



THE VILLIERS QUARTET

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United Kingdom

www.villiersquartet.com

Villiers Quartet Biography

James Dickenson, Violin I
Tamaki Higashi, Violin II
Carmen Flores, Viola
Nick Stringfellow, Cello

Named after Villiers Street in London's colourful musical epicentre, the Villiers Quartet encompasses the grand and iconic spirit of the extraordinary music tradition in London.

Hailed as one of the most charismatic and "adventurous" quartets of the European chamber music scene (*The Strad*), the Villiers Quartet has developed an international reputation for its performances of British music. Championing music which reflects Britain's rich musical heritage, the Villiers Quartet (VQ) has performed works by Elgar, Britten, Delius, William Sterndale Bennett, Robert Saxton, Kuljit Bhamra, MBE, and Frank Bridge. The VQ has been praised for its "exquisite ensemble playing" (*Seen & Heard International*), and its performances have been hailed as "masterful." (*Classical Source*).

The Villiers Quartet has been featured in numerous festivals including the North York Moors Chamber Music Festival, the Brit Jazz Fest, the Hungerford Arts Festival, and the British Music Society.

The VQ's internationally acclaimed *VQ New Works Competition* encourages audiences to interact with contemporary music performance online, and supports the creation of new works for string quartet. The Competition ran in 2012, 2014 and 2016. The winning compositions will be released digitally on the VQ's own label imprint in 2017.

The Villiers Quartet is winner of the 2015 Radcliffe Chamber Music Competition, and holds the position of *Quartet-in-Residence* at Oxford University's Faculty of Music, and feature in the University Faculty of Music Concert Season.

In addition to their work at Oxford University, the VQ has presented masterclasses at Dartmouth College, the University of Nottingham, Syracuse University, Goshen College, and Indiana University South Bend. The VQ is also *Quartet-in-Residence* at Nottingham High School, where they direct an extensive chamber music programme for young students.

The Villiers Quartet are managed internationally through Mary Kaptein Artists. www.marykaptein.com

Recordings

The Villiers Quartet's debut CD for Naxos, *The Complete Quartets of Robert Still*, was praised for its "sublimely articulate and concentrated readings," (*Gramophone*) and received 5-stars in *Classical Music Magazine*. The VQ

was the featured quartet on the soundtrack to the BBC One film, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and they have been featured on BBC Radio both in live performance and on the classical music program *In Tune*. Upcoming highlights include their Netherlands debut at the Festival Kamermuziek aan de Berkel, and the release of their CD of the Delius and Elgar quartets in collaboration with Oxford Professor Daniel Grimley, and the first complete recording of the quartets by English composer Peter Racine Fricker.

Member Biographies

James Dickenson studied both in the UK and the USA and lists Lydia Mordkovich, Danny Phillips, Jerry Horner, Wen Zhou Li, and Christopher Rowland as some of his many teachers and mentors. After graduating from the Royal Northern College of Music, James left the UK to lead the Degas Quartet in the USA. With this quartet James gave concerts all over the USA, in Carnegie Hall and at the Aspen Music Festival, and held various residencies in over ten universities. Since leaving the quartet in 2007, James returned to the UK to continue his teaching, performing, and chamber music career.

An advocate of new music, James has worked closely with many American composers, including Jeffrey Mumford, Andrew Waggoner, and he is currently commissioning a new piece for violin from Shafer Mahoney.

James has just completed a research and recording project of Louis Spohr Duos (due for release on Naxos). He is a regular contributor to articles published by the European String Teachers Association.

James plays a violin made by Sergio Perreson in 1976.

Tamaki Higashi started violin at the age of seven and was a multiple winner of the South Japan Music Competition in her hometown of Kagoshima. She was invited to study with Lewis Kaplan in New York City, and she received both her Bachelors and Masters degrees from the Mannes College of Music. After graduating in 2002 she founded the Degas Quartet. Together with her husband James, the Degas Quartet held residencies at Syracuse University and with the Western Piedmont Symphony, working closely with the Cassatt Quartet and Earl Carlyss of the Juilliard Quartet. The Degas Quartet toured frequently within the United States and was featured live on NPR broadcasts, appearing in many prestigious venues and festivals including Carnegie Hall, Aspen Music Festival, and the Library of Congress.

Tamaki and James moved to the UK in 2007, and since then she has enjoyed a busy schedule as recitalist, teacher, and chamber musician. A passionate advocate for music education and community outreach, Tamaki organised several music projects in North Carolina, USA and Kagoshima, Japan, bringing chamber music to local schools and children's groups.

She plays on a fine Italian violin by Antonio Ungarini of Fabriano, 1740.

Carmen Flores graduated from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and studied viola at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Canada. Her Principal teachers included Yizhak Schotten and Steven Dann. She was a US Fulbright Scholar to the Philippines 2000 - 2001.

Carmen has held the position of Principal Viola of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia since 2007; Violist of the Villiers Quartet since 2010.

She has given performances in the UK and abroad with ARC Ensemble, CHROMA, Midori, BBC Symphony Orchestra, the North York Moors Festival, Brit Jazz Fest, Barnes Music Festival, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, and the English National Opera and Canadian Opera Companies.

Carmen plays a viola made in 2006 by British luthier William Castle.

Nick Stringfellow began his musical education at Chetham's School of Music, performing in inspirational masterclasses from an early age with the likes of Heinrich Schiff and Janos Starker. After further study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Clive Greensmith, he completed his training at the Royal College of Music, studying jointly with Anna Shuttleworth and Anthony Pleeth.

Nick cut his chamber music teeth as cellist with the London Mozart Ensemble alongside violinist David Le Page. Subsequently he was invited to become principal cellist with the Orchestra of the Swan. Nick also appears as soloist with the orchestra and takes part in its extensive education and outreach programmes.

As a chamber musician, Nick has enjoyed an exciting career, playing across a wide variety of styles and genres. He has performed with many ensembles including the Fitzwilliam String Quartet and the Brook Street Band and recorded for EMI, Naxos, Somm and Orfeo. He is the featured cellist on Schott's "Baroque around the World" series and his trio "Spirituoso" is currently resident ensemble at Handel House.

Nick is also passionate about the string arrangements of the great Jazz and Soul era and has led cello sections for Smokey Robinson and George Benson.

Nick plays a cello made by Roger Hansell in 1994, which is a copy of an instrument made by Francesco Ruggieri in 1694.

Website: www.villiersquartet.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thevq>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/villiersquartet>

Press/Media Enquiries: www.musicandmediaconsulting.com e-mail john@musicandmediaconsulting.com

Season Highlights

2016/17

- release of Fricker CD, Naxos Records
- release of Elgar/Delius CD, Naxos Records
- release of CD with music by Kuljit Bhamra, MBE
- USA Tour, including residencies and visits to Syracuse University, NY, and Dartmouth College, NH
- performance at St. Andrew's Music Festival, Sheffield, premiere of 2 works by Ray Kohn
- Netherlands debut at *Sursum Musica*, Dordrecht

2015/16

- Appointment as *Quartet-in-Residence* at the Faculty of Music, Oxford University
- Appointment as *Quartet-in-Residence* at Nottingham High School, independent school in the UK
- Release of CD Recording for Somm Records, of Piano Quintets by David Matthews and Dmitri Shostakovich
- performances at Holywell Music Room, Oxford
- performance at St. Andrew's Music Festival, Sheffield
- 2016 VQ New Works Competition (Kristina Wolfe, USA/Denmark, winner), with Paul Gambaccini, host
- Featured quartet on soundtrack to BBC One film *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, music by Carly Paradis

2014/15

BBC Radio Live Concert Broadcast, Leamington
University of Nottingham, Djanogly Recital Hall, Nottingham, England
Holst Festival, London
Kings Place, London
UK Sibelius Festival, London
English Music Festival, Oxford

Collaborations:

Composers:

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies
David Matthews
Andrew Waggoner
Robert Saxton
Kui Dong
Ray Kohn
Carly Paradis
Riho Maimets
Jose Gonzalez Granero
Kristina Wolfe
Rob Keeley
Kuljit Bhamra

Musicians:

Jamie Walton, cello

Sally Pinkas, piano

Martin Cousin, piano

Paul Turner, piano

Kuljit Bhamra, tabla

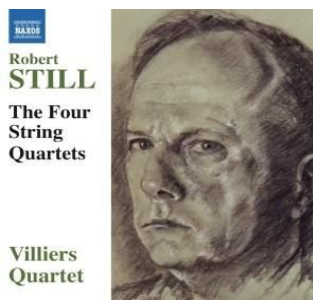
Davide Giovannini, jazz drums

Victoria Soames Samek, clarinet

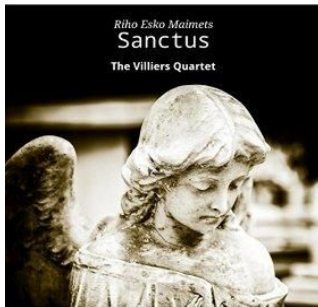
Charles Sewart, viola

Recordings

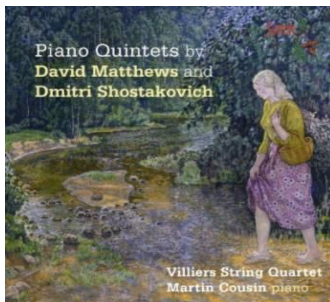
CD: The Complete Quartets of Robert Still (Naxos, 2014)



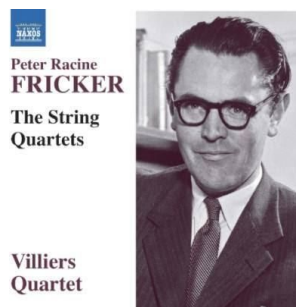
CD: Riho Maimets, Sanctus for String Quartet (2015)



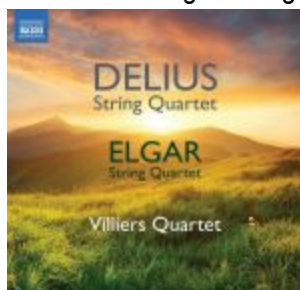
CD: Piano Quintets of David Matthews and Dmitri Shostakovich, with Martin Cousin, piano (Somm Recordings, 2016)



CD: The String Quartets of Peter Racine Fricker (Naxos, 2017)



CD: Delius & Elgar String Quartets (Naxos, 2017)



Film Soundtrack: Featured string quartet on score to film adaptation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (BBC One production, 2015)

CD: String Quartets of Delius and Elgar (Naxos, to be released 2017)

CD: String Quartets of Peter Racine Fricker (Naxos, to be released 2017)

Residencies & Associations

Quartet-in-Residence at St. Andrew's Church, London (2011-2012)

Quartet-in-Association with Northern Lights Symphony Orchestra (2011-2012)

Quartet-in-Association with Southern Sinfonia (2014 – present)

Ensemble-in-Residence, Nottingham High School (2015–present)

Quartet-in-Residence, Faculty of Music, University of Oxford (2015–present)

Education & Teaching

The VQ has presented masterclasses, lecture-recitals, and music education projects at the following organisations:

Grittleton & Young Grittleton Music Summer Course (UK, 2010 - present)

IntoUniversity London Primary Schools (London, UK, 2011)

British Music Society (London, UK 2013)

Goshen College (Indiana, USA, 2013)

Dartmouth College (New Hampshire, USA, 2013, 2016)

University of Indiana, South Bend (Indiana, USA, 2013)

Syracuse University (New York, USA. 2013, 2016)
Liverpool High School (New York, USA, 2013)
Bridgeport Elementary School (New York, USA, 2013)
University of Nottingham (UK, 2014)
Robert Smyth Academy (UK, 2014)
Schools project with Leamington Concerts (UK, 2015)
Sherborne School (UK, 2016)
Nottingham High School (UK, 2015)

Music Festivals

Brit Jazz Fest (2012)
North York Moors Chamber Music Festival (2013)
Oundle International Festival (2013)
Barnes Music Festival/Holst Festival (2014)
Hungerford Arts Festival (2015)
UK Sibelius Festival (2015)
English Music Festival (2015)
St Andrews Music Festival (2015 & 2016)
Lake District International Music Festival (2017)

Press Excerpts

"Compelling, challenging and deeply satisfying British music"

-The Strad

"Superb throughout"

-The Observer

"a performance of gentle delicacy with moments of supreme radiance"

- Europadisc

"the Villiers lavishing playing of exquisite beauty"

-Yorkshire Post

"Zest and passion"

-The Observer

"Cogent, passionate...If only more quartet ensembles were so adventurous."

-The Strad

No praise can be too high for these sublimely articulate and concentrated readings by the Villiers Quartet."

-Gramophone Magazine

"Their energy, depth of feeling and almost fierce commitment [of the Elgar Quartet] was particularly impressive....The Villiers Quartet showed high technical quality and interpretive insight....they succeeded triumphantly"

-Classical Source

"Masterful playing"

-Classical Source

*CD: The Complete Quartets: Robert Still: "5**** stars. This young ensemble relishes the challenge here....this should be snapped up"*

-Classical Music Magazine

No praise can be too high for these sublimely articulate and concentrated readings by the Villiers Quartet."

-Gramophone Magazine

"Exquisite ensemble playing"

- Seen and Heard International

"The Villiers Quartet is the product of a fascinating mix of musical influences and styles."

Classical Music Magazine

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