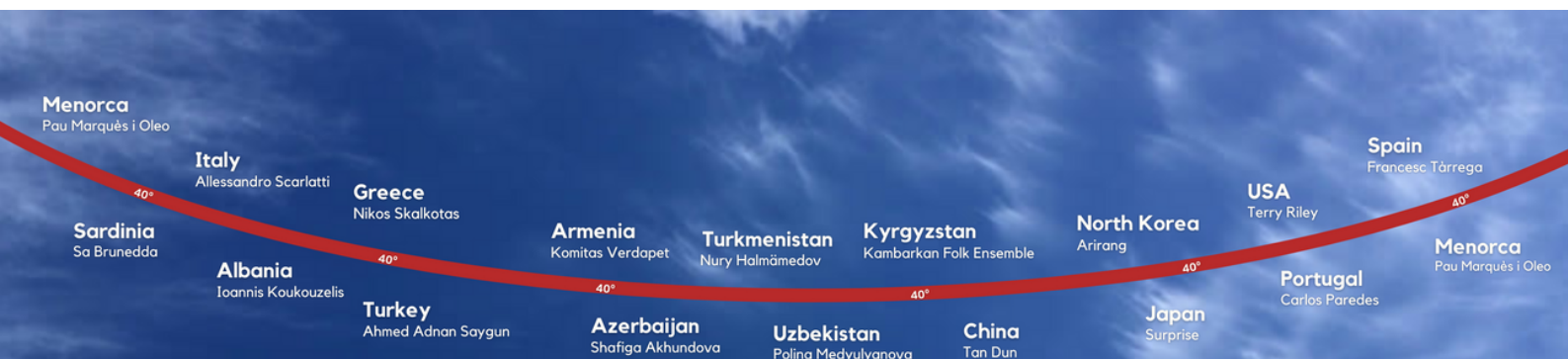
Parallel 40 Themes

Cultural identity - the meaning of places you call home

Storytelling - every piece of music tells a story, the people we meet share their own stories and connections to the land, music and cultures along the 40th Parallel Line.

Connection and Empathy - This project highlights that no matter where you are from, we are all inherently linked as humans. Understanding and empathy comes from knowledge, and what better medium than music and art to spread knowledge of different places and cultures in the world.

Themes connecting the World - this could be climate change, migration, humans and their place in the world.



Regions along the Parallel 40 line

- Spain & Island of Menorca
- Italy & Sardinia
- Albania
- Greece & Island of Lemnos
- Turkey
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- USA: States include: California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey
- Portugal
- North Korea
- Japan: Island of Honshu
- China: Inner Mongolia; Beijing
- Uzbekistan
- Turkmenistan

Parallel 40 Explained

Parallel 40 is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Belinfante Quartet, filmmaker Macià Florit, sociologist and curator Anna Gornés and playwright Núria Ramis.

The project documents the vital testimony of people from regions linked by the 40th Parallel Line, and collects their most characteristic music (folk and/or Classical). It is a project which connects people, their stories, traditions and music together, highlighting Frieda Belinfante's ethos that Music is a Universal and Emotional language.

The music collected will be from a huge variety of cultures. Some compositions will be string quartets, some will be music outside of the string quartet repertoire and Western Classical Music canon, arranged for the four voices in the string quartet. The project will culminate in live music events, a stage performance and a recording project (CD release February 2024 with 7 Mountain Records). The new string quartet arrangements will be available digitally for other string quartets, students and amateur players to get to know. Eventually the quartet aim to travel to these regions on the Parallel 40th North, sharing and collecting music as they go.

We have found in our exploratory concerts that audiences find different works they connect to - there is a favourite for everyone. We've had locals and visitors alike come to us afterwards to share their connections to the music and regions which most inspired them, and they share their own stories with us in return.

In our arrangements you can expect poetry readings, singing, colours from different instruments (who knew about metal guitar plectrums?), improvisation and an imaginative way to explore such rich cultures from the voices a string quartet can offer. This project also lends itself to cross-art collaborations, with poetry, visual art and theatre all connecting naturally to the music and stories we explore. We can offer an immersive live music experience, which really will have something that everyone can connect to.

Pau Marques i Oleo

Belinfante Quartet

Scarlatti

Koukouzelis

Saygun

Skalkottas

Verdapet

Akhundova

Tan Dun

Terry Riley

Tarrega

Carlos Paredes

LIFE AND DEATH - LA SERENISSIMA

Using Gustav Mahler as a 'ghost composer' we thread together a programme inspired by his music and philosophy on the world - centred around Benjamin Britten's Third Quartet, which looks at the importance of place, life and death, reaching transcendence for his opera Death in Venice.

Britten consciously refers to Mahler's music. Haydn's string quartets are often inspired by Austrian folk-music and threading everything together is a new commission by British talent Rhiannon Randle, who will be drawing inspiration from Mahler, Britten and folk music local to her home in Guilford, where she is active in conservation of nature.

Music

Haydn String Quartet Op.64 No.6

Benjamin Britten Third String Quartet

Rhiannon Randle - new commission (15')

Traditional music of Venice

Elizabeth Maconchy

Gustav Mahler

Themes Explored:

Life and Death: of humans, the planet, what it means to be an 'artist'.

Gustav Mahler: Exploring his philosophies on Nature and the Planet, music and legacy.

Folk Music: Looking at traditional music from Austria, Germany, Bohemia and Britain.

Home: The concept of 'place' and what home means to a local community.





La Serenissima Explained

Britten was at the end of his life composing his Third Quartet. His admiration, and indeed fierce promotion of Mahler in the UK, the USA and via burgeoning Mahler Societies in Europe in the 1930s helped propel Mahler's music to popularity by the 1960s. Britten uses his Third Quartet as a final, and personal farewell, seeking transcendence through his character Aschenbach from his opera *Death in Venice*, which is finally achieved in the last movement 'La Serenissima' (Venice). He quotes Mahler's 9th Symphony (often considered his own farewell piece) and mirrors its format. The link with Mahler goes further to both the Opera and Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice*. Mann's protagonist Aschenbach is named after Mahler (Gustav), and Mahler's death in 1911 coincided with the writing of and inspiration behind the novella. While Britten's Opera may avoid Mahler's music directly, due in part to the film *Death in Venice* going perhaps overboard by making Aschenbach's character into Mahler the composer: Britten's more intimate string quartet allows for him to make his final acknowledgement of Mahler's influence on his life and music.

Through Mahler's own output we see music influenced by Austro-Bohemian folk music - while Mahler concentrated on growing the Symphony, the father of the string quartet and symphonist Joseph Haydn also loved using Austrian folk music in his works. And so two composers who never met are linked by a love of traditional music, passed on through local people.

Rhiannon Randle is a bright British composer, who spent a Summer in Benjamin Britten's The Red House researching his music for her masters. Her love of Britten and incorporating folk music into her own works, and her connection to local environmental causes in Guilford has led to an exciting collaboration. To explore the string quartet form through Mahler's philosophy on and love of Nature; Britten's own deep connection to places (both Suffolk and Venice in his Third Quartet) and how traditional music can be both preserved and shared incorporated into compositions. - Rhiannon will be looking at folk music local to her in Guilford.

IMMERSIVE THEATRE

Death Of Venice

An Immersive Classical Music Theater Experience. Total Performance Time: 60'

Let four Venetian Gondoliers journey you to beloved Venice, who is at risk of death from climate change's rising sea levels. 'Death Of Venice' is shaped around Benjamin Britten's Third String Quartet, which journeys to find transcendence and hope in its final movement; 'La Serenissima' (Venice).

Everyone has a place or landscape that they cherish, and can help protect. We believe that reconnecting people with nature, and increasing everyone's love of it, will help initiate acts to help combat climate change. Here Venice becomes both place and character - historically anthropomorphised, in this production we draw emotional ties to her and her fate. Venice is predicted to 'sink' by 2100 - how far should we go to save her? Is her death inevitable, and what does that mean for us as individuals in our role for caring for the planet now?

Themes Explored:

Life and Death

Climate Change and the Planet

The role of Artists

Place

C.20th Music

In 2023 the Belinfante Quartet were selected for the prestigious European Merita Project, and a part of which means in 2024 they will be mentored to create an immersive string quartet and theatre work.

Benjamin Britten Third String Quartet

Traditional Music of Venice

Monteverdi

Poetry

Prose

Interactive Elements



Improvisation

The Belinfante Quartet love to include improvisations in concerts, and find that their audiences love and listen differently when it is incorporated. In July 2023, the Belinfantes visited The Green Man Gallery, Buxton, where they were inspired by the resident artist's work to improvise to artwork. Two works of art were even sold afterwards. We are always delighted to include improvisation in any of our programmes and events.

Outreach

The Belinfante Quartet are experienced in tailor-making events for different settings and champion bringing live music to people who can't normally access concerts. If your group have any specific requirements, do get in touch to see what we can bring to your community.



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