

KONTRAS QUARTET BIOGRAPHY

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 described as "a tightly crafted and beautiful instrument" (CVNC Arts Journal) and 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 records for MSR Classics and recently released two 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.

The Kontras Quartet's recent and upcoming performances include multiple broadcasts on classical radio stations nationwide (including *Performance Today* and *Concierto* on NPR); concerts at Chicago's Symphony Center, the Farnsworth House, and the Juilliard School; television appearances on NBC and PBS; regular appearances on concert series throughout the Midwest and Southeast; and sold out performances at the Telluride, IBMA and MerleFest festivals.

Kontras enjoys educational work of all kinds, and has been the Professional Quartet in Residence at Western Michigan University for two years. In addition to their concert schedule, the quartet will hold teaching residencies at Elmhurst College and Appalachian State University in 2016. They will also continue their 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 more than 40,000 students.

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 full-time position established through Chamber Music America's Residency Partnership Program. The quartet has received continued training with the Vermeer Quartet and Juilliard String Quartet.