



## String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam

The world's largest string quartet festival

24–29 January 2026 (MM 876)

6 days • £3,350

Lecturer: Leo Samama

15 concerts, world-class ensembles – the greatest string quartet gathering in the world.

All performances are at the excellent modern Muziekgebouw, which overlooks the River IJ.

The hotel is immediately adjacent – time spent travelling to the concerts is eliminated.

Talks by musicologist Leo Samama, writer, lecturer, composer and co-founder of the Netherlands String Quartet Academy.

Walks and visits within Amsterdam with a local art historian.

The Strijkkwartet Biennale Amsterdam is the première festival of its kind, a gathering of world-class quartets and enthusiastic listeners in one of the loveliest cities in Europe. Immersive, intensive and inspiring, the festival embraces both tradition and innovation, and presents the familiar and the unknown. Mainly, however, it is a sublime sequence of some of the finest music ever composed.

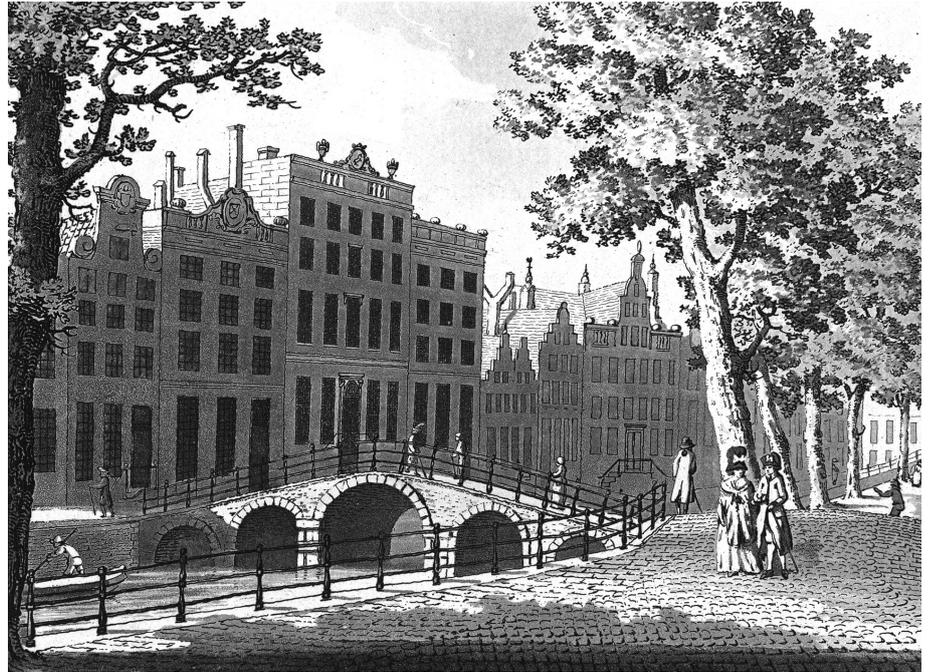
From the week-long festival we have selected 15 concerts of varying formats and durations, some starting at 9.30am and some at 10.30pm. If this sounds a formidably busy schedule, be comforted by the proximity of the hotel: you could be in your room within four or five minutes of the players leaving the stage.

The concerts take place in the three halls of the Muziekgebouw and BIMhuis, an adventurous building by Danish architects 3XN which opened in 2005, and is located in the docks just beyond the main railway station. A huge glass wall affords views across the River IJ, Europe's busiest port in the 17th century.

An Amsterdam-based art historian leads guided visits to art galleries and historic buildings of the city.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Depart late-morning by train from London St Pancras (Eurostar, approx. four hours) and transfer from Amsterdam Centraal to the hotel. Dinner is at the hotel before going next door to the Muziekgebouw. **8.15pm concert: the Belcea Quartet and Tabea Zimmermann (viola):** Mozart, *String Quartet K.465 'Dissonance'*; Brett Dean, *String Quartet*; Mozart, *String Quintet in G minor, K.516*



Amsterdam, De Herengracht, aquatint c. 1790.

**Day 2.** Morning lecture before a concert at 11.00am: **Cuarteto Casals:** Bach, *The Art of Fugue BWV 1080 for string quartet*. Independent lunch before an afternoon concert at 1.30pm: **Quatuor Ébène:** Beethoven, *String Quartet Op.18 No.3*; Op.95 'Serioso'; **Belcea Quartet:** Beethoven, *Op.59 No.1 'Razumovsky'*; **Quatuor Ébène:** Beethoven, *Op.59 No.2 'Razumovsky'*; **Both quartets:** Felix Mendelssohn, *Octet Op.20*. Dinner is followed by: 8.15pm, **Signum Quartet & Dizu Plaatjies:** Arnold van Wyk, *'Five Elegies'*; Denise Onen, *'Democracy'*; Abel Selaocoe *'Umthwalo'*; Dizu Plaatjies, *'21:30'*; Priaulx Rainier, *String Quartet*.

**Day 3.** Concert at 9.30am: **Quatuor Arod:** Dvořák, *String Quartet No. 12 'American', 2nd movement only*; Tchaikovsky, *String Quartet No.1. 'Masterclass' at 11.30am with Alina Ibragimova (violin) & Charlotte Saluste-Bridoux (violin)*. Break for lunch. Afternoon visit to the Rijksmuseum which concentrates on the major works in its unrivalled collection of 17th-century paintings, Rembrandt's *Night Watch* and four Vermeers among them. Afternoon lecture and dinner followed by concert at 8.15pm, **Cuarteto Casals:** Shostakovich, *String Quartets No.1, No.3 & No.2*. Break. Concert at 10.30pm: **Chiaroscuro**

**Quartet:** Sweelinck, *Fantasia Cromatica*; Beethoven, *String Quartet No.12 Op.127*.

**Day 4.** Concert at 9.30am: **Malion Quartett,** Tchaikovsky, *String Quartet No.3 Op.30*. Visits to the magnificent 17th-century Portuguese Synagogue and to Rembrandt's House, recently and excellently refurbished. Independent lunch before concert at 2.15pm: **Pavel Haas Quartet,** Martinů (*No.3, No.5, and No.7*). Afternoon lecture followed by an evening concert at 8.15pm: **Chiaroscuro Quartet & Olga Pashchenko (harpichord):** Purcell, *Fantasias 7, 8, 11*; Mozart, *Piano Concerto No.12 K.414 (transcribed for string quartet & keyboard)*; *Fantasia K.396*; *Piano Concerto K.449 (transcribed for string quartet & keyboard)*. Short break before a concert at 10.30pm: **Pavel Haas Quartet:** Beethoven, *String Quartet No.16 Op.135*.

**Day 5.** Concert at 9.30am: **Leonoro Quartet:** Schumann, *String Quartet No.3 Op.41/3*. Break. 11.30am: 'Keynote' lecture (speaker to be confirmed). Afternoon visit to the Willet-Holthuysen Museum, a fully-furnished 17th-century merchant's house on the Herengracht. Lecture and final dinner before a concert at 8.15pm: **Pavel Haas Quartet:** Dvořák, *Cypresses (selection)*; *String Quartet No.11 Op.61 & No.14 Op.105*.

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continued

**Day 6. Concert at 9.30am: Marmen Quartet:**  
*Brahms, String Quartet No.1 Op.51.* Morning visit to the Van Gogh Museum, home to the largest collection of the artist's works, largely from his brother Theo's collection. Board the afternoon Eurostar, arriving at London St Pancras International in the evening.

## Lecturer

**Leo Samama.** Writer, composer, and co-founder of the Netherlands String Quartet Academy, he has worked with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Residentie Orchestra in The Hague and the Netherlands Chamber Choir. Between 1977 and 1992 he taught at the Utrecht Conservatory, the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and Utrecht University, and today teaches music philosophy. Among his publications are *Nederlandse muziek in de 20-ste eeuw* (Dutch Music in the 20th Century), *The Meaning of Music* and *Het strijkkwartet* (The String Quartet) in 2018. In 2010 he was created an Officer of the Order of Orange-Nassau for his contribution to Dutch musical life.

*The lecturer joins the tour for four lectures, the concerts and most dinners. Walks and most visits are led by a local guide.*

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £3,350 or £3,110 without Eurostar. **Single occupancy:** £3,830 or £3,590 without Eurostar.

**Included:** tickets for 15 concerts; rail travel by Eurostar (Eurostar Plus; previously called Standard Premier); travel within Amsterdam by coach or taxi; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts and four dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guide.

**Accommodation. Mövenpick Hotel Amsterdam City Centre** ([movenpick.com](http://movenpick.com)): a modern, comfortable hotel located directly next door to the Muziekgebouw.

**How strenuous?** Participation in the walks and visits requires the fitness to be expected of everyday walking and stair climbing, and to be able to walk at least a couple of miles unaided.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.