



Martin Funda ist Kammer- und Orchestermusiker, Solist und Pädagoge. Er wurde 1985 in Gera geboren, studierte bei Prof. Anne-Katrin Lindig an der Hochschule für Musik „Franz Liszt“ Weimar und anschließend bei Prof. Nora Chastain an der Universität der Künste Berlin. Weitere musikalische Impulse erhielt er bei Antje Weithaas, Norbert Brainin, Kolja Blacher, Donald Weilerstein, Tabea Zimmermann, Günter Pichler, Natalia Prischepenko und dem Artemis Quartett. Internationale Bekanntheit erlangte er als Primarius und Gründungsmitglied des Armida Quartetts. Seit dem Gewinn des Concours de Genève 2011 und beim Internationalen Musikwettbewerb der ARD 2012, bei dem das Ensemble mit dem Ersten Preis, dem Publikumspreis und sechs weiteren Sonderpreisen ausgezeichnet wurde, hat sich das Armida Quartett als eines der meistgefragten jungen Quartette weltweit etabliert. Zum Wintersemester 2018/19 erfolgt die Berufung als Professor für Kammermusik für Streicher an die HMDK Stuttgart. Zuvor hatte Martin Funda Lehraufträge an der Universität der Künste Berlin und an der Hochschule für Musik „Franz Liszt“ Weimar.

PROF. MARTIN FUNDA
(CHAMBER MUSIC FOR STRINGS)
IN CONVERSATION WITH SABINE KRAUT

DEDICATION TO THE GREATER GOOD

Professor Martin Funda talks to Sabine Kraut about his career, his passion for chamber music, the highs and lows, and his desire to make new discoveries and to support and challenge HDMK students.

Martin, since Gerhard Schulz left the school, part of the chamber music curriculum was split between different courses. Your appointment will bring back the continuity in a field that means a lot to all of your colleagues. How and when did your interest in chamber music begin?

Making music together was part of my upbringing in a musical family from an early age. I formed my first ensemble, a piano trio, with two school friends when we were nine years old to enter our first regional competitions and perform concerts in my hometown, Gera.

When did chamber music become the main focus of your work?

I have always loved playing with other musicians. Whilst at the Schloss Belvedere music school in Weimar, I played in many different ensembles and chamber music was already an important part of my education alongside solo playing. The Armida Quartett came into existence because three of my friends started stu-

dy at the University of the Arts Berlin at exactly the same time as me in 2005. We really wanted to have lessons with the Artemis Quartett, so we formed a quartet. We quickly felt that we worked well as an ensemble and subsequently invested a lot of time rehearsing, organising and planning our activities from 2008. After a few smaller competitions and self-organised concerts we started to prepare repertoire for major competitions. After winning the Concourse de Genève in 2011 and the ARD-Musikwettbewerb in 2012, it was clear we had a future as a quartet ahead of us.

Have you, individually or as a quartet, worked with your predecessor Gerhard Schulz and/or his quartet, the Alban Berg Quartett?

Unfortunately we have never worked with Gerhard Schulz, but we have previously worked with Günter Pichler, the first violinist of the Alban Berg Quartett, having met him at a course as part of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

It was possibly the first course we participated in as a quartet. The concert hall was completely packed with students and members of the public, who were brought to tears as the [Alban Berg] quartet left the stage. It was during a masterclass with Pichler on Mendelssohn's F minor quartet that I was first introduced to his persistent and merciless style - I played the first bar, actually just the upbeat to the slow movement, probably around 40 times, and each time he had suggestions for improvements - fingerings, bow speed, intonation, timing, tension before the first note, vibrato speed, facial expression...! It was an extremely intensive, formative and educational experience. We still cross paths; most recently he was, by chance, at our concert at the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg and, over lunch, we discussed the chamber music world. The ABQ has had a great impact on chamber music generally and is an inspiration to many ensembles.

Which teacher was the most formative for you and your quartet, be it from their playing or their teaching, and why?

That's a long list... My first chamber music lessons were with Norbert Brainin in Weimar. I still remember the quirky anecdotes from the Amadeus Quartet's adventures, and see certain parallels on our travels now and again.

We studied with the Artemis Quartett and, the musical aspects aside, they taught us how to best organise and optimise our cooperation as a quartet. We were mentored by the then first violinist Natalia Prishpenko and by Friedemann Weigle, who even during difficult periods encouraged us to persevere.

We went on to study with Rainer Schmidt (Hagen Quartet) in Basel and historical performance practice with Reinhard Goebel in Salzburg. Masterclasses have always been incredible and uniquely inspiring for us, so it was an honour to have the chance to work with Alfred Brendel and Walter Levin. I also highly value our frequent collaborations with partners such as Jörg Widmann, Tabea Zimmermann, Julian Steckel, Eckhart Runge and Kit Armstrong.

It is now compulsory for all students at the HDMK to take chamber music modules. What significance do you think chamber music should have in everyday student life?

In my opinion, chamber music for Bachelor's students alongside their solo studies is an extremely important subject. It's also great to escape the four walls of the practice room and explore repertoire together with fellow students, trying out different interpretations. When else will there be time and the opportunity to really delve into harmony and melody? For all students, the chance to think outside the box, learning from the many chamber music professors, is definitely exciting, but a lot is also to be learnt from the other members of your ensemble. You develop a certain awareness which is very useful later in life, regardless of which occupational field you eventually work in.

What musical aspects are particularly well suited to being taught in chamber music lessons or can only be taught in chamber music lessons?

Intense work in a chamber music ensemble in which the musicians have different origins, ways of working and experience teaches you how to get along with each other, reach musical compromises, to give and take criticism respectfully and to be modest.

It comes down to working for the greater good and sharing responsibility.

It would be desirable for the institute and the school to draw in more quartets for the Master's programme. Do you have ideas on how to make the Master's course particularly attractive and how to incentivise it?

I have observed and worked with Master's programmes in chamber music and various quartet programmes in different organisations internationally and gathered many ideas in the last years that I don't want to give away in detail just yet. The chamber music department colleagues and I are looking to develop the Master's programme this semester, with the goal being to discover young, ambitious quartets and ensembles to mentor within an individually tailored two year Master's programme.

I'm looking forward to getting to know the school and the chamber music department and to starting to exchange ideas with teachers and students as soon as possible.

What content do you think should be part of chamber music classes?

Broadening one's knowledge of repertoire and interpretational confidence in music of all eras, even contemporary and lesser known works!

Improving the rehearsal process of ensembles is also important so that you can work independently on new pieces once you have finished your studies.

I also want to develop concert programmes together that inspire curiosity in the audience and that are presented by the ensembles themselves in group chamber music evenings. We will discuss possible ways to enjoy a long-lasting professional concert career. Organisation plays a big role in this; well-thought-out rehearsal planning in the run up to a concert or competition can make all the difference.

Are there courses that you think need to be offered, perhaps that you did not get during your studies, or skills you wish to share that weren't part of your studies?

I want to encourage students to work in a goal-oriented way, to take responsibility individually and not to take a wait-and-see approach. Besides teaching technique and different interpretational impulses, lessons are about the mutual exchange of thoughts and ideas.

I consider a certain flexibility and a broad range of musical activities to be particularly important for musicians these days, as the life and role of musicians is constantly changing and can be very diverse.

Stage and mental training can help you to understand yourself better and how to deal with problems such as stage fright.

You won the ARD-Wettbewerb in 2012 and have been internationally in demand as a quartet since then. How would you describe the everyday life of a quartet musician? Would you recommend this career path to young musicians?

My everyday life as a quartet musician consists of practising and rehearsing, but also communicating with the other members and with our agent. It's useful that we can divide the various tasks such as travel planning, programme planning, discussions with the agent, finances and acquiring new contacts between the four of us. All this requires a lot of time on the computer, which sometimes unfortunately takes away time from the essential musical work.

Each of us has to put in a huge amount of effort to ensure a successful and continuing quartet career. A quartet only functions

in the long-run when all four members work as one and are as musically skilled as possible on their individual instruments. Only then can you assert yourself in the small chamber music world.

What is particularly important to you when you play?

Working precisely and in a result-oriented way whilst not changing my personality, and always being open to new things. Free and open music-making and communicating is very important to me.

Do you have any particular repertoire preferences?

Luckily not, so I always look forward to all of the upcoming pieces! In the Armida Quartett we often have particular areas of focus for repertoire; for example we are currently working on a new urtext edition of the Mozart string quartets with G. Henle Verlag, which we will then perform. We will also publish our fingerings and bowings in the G. Henle app. In 2019/20, we will be playing a lot of modern and contemporary repertoire, which is always a challenge, but we enjoy it immensely and like to play it regularly.

We are of course looking forward to your inaugural concert! Is the date set already, and the programme?

I'm hoping that we can find a suitable date soon - the exact date and repertoire has not yet been decided. It's an honour to be Gerhard Schulz's successor, and a great joy to be a part of the long-standing tradition of chamber music at the HDMK Stuttgart.



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