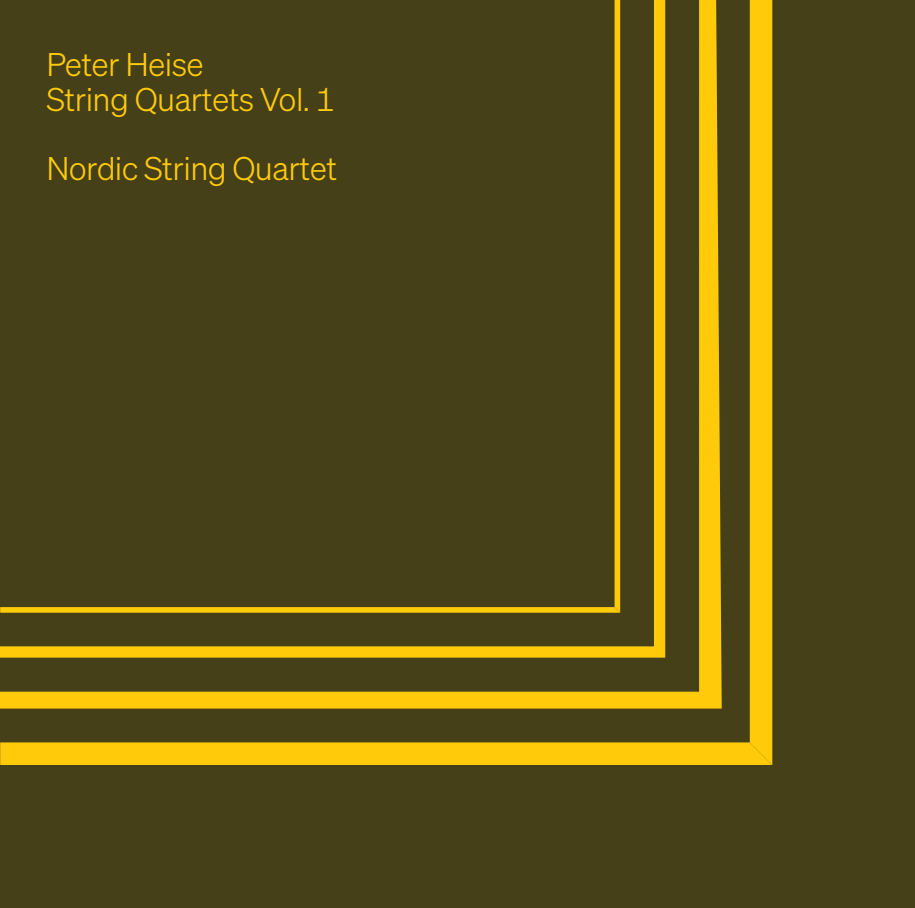


Peter Heise  
String Quartets Vol. 1

Nordic String Quartet



Peter Heise (1830–1879)

## String Quartets Vol. 1

Nordic String Quartet

Heiðrun Petersen, violin

Mads Haugsted Hansen, violin

Daniel Eklund, viola

Lea Emilie Brøndal, cello

### String Quartet No. 2 in G major (1852)

1 I Allegro molto vivace	22:12
2 II Largo	6:04
3 III Menuetto. Allegro	6:34
4 IV Allegro molto	3:14
	6:20

### String Quartet No. 1 in B minor (1852)

5 I Allegro	23:52
6 II Larghetto	6:15
7 III Scherzo. Prestissimo	7:08
8 IV Allegro vivace	3:34
	6:56

### String Quartet No. 3 in B flat major (c. 1853)

9 I Moderato assai – Allegro assai vivace	25:18
10 II Scherzo. Presto agitato	8:58
11 III Andante sostenuto	5:43
12 IV Finale. Molto allegro	4:13
	6:23

Total 71:24

World premiere recording



Danish Arts  
Foundation



Peter Heise, 1864

## The Lost Quartets

By Jens Cornelius

Amongst Copenhagen's upper class during the 1850s, Peter Heise's time and milieu, string quartets were performed in private. As is often the case in affluent circles, there were many skilled string players as well as room to practise and listen in the salons. 'There was hardly a musical house that did not have its regular weekly quartet evening', wrote the music historian Angul Hammerich in 1886, as he looked back at the musical life of Copenhagen elite in the 1840s in which he had grown up himself.

It was not until 1854 that a string quartet was performed for the first time at a public concert in Denmark. A society devoted to chamber music was formed in 1868, the so-called *Natmandsforening* (The Scavenger's Society), which is still in existence,

and from then on string quartets slowly gained a new status as public music that addressed a broader, ticket-buying audience.

String quartets lived a rather hidden existence in Denmark at the time, but Peter Heise's quartets succumbed to a quite exceptional oblivion. The six works by Heise were not part of the public music scene in his own time, and after his death in 1879, they were packed away and forgotten, each in turn, even though Heise was one of Denmark's most popular and beloved composers. The obscurity has lasted until today, and this recording of the first three is a premiere: it is music that has hitherto been virtually unknown.

Heise was born in 1830 and died at the age of 48 when he was at the peak of his art. Shortly before his death, he had experienced success with his opera *Drot og marsk* (*King and Marshal*), arguably the best Danish opera of the 19th century.

His hundreds of songs and romances were very popular and beginning to be printed in large numbers, spreading his music to the many Danish homes equipped with a piano. He was seen, to a high degree, as a vocal composer.

At this point, the manuscripts of the string quartets were in the hands of the cellist Julius Holm, with whom Heise had been friends since his youth. Holm kept them until his death in 1909, when they were discovered amongst his estate by a librarian from the Royal Danish Library, who returned them to Heise's widow, Vilhelmine. The music bore signs of having been used extensively.

Vilhelmine ('Ville') Heise was, by this time, 71 years old, and apparently wished to protect her husband's high posthumous reputation, not allowing unknown works from his youth to disturb the picture. It was most probably Ville who packed Heise's String Quartets Nos. 2–6 together in a folder labelled 'Youth

Works'. The sheet music for the String Quartet No. 1 found itself in a folder with other works which were labelled, 'Heise's hand-written music from old times, not to be printed, maybe better burned'.

All the quartet manuscripts were handed over to the Royal Danish Library following Ville Heise's death in 1912, but as discarded works they received no attention. In short, there was no public knowledge of the quartets' existence. The first biography of Heise from 1926 only mentioned, in a short quotation from a letter, that Heise had worked on a quartet at some point, but it was not until a selection of Heise's letters was published in 1930 that one could read the entire letter in which Heise mentions his String Quartet in G minor (that which is now called No. 6). In January 1857 Heise wrote to his friend, Edvard Holm, brother of the cellist Julius Holm mentioned earlier: 'Now I'm working on a string quartet, of which the first movement is fin-

ished, and I am very satisfied with it; it sets off in G minor. If only I could get on as well with the third movement; that's what I've been hunting for these past days.'

The letter excerpt led the music journalist Richard Hove to go through the manuscripts at the Library, where he found the G minor quartet described. It was then performed in modest circumstances in Hove's hometown, Thisted, in 1931. Ten years later, Hove wrote an introductory article about Heise as a chamber music composer in *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift* (Danish Music Journal) and was the first to say that Heise had written over 20 chamber works, including six quartets.

It was 1945 before the G minor quartet was performed again, in a radio transmission by the day's leading Danish quartet, the Erling Bloch Quartet. Since the 1950s there have been occasional performances of Heise's Quartets Nos. 3, 4 and 6, which now circulated amongst

musical Danes in diverse copies. But none of the quartets embedded themselves into the repertoire in Denmark, and none were printed or recorded. This is quite strange, as there is certainly not an abundance of Danish quartets from the 19th century to compete with.

Later in the 20th century, it was probably the declining interest in older Danish music in general that was behind the neglect of Heise's quartets. This has changed today, and in 2017 the works were printed for the first time in a collaboration between the Royal Danish Library and the University of Copenhagen. After a long period of dormancy, the six string quartets can now finally be played, heard and enjoyed.

### **String Quartet No. 1 in B minor**

Peter Arnold Heise was born to an academic family in Copenhagen in 1830. By the time he was 13 he was already composing, taught by A.P. Berggreen, who was also the teacher

of Heise's slightly older contemporary, Niels W. Gade.

Although Heise was active in the high Romantic period, he was essentially a Classicist at heart. He sought to imbue his compositions with clarity, precision and transparency, which is evident in his string quartets, particularly in his debut work, String Quartet No. 1. The first movement is a refined and succinct introduction to the genre, characterized by its clean and precise structure. Despite its minor key, the movement exudes a disarmingly humorous quality, a trait that has traditionally been well-received in Danish music, where grandiose expressions are not typically favoured.

In the subsequent movements, Heise's stylistic influences become more apparent. The second movement, for example, features a slow main section reminiscent of Schubert and a tumultuous middle section evocative of Mozart. The third movement is a simple scherzo with a trio

section in a folk style reminiscent of Haydn, while the fourth movement showcases Heise's mastery of Classical fugue technique.

The work was composed during the winter of 1851–52. Unlike String Quartets Nos. 2–6, the preserved sheet music for String Quartet No. 1 bears no signs of use, suggesting that this charming and masterfully crafted music may have never been performed prior to this recording.

#### **String Quartet No. 2 in G major**

Though Ville Heise tried to hide the quartets, as the editor of the new sheet music edition of 2017, Professor Michael Fjeldsøe points out that it is wrong to regard Heise's string quartets from the 1850s as youthful works, though they were composed in Heise's formative years, the same period in which he made a breakthrough in other genres. The first quartet already shows that it has been made by a composer who is skilful in this genre. Heise had heard

many performances of string quartets, as well as having played chamber music on his main instrument, the piano, and on the violin.

Heise clearly wanted to master the challenges of the quartet genre and composed his quartets each in their own key. String Quartet No. 2 in G major is from 1852. It has confidence and again a humorous character in the first movement, which surprises with its rhythmic intricacies. After the lively beginning comes the unexpectedly dark second movement in C minor: It is a tragic *largo*, although typically for Heise it is in a short format and with a quite unorthodox middle section. The third movement is this time a minuet, and compared to the concise scherzo movement in the first string quartet, the minuet here is more developed and has an elegant wit – Heise was known in Copenhagen's cultural circles as a highly entertaining and witty person. This trait also permeates the final movement, which, like the first

movement of String Quartet No. 1, Heise concludes with a humorous pizzicato punctuation mark.

#### **String Quartet No. 3 in B flat major**

In the winter of 1852–53, Heise embarked on a transformative journey to Leipzig, where Niels W. Gade had his breakthrough in the 1840s. The stay was a revelation for Heise, who quickly developed under the guidance of his teacher Moritz Hauptmann, the cantor at the Thomaskirche. In addition, the range of music in Leipzig was way beyond what Heise could experience in contemporary Copenhagen, spanning everything from Baroque music to new works by Schumann and Wagner. This experience greatly expanded his knowledge of the repertoire, simply because a much smaller selection of European music had reached north to Denmark.

The next three string quartets were written during or immediately after the Leipzig trip. String Quartet No. 3 significantly raises the level of

ambition compared to his previous quartets, and the music has moved away from the entertaining. The first movement is expanded with a slow introduction, and the entire movement is far richer and more varied than before. Similarly, the second movement, a twisted and galloping scherzo, has a greater breadth and scope.

The third movement's *Andante* is a peaceful moment, but the tension is not fully released. In true Romantic fashion, the qualms last until the end: the last movement is stormy and begins with fast changes between minor and major, reminiscent of Nordic folk music and a hallmark of Carl Nielsen's unorthodox style. In the end of the movement's development section, Heise inserts a solo cadenza for the first violin, after which the work reaches a light and liberating coda in B flat major.

The manuscript for String Quartet No. 3 is not dated, and Heise was generally private about his music and did not actively seek to have his quar-

tets published. Composing was not a profession he practised to achieve great fame or to make money – he became wealthy in 1859 through his marriage to Ville, the daughter of one of Denmark's richest men – and therefore had a more private attitude towards his musical work. Not attempting to have his quartets published was not an expression of Heise's own assessment of quality, but unfortunately his humility had a side effect: it took 170 years for the music to reach a wider audience. Hopefully, it is not too late for Peter Heise to gain recognition as a quartet composer alongside his reputation as a vocal composer.

The **Nordic String Quartet** was founded in 2013 and consists of Heiðrun Petersen on violin from the Faroe Islands, Mads Haugsted Hansen on violin from Denmark, Daniel Eklund on viola from Sweden, and Lea Emilie Brøndal on cello from Denmark. In November 2019, the quartet made their debut at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen under the guidance of Professor Tim Frederiksen, primarius in Den Danske Kvartet from 1986 to 1996.

In 2017, the quartet began a landmark recording project for Dacapo Records, featuring the complete string quartets of Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen. The first CD of the series, which includes string quartets Nos. 1-6, was released to critical acclaim in February 2019. According to MusicWeb International, "the playing is taut, and the sense of ensemble is great. They rise to all that Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's music demands."

The Nordic String Quartet is dedicated to unearthing the hidden treasures of the classical world, as demonstrated by their autumn 2019 release of Danish composer Nancy Dalberg's previously unknown string quartets, which received widespread acclaim and attention worldwide, shining a much-deserved light on an underappreciated composer.

Since then, the group has consistently enhanced and broadened their concert programme, featuring a mix of classical core repertoire and contemporary works. They have a particular love for Scandinavian composers, including Nielsen, Grieg, and Sibelius, as well as contemporaries like Signe Lykke, Hans Abrahamsen, and Per Nørgård.

The Nordic String Quartet has received numerous awards, including the Odd Fellow Music Prize, Léonie Sonning's Talent Prize, and the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen's Talent Prize.



Nordic String Quartet

Lea Emilie Brøndal, Daniel Eklund, Heiðrun Petersen, Mads Haugsted Hansen

## De glemte kvartetter

Af Jens Cornelius

I København i midten af 1800-tallet, da komponisten Peter Heise levede, var strygekvartetter noget, der blev spillet privat. Der var mange dygtige strygermusikere i byens velhavende kredse, og deres saloner havde god plads til de udøvende og deres private tilhørere. "Der var vel næppe et rigtigt musikalsk hus, der ikke havde sin regelmæssige ugentlige kvartet-aften," skrev musikhistorikeren Angul Hammerich om den højkulturelle del af den danske hovedstad, som også var hans eget barndomsmiljø.

Første gang, en strygekvartet blev opført ved en offentlig koncert i Danmark, var i 1854. I 1868 blev der stiftet en københavnsk musikforening udelukkende for kammermusik, den såkaldte Natmandsforening (der stadig eksisterer), og herefter begyndte

strygekvartetgenren langsomt at få status som offentlig musik, der henvendte sig til et bredere, billetkøbende publikum.

Strygekvartetter levede altså dengang en ret skjult tilværelse i Danmark. Alligevel er det mørke, som har ligget over Peter Heises strygekvartetter, ret utroligt. De seks strygekvartetter af Heise blev ikke en del af det offentlige musikliv på hans egen tid, og efter hans død i 1879 blev værkerne pakket væk, på trods af, at Heise var en af Danmarks mest populære og elskede komponister. Glemslen har varet til i dag, og denne indspilning af de tre første kvartetter er den første nogensinde. Musik, der hidtil har været så godt som fuldstændig ukendt.

Peter Heise var født i 1830 og døde som blot 48-årig, da han var på toppen af sin kunst. Han havde kort før sin død oplevet succes med sin fremragende opera *Drot og marsk*, vel nok 1800-tallets bedste danske

opera. Heises hundredvis af sange og romancer var også meget populære og var begyndt at udkomme i store oplag. Han blev derfor i høj grad regnet for at være vokalkomponist.

På det tidspunkt var manuskripterne til Heises seks strygekvartetter i hænderne på hans ungdomsven, cellisten Julius Holm, der beholdt dem indtil sin død i 1909. I Holms dødsbo blev noderne, der bar tegn af at have været flittigt brugt, opdaget af en bibliotekar fra Det Kongelige Bibliotek, som leverede dem tilbage til Heise enke, Vilhelmine.

Vilhelmine ("Ville") Heise var på det tidspunkt 71 år og ville åbenbart i et forsøg på at beskytte sin mands høje, posthume anseelse ikke lade ukendte værker fra hans yngre år forstyrre billedet. Det var sandsynligvis hende, der pakkede manuskripterne til hans strygekvartetter nr. 2-6 sammen i en mappe, påtegnet "Ungdomsværker". Noderne til strygekvartet nr. 1 blev lagt i en mappe med andre værker, der ligefrem blev påtegnet

"Heises skrevne noder fra ældre tid, ikke trykkes, måske helst brændes."

Alle kvartetmanuskripterne blev efter Ville Heises død i 1912 overgivet til Det Kongelige Bibliotek, men som frasorterede værker fik de ingen opmærksomhed. Der var kort sagt intet offentligt kendskab til kvartetternes eksistens. Den første biografi om Heise fra 1926 nævnte kun i form af et kort brevcitat, at Heise på et tidspunkt havde arbejdet på en kvartet, men først da et udvalg af Heises breve udkom i 1930, kunne man læse hele brevet, hvor Heise omtaler sin strygekvartet i g-mol (den kvartet, der i dag har nr. 6): "Nu arbejder jeg på en strygekvartet, hvoraf det første stykke er færdigt, og jeg er meget tilfreds med det; den begynder i g-mol. Hvis jeg bare kunne komme lige så godt i gang med det tredje stykke; det er jeg på jagt efter i disse dage"

Sådan skrev Heise i januar 1857 til vennen Edvard Holm, bror til førnævnte cellist, Julius Holm. Brevcitatet fik musikjournalisten Richard Hove

til at gennemgå manuskripterne i biblioteket, og han fandt den omtalte g-mol-kvartet, som derefter blev opført i 1931 i Hoves hjemby, Thisted. Ti år senere skrev Hove en præsentationsartikel i Dansk Musik Tidsskrift om Heise som kammermusikkomponist og var her den første til at oplyse, at Heise havde skrevet over 20 kammerværker, blandt andet seks kvartetter.

I 1945 blev g-mol-kvartetten spillet i radioen af tidens førende danske kvartetensemble, Erling Bloch Kvartetten, og fra 1950'erne og frem var der enkelte opførelser af Heises kvartetter nr. 3, 4 og 6, der nu cirkulerede i diverse afskrifter. Men ingen af kvartetterne bed sig fast i repertoiret i Danmark, og ingen af dem blev trykt eller indspillet. Ganske mærkeligt, for der er bestemt ikke en overflod af danske kvartetter fra 1800-tallet at konkurrere med.

Senere i 1900-tallet var det nok især en dalende interesse for den ældre danske musik generelt, der lå bag negligeringen af Heises kvartetter.

Det har ændret sig i dag, og i 2017 blev værkerne for første gang udgivet på tryk i et samarbejde mellem Det Kongelige Bibliotek og Københavns Universitet. Efter lang tids dvale kan de seks strygekvartetter nu omsider spilles, høres og nydes.

### **Strygekvartet nr. 1, h-mol**

Peter Arnold Heise blev født 1830 i en akademikerfamilie i København. Allerede som 13-årig var han i gang som komponist, og som kompositions lærer havde han A.P. Berggreen, der også var lærer for Heises lidt ældre kollega Niels W. Gade. Selv om Heise var aktiv i den højromantiske periode, var han inderst inde klassicist. Han stræbte efter klarhed, præcise former og gennemsigtigt satsarbejde, og den stræben efter koncise udtryk finder man i hans strygekvartetter. I særlig grad i strygekvartet nr. 1, der er en sikker, kortfattet debut i genren, hvor 1. sats formalt set er skåret ind til benet. Trods mol-tonearten har satsen afvæbnende, humoristiske træk,



hvad der gennem tiderne generelt har været populært i dansk musik, hvor patos og overdådighed sjældent har været velanset!

I kvartetens følgende sats er Heises stilistiske forbilleder mere tydelige: 2. sats har en langsom hoveddel, der er temmelig Schubert'sk i stilen, og et stormfuldt mellemafsnit, der virker inspireret af Mozart. 3. sats er en enkel scherzo med trio-del i spillemandsstil som hos Haydn, mens Heise i 4. sats viser sin beherskelse af klassisk fugateknik.

Værket er komponeret i vinteren 1851-52. I modsætning til strygekvartetterne nr. 2-6 har de bevarede noder til strygekvartet nr. 1 ingen brugsspor, og muligvis har denne charmerende, veloplagte musik derfor aldrig nogensinde været spillet, før denne indspilning blev lavet.

### **Strygekvartet nr. 2, G-dur**

Selvom Heises enke forsøgte at underekspone sin mands strygekvartetter, er det, som udgiveren af

nodeudgaven fra 2017, professor Michael Fjeldsøe, påpeger, forkert at betragte Heises strygekvartetter fra 1850'erne som ungdomsværker. De er komponeret i Heises formative år, den samme periode, der gav ham et gennembrud som vokalkomponist. Selvfølgelig de tidligste af hans kvartetter er skabt af en komponist, der er fortrolig med genren, for Heise havde hørt mange kvartetopførelser og spillede, udover sit hovedinstrument, klaver, også violin i kammermusikalske sammenhænge.

Heise ønskede tydeligvis at beherske kvartetgenrens udfordringer, og han komponerede sine kvartetter i hver deres toneart. Strygekvartet nr. 2 i G-dur er fra 1852. Den har selvsikkerhed og igen et humoristisk præg i 1. sats, der overrasker med rytmiske finurligheder. Ovenpå den livlige begyndelse kommer den mørke 2. sats i c-mol uventet: Det er en tragisk largo, om end den typisk for Heise er udformet i et kort format og med et ret uortodokst mellemstykke. 3. sats er denne gang en menuet, og

i forhold til den kortfattede scherzosats i 1. strygekvartet er menuetten her mere udfoldet og har et elegant vid – Heise var kendt i Københavns kulturelle kredse som en meget underholdende og vittig person. Det temperament gennemstrømmer også finalen, som Heise (ligesom i 1. sats af strygekvartet nr. 1) ikke kan lade være med at afslutte med et humoristisk pizzicato-punktum.

### **Strygekvartet nr. 3, B-dur**

I vinteren 1852-53 var Heise på sit livs store dannelsesrejse til Leipzig, hvor Niels W. Gade havde fået sit store gennembrud i 1840'erne. Opholdet blev en øjenåbner for Heise, der udviklede sig hurtigt under vejledning fra sin lærer Moritz Hauptmann, kantoren ved Thomaskirken. Desuden var udbuddet af musik i Leipzig helt uden sammenligning med, hvad Heise kunne opleve i datidens København, og spændte over alt fra barokmusik til nye værker af Schumann og Wagner. Rejsen til Leipzig blev derfor også en

stor udvidelse af Heises repertoirekendskab, simpelthen fordi et meget ringere udsnit af europæisk musik var nået nordpå til Danmark.

De næste tre strygekvartetter, Heise skrev, blev skrevet under eller lige efter Leipzig-rejsen. Strygekvartet nr. 3 hæver ambitionsniveauet betydeligt i forhold til hans foregående kvartetter, og musikken har flyttet sig væk fra det diverterende. 1. satsen er udvidet med en langsom indledning, og hele satsarbejdet er langt fyldigere og mere varieret end tidligere. Også 2. satsen, en forrevet og galopperende scherzo, har ægte bredde og vingefang, og dermed udvides værket dramatiske perspektiv.

3. satsens andante er en balsamisk stund, der dog ikke får spændingerne forløst. På ægte romantisk vis varer kvalerne ved lige indtil slut: Sidste sats er stormfuld, og den begynder med den slags hurtigt skift mellem mol og dur, der er kendt fra nordisk folkemusik, og som senere også blev et kendetegn for Carl Niel-

sens uortodokse stil. I slutningen af satsens gennemførringsdel indskyder Heise en solokadence for primoviolin, hvorefter værket når til en lys og befriende coda i B-dur.

Manuskriptet til strygekvartet nr. 3 er ikke dateret, og Heise var i det hele taget tilbageholdende med at oplyse om sin egen musik. At komponere var ikke et fag, han praktiserede for at opnå stor berømmelse eller for at tjene penge – velhavende blev han i 1859 gennem sit ægteskab med Ville, der var datter af en af Danmarks rigeste mænd – og derfor havde han en mere privat indstilling til sit musikalske arbejde. At Heise ikke selv prøvede at få kvartetterne udgivet, var ikke udtryk for hans egen kvalitetsvurdering. Men ydmygheden fik desværre den bivirkning, at der skulle gå 170 år, før musikken blev udbredt til at større publikum. Forhåbentlig er det ikke for sent for Peter Heise at opnå anerkendelse som kvartetkomponist side om side med hans ry som vokalkomponist.

**Nordic String Quartet** blev dannet i 2013 og består af Heiðrun Petersen, violin (Færøerne), Mads Haugsted Hansen, violin (Danmark), Daniel Eklund, bratsch (Sverige) og Lea Emilie Brøndal, cello (Danmark). Kvartetten debuterede fra Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatoriums solistklasse i november 2019 efter studier hos professor Tim Frederiksen.

I 2017 påbegyndte kvartetten indspilningen Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreens komplette strygekvartetter for Dacapo Records, en milepæl for både kvartetten og komponisten. Første cd med strygekvartetterne nr. 1–6 udkom i februar 2019 og blev varmt modtaget: "Spillet er stramt, og samhørigheden er stor. De honorerer de krav, Gudmundsen-Holmgreens musik stiller," ifølge MusicWeb International. Også danske Nancy Dalbergs samlede og indtil da ganske ukendte strygekvartetter udkom på Dacapo Records i 2019. Et meget rost album, der langt om længe har fået Dalbergs musik frem i lyset, også internationalt.

Siden da har gruppen begejstret med innovative koncertprogrammer, der byder på en blanding af klassisk kerne-repertoire og moderne værker og samtidig er præget af kvartetens forkærlighed for nordiske komponister – ikke kun ældre verdensberømte komponister som Nielsen, Grieg og Sibelius, men også nulevende som Signe Lykke, Hans Abrahamsen og Per Nørgård.

Kvartetten har modtaget flere priser, blandt andet Odd Fellow Logernes Musikpris, Léonie Sonnings Talentpris samt Carl Nielsen og Anne Marie Carl-Nielsens Talentpris.

*Allegro molto vivace.*  
Quartett II

First page of Peter Heise's manuscript for String Quartet No. 2

**DDD**

Recorded at Garnisonskirken, Copenhagen, on 24–25 February, 12–13 June and 11–12 September 2022

World premiere recording of the critical edition of *Peter Heise: String Quartets Nos. 1–6*. Edited by Michael Fjeldsøe (2017)

Recording producer: Tim Frederiksen

Editing: Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir and Mette Due

Sound engineering, mixing and mastering: Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir

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Nordic String Quartet, [www.nordicstringquartet.com](http://www.nordicstringquartet.com)

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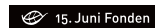


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