

Niklas Schmidt

Cellist Niklas Schmidt studied in Hamburg and later in Cologne and was a regular guest at the Menuhin Academy in Gstaad. In 1980, together with violinist Michael Mücke and pianist Wolf Harden, he founded the *Trio Fontenay*. The ensemble recorded nearly the entire literature for this genre on CD for Teldec, EMI and Philips; most of the recordings received national and international awards, including the *Deutscher Schallplattenpreis* 1994 for the complete recordings of the Beethoven Trios and the Diapason d'Or.

The *Trio Fontenay* performed at the most prestigious concert halls in the world including Carnegie Hall in New York, the Salle Gaveau in Paris, Wigmore Hall, Queen Elisabeth Hall, Royal Festival Hall in London, and the Herkulesaal in Munich and appeared at international festivals such as the Salzburg Festival, the Festival de Montpellier, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and the Festival de Montréal as well as at the Kissinger Summer and the Schubertiade in Austria. Since its American debut in 1986, the ensemble also undertook one or two major USA tours each year. A special honor for the three musicians was the ensemble's appointment as *Trio en Résidence au Châtelet* in Paris. At the end of 1997, Niklas Schmidt resigned from the ensemble as cellist.

Since then, he has been appearing frequently as a soloist as well as in various chamber music formations. Together with Menahem Pressler, he performed the "Arpeggione" Sonata in Washington D.C. and the Beethoven Sonatas in Hamburg, and performed the Schubert String Quintet with members of the Alban Berg, Cleveland, Guarneri and Juilliard quartets. With orchestra, he has, of late, frequently performed the two Haydn concertos. His many musical partners include Nobuko Imai, Donald Weilerstein, Ralf Gothóni, the Aurnyn Quartet and the Fine Arts Quartet. In August 2012, his latest CD *The Singing Cello* was released, presenting Schubert's *Arpeggione* and Beethoven's complete Variations for Cello and Piano in a recording with his piano partner John Chen. The next CD will appear in 2013 with works by Richard Strauss and Sergei Rachmaninoff.

Since 1987, Professor Schmidt has taught chamber music and cello at the *Hochschule* for Music in Hamburg. He is also regularly invited to conduct master classes throughout the world, from Paris, Helsinki, Nice, Montréal and New York to Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Since 1999, Niklas Schmidt has directed the prestigious Hamburg chamber music series *Chamber Concerts in the Mozartsaal* which presents world renowned ensembles and soloists. After a successful Schubertiade in 2011, a *Brahmsiade* will take place during this series in April 2013. Schmidt is also director of the *International Mendelssohn Summer School Festival* in Hamburg and the *International Chamber Music Competition Hamburg ICMC*. In 2010, he founded his own label with the name *Fontenay Classics International FCI* which has already released seven CDs.

Niklas Schmidt performs on a Rogeri cello (Brescia) from the year 1700.