

KONTRAS QUARTET

Admired for their "superlative artistry" (*CVNC Arts Journal*), the Kontras Quartet has established an international following for their vibrant and nuanced performances. The "superb Chicago-based ensemble" (*Gramophone Magazine*) has been lauded for their "crisp precision" (*Palm Beach Daily News*) and "enjoyable musical personality" (*Fanfare Magazine*). Kontras means contrasts in the Afrikaans language - fitting for a string ensemble whose colorful repertoire spans centuries, genres, and continents.

The Kontras Quartet's recent engagements include international tours of South Africa and Switzerland; broadcasts on classical radio stations nationwide (including *Performance Today* and a 3month residency with Chicago's WFMT 98.7 fm); performances at Chicago's Symphony Center and the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.; television appearances on NBC and PBS; and sold-out concerts in Telluride, Salt Lake City, Raleigh and Arizona. In the spring of 2018, Kontras and saxophone great Branford Marsalis gave the world premiere of Dan Visconti's quintet for string quartet and saxophone, a work that the Quartet co-commissioned with San Diego's Art of Élan.

Kontras enjoys educational work of all kinds, and until 2020 served as the Quartet in Residence at Western Michigan University. The quartet has also continued its work in the Chicago Public Schools with the support of a grant from the Boeing Company. Outside of the Chicago area, Kontras has made a significant educational impact in North Carolina, bringing over 200 innovative and interactive outreach programs to 40,000 school-age and college students.

The Kontras Quartet records for MSR Classics and has released three critically acclaimed albums. The first, *Origins*, features new and lesser-known works from the quartet's home countries, including the world premiere recording of Dan Visconti's *Ramshackle Songs*. The recording was commended by Gramophone Magazine for the quartet's "scrupulous shading and control". The second, *Lucid Dreamer*, features a septet that Kontras commissioned in 2013 with a generous Chamber Music America-awarded grant. The work treads the line between classical music and American folk and invigorates Kontras' ongoing collaboration with the esteemed Kruger Brothers trio, as does their 2017 release, the *Roan Mountain Suite*.

Formed while the group's members were string principals in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Kontras Quartet began pursuing a professional career in 2009. Kontras enjoyed immediate recognition, holding their own against seasoned string quartets from around the country to win a four-year chamber music residency with the Western Piedmont Symphony in North Carolina, a fulltime position established through Chamber Music America's Residency Partnership Program. The quartet has received continued training with the Vermeer and Juilliard String Quartets.