

# Amour Scandaleux

In *Amour Scandaleux*, the Ragazze Quartet tells the story of the turbulent love life of Emma Bardac (1862–1934). The French singer was unhappily married to the banker Sigismond Bardac, with whom she had two children. During a salon she organised herself, she met the composer Gabriel Fauré, with whom she began an affair. After several years, this relationship ended and she became involved with Claude Debussy, who was married at the time.

Debussy neglected his marriage, leading his wife to attempt suicide. He refused to pay her hospital bills, causing widespread outrage among Parisian high society. To escape public condemnation, Emma and Claude fled to England. After returning to Paris, they had a daughter together, but their relationship gradually deteriorated. Debussy fell ill with cancer, and after his death their daughter also died as a result of a medical error. Emma Bardac outlived them all and died many years later, in 1934.



This compelling history is brought together in the programme *Amour Scandaleux*, featuring string quartets by Fauré and Debussy alongside a newly commissioned work by composer Karmit Fadael. **Gabriel Fauré's** String Quartet, his final composition, was written shortly before his death and is his only work for this ensemble. Composed when he was almost deaf and physically frail, the quartet reflects an introspective, spiritual atmosphere, imbued with serenity and resignation.

**Claude Debussy** composed his String Quartet at the age of thirty. It was among the first works in which he moved away from nineteenth-century Romantic traditions, such as those of Wagner and Franck, in favour of a highly personal and innovative sound world. Rather than adhering to strict academic thematic development, Debussy focused on timbre, modal writing and subtle harmonies, using cyclical themes that return and transform across all four movements. Although the quartet received mixed reactions at its premiere, it is now regarded as a masterpiece that helped open the door to modern chamber music.

In addition to the quartets by Fauré and Debussy, the Ragazze Quartet has commissioned a new work from composer **Karmit Fadael**. She will write three musical commentaries, giving voice to Emma Bardac within the programme.

Fadael on the commission:

*"In recent years, my work has often focused on 'female' suffering. I would like to give sound to Emma Bardac's inner world and to humanise her pain. She is frequently portrayed as a 'femme fatale', surrounded by scandal, while in reality she held a high social position that made her attractive to men of her time. Was she not ahead of her time? And was her femme fatale image perhaps a conscious way of engaging with the ethics and position of women in her era? In this new work, I aim to symbolise both the game of seduction and her personal story."*

**Repertoire:** Gabriel Fauré - String Quartet in E minor, Op. 121 (1924), Claude Debussy - String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10 (1893), Karmit Fadael - Newly commissioned work

**Performers:** Ragazze Quartet

**Performance Period:** seizoen 2027/2028

**Venues:** Small and mid-sized halls

If you would like to invite the Ragazze Quartet or have any questions, please contact Annette de Bock ([annette@ragazzequartet.nl](mailto:annette@ragazzequartet.nl)).

