

Ruth Killius | Biography

Viola



"Ruth Killius shines in a revelatory performance of Bartók's Viola Concerto."

Ruth Killius' extraordinary ability to use her instrument to revive the wealth of viola literature from the Classical to the Modern Age is without equal. The versatility of her playing has bestowed her instrument with new meaning.

Particularly through her interest and commitment to contemporary music, Ruth Killius, who studied with Ulrich Koch and Kim Kashkashian, has succeeded in establishing the viola as an integral part of the musical 21st century and in expanding the standard repertoire for her instrument. She participated in the performance of numerous original premieres e.g. the Brian Ferneyhough String Trio together with members of Geneva's Ensemble Contrechamps as well as in Elliott Carter's Oboe

Quartet with Heinz Holliger. Holliger wrote his double concerto for violin, viola and small orchestra, a commission from the Salzburg Festival, for her. The performance of the original premiere of John Casken's double concerto *That Subtle Knot*, dedicated to the duo Thomas Zehetmair and Ruth Killius, together with the Royal Northern Sinfonia attracted widespread attention. In the spring of 2023, the work was released paired with Bartók's Viola Concerto on ECM New Series.

With solo and double concertos, Ruth Killius made guest appearances with the Basel Chamber Orchestra, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Camerata Salzburg, Russian National Youth Orchestra, Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Filharmonia Poznanska and repeatedly in Gateshead and Clermont-Ferrand. Highlights include her participation in the charity concert for the *Gute Tat* Foundation with the Orchestre National Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and the opening of the 40th Styriarte, where Ruth Killius premiered a commissioned composition by Flora Geißelbrecht together with Thomas Zehetmair and the Styriarte Festival Orchestra.

Together with Thomas Zehetmair, Ruth Killius formed the Zehetmair Quartet in 1994, which is now considered one of the world's leading string quartets. For its recording of Robert Schumann's Quartets Nos. 1 and 3, the ensemble received the *Gramophone Award of the Year* in addition to four other prizes. A recording featuring Hindemith's String Quartet No. 4 and Bartók's String Quartet No. 5 was distinguished with the *Diapason d'Or de l'Année*. In 2013, the ensemble released a recording dedicated to Beethoven, Bruckner, Hartmann and Holliger.

For ECM, Ruth Killius has recorded a CD featuring works by Elliott Carter and Isang Yun together with Heinz Holliger and Thomas Demenga. The recording released under the Glossa label featuring Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century under Frans Brüggen is considered to be a reference recording. In April 2018, her latest recording of all Hindemith sonatas for viola was published by NoMadMusic.

The duo Thomas Zehetmair and Ruth Killius can be heard in numerous music centers. The widely regarded album *Manto and Madrigals*, inspired by Scelsi's *Manto* for a singing violist featuring works of Bartók, Holliger, Martinů et al. was released on ECM in March 2011.