



ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

Sunday 4th October 2020, 3.00pm

THE
Revolutionary
DRAWING ROOM



Beethoven – The Late Quartets, Concert 2



PROGRAMME

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)
String Quartet in Eb op. 127

Maestoso - Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo e molto cantabile
Scherzo
Finale - Allegro

When Beethoven was approached by Prince Nikolai Galitzin with a commission for one, two or three quartets, he was at work on the Missa Solemnis and his 9th Symphony. Once these were completed in the first half of 1824, he spent the remainder of his life largely on his five late string quartets beginning with Op.127 in Eb major.

The first movement opens with a majestic chordal introduction which eases us into the lyrical first theme. This introductory music reappears twice punctuating the musical structure at the end of the exposition and development.

The second, slow movement, is in the subdominant key of Ab and is a set of variations, one in the magically remote key of E major. The quickest variation, marked *Andante con moto*, recalls the 5th variation of the slow movement of his quartet Op.18 No.5 in its character of fairground jauntiness. Schubert must surely have heard this work as some of the sustained lyrical writing and textures of his famous string quintet can be heard here.

The Scherzo that follows is lively and humorous with a contrasting minor-mode trio which threatens to return after the *da capo* of the Scherzo, a device Beethoven had used a number of times already in both his symphonies and quartets. This time, though, the surprise is that this return is a false one and the movement finishes swiftly afterwards.

The dramatic unison opening of the finale quickly relaxes into a lyrical rondo theme which recalls the famous 'Ode to Joy' theme of his 9th Symphony. Surprisingly, in the coda the composer doesn't increase the tempo and excitement, as he so often had done in previous works, but rather winds down the tempo and dynamic before building gradually to a grand ending.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

String Quartet in F op. 135

Allegretto

Vivace

Assai Lento, cantante e tranquillo

Grave, ma non troppo tratto

This work proved to be Beethoven's last completed quartet and it wasn't performed until after his death. And yet it seems that he saw it as the first of a potential new set rather than as a farewell to the world which inevitably makes us wonder what might have been! Its key of F major happens to be the same one that he chose for the first of both his early Op.18 set and his middle-period quartets.

Beethoven's four previous late quartets were all large-scale works of extraordinary intensity and complexity which audiences of the time found enormously challenging to listen to. This final work, however, reverts, to some degree, to the humorous and conversational style of his former teacher, Joseph Haydn. The opening Allegretto in particular is light-hearted in mood and the themes are passed around between the players in true Haydnesque fashion. There are still moments, though, when one unprepared dissonance is piled upon another making one almost feel that the players are slightly lost before all is eventually resolved in a conventional manner.

The second movement, marked Vivace, is a Scherzo in all but name in which Beethoven, again like Haydn, plays around with cross rhythms and unexpected phrase lengths. The slow movement that follows has a very special atmosphere of intimacy and poignant feeling that perhaps connects it more with the atmosphere of the other late quartets.

The title of the finale is "Der schwer gefaßte Entschluß" (The Difficult Decision). Beethoven added the words "Muß es sein?" (Must it be?) for the opening notes of the slow introduction and then "Es muß sein!" (It must be!) for the answering phrase that begins the Allegro. It seems that the composer was not perhaps agonising over deep questions of the meaning of life but merely enjoying himself. The anguished tone of the slow sections is quickly dissipated and the work finishes in a happy and exuberant mood.

Programme Notes © Adrian Butterfield

"...a formidable quartet, whose virtuosity is matched by their insightful attention to every detail."

EARLY MUSIC REVIEW

The Revolutionary Drawing Room



The Revolutionary Drawing Room is a period instrument ensemble specialising in the repertoire of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The name 'Revolutionary Drawing Room' refers to the revolutionary years in Europe between 1789 and 1848. The 'drawing room' (the name deriving from the earlier 'withdrawing room') was where chamber music was performed in Georgian times, in the houses of musicians and their patrons. The political upheavals of that time were matched by a breathless pace of change and the forging of new styles and forms in musical composition, as well as new models of musical instruments. The string players of the Revolutionary Drawing Room use original instruments and bows, or modern copies, creating a special sound derived from the beauty and flexibility of gut strings.

The ensemble, founded in 1990, has performed in Canada, Germany, Holland, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and Ireland and across the UK, and recorded for CPO (Donizetti and Boccherini quartets) and the BBC (Mendelssohn Octet). Recent appearances have included concerts in the Gregynog, Maldon and Petworth Festivals and the Music and Beyond Festival in Ottawa. The quartet is currently completing a cycle of Beethoven's Quartets over four years at St. John's, Smith Square.

Recent recordings include Mozart's Clarinet Quintet with Colin Lawson on the Clarinet Classics label and 'A Viennese Quartet Party' on Omnibus Classics, A double-CD of flute quartets by Mozart and his contemporaries with Rachel Brown was released in September 2016 on the Uppernote label.

Adrian Butterfield is a violinist, director and conductor who specialises in performing music from 1600-1900 on period instruments. He is Musical Director of the Tilford Bach Festival and Associate Director of the London Handel Festival and regularly directs the London Handel Orchestra and London Handel Players as well as working as a guest soloist and director in Europe and North America. He has led The Revolutionary Drawing Room for 25 years.

He started playing string quartets at the age of seven at Pro Corda, a string chamber music course for children, and after 11 years as a student was a member of the coaching staff for over ten years.

The London Handel Players perform regularly at Wigmore Hall and throughout Europe and North America and made their debut at Carnegie Hall in 2014. Adrian's world premiere complete recordings of Leclair's first two Books of violin sonatas were released in 2009 and 2013 on Naxos Records.

He is Professor of Baroque Violin at the Royal College of Music in London, gives masterclasses in Europe and North America and has taught at Dartington and Pro Corda Baroque. He also directs an annual baroque project with the Southbank Sinfonia.

He has conducted all the major choral works of Bach as well as numerous works by Handel and his contemporaries and directed ensembles such as the Croatian Baroque Ensemble in Zagreb, the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Mozart Players.

Plans for the 2020/21 season include conducting Messiah with the London Mozart Players and Handel's *Il Trionfo* in the London Handel Festival, performing Bach's Brandenburg Concertos with the London Handel Players, Beethoven quartets with the Revolutionary Drawing Room and recording more Leclair sonatas for Naxos.

Hungarian violinist **Dominika Fehér** was born into a musical family and has always had a passion for chamber music. During her studies at the Franz Liszt Music Academy Budapest she had regular coaching with members of the Bartók and Kodály Quartets as well as János Rolla, the leader of the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra. Upon completing her Masters degree with highest honours, Dominika was awarded the Weingarten Scholarship to study with Oistrakh pupil Rimma Sushanskaya at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where she later became a Junior Fellow as a member of the Bantock Quartet. Their performances included Steve Reich's 'Different Trains' and 'Triple Quartet'. While at the Conservatoire, she developed a passion for early music under the guidance of Margaret Faultless, Lucy Russell and Oliver Webber, and has become a sought-after performer specialising in historically informed performance practice of 17th – 19th century music.

Dominika has toured the world with leading early music ensembles, such as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, English Baroque Soloists, Academy of Ancient Music, Early Opera Company and The Kings Consort, and recorded for Signum Classics, Resonus Classics and Convivium. She has appeared at the BBC Proms and also performed at the Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall, Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Royal Festival Hall in London, Carnegie Hall in New York, La Scala in Milan, Konzerthaus in Vienna and National Centre For the Performing Arts in Beijing.

Dominika has broadcast live as soloist in Dittersdorf's Double Violin Concerto on BBC Radio 3 and given solo performances of works by Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart, Piazzolla, Schnittke and Malcolm Arnold. In 2019 she was a finalist in the Premio Bonporti International Baroque Violin Competition. She plays

a Rogeri violin kindly loaned to her by Simon Smewing through the Beare's International Violin Society.

Rachel Stott is a viola player and composer. She played for many years with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Classical Players and other period instrument orchestras while also exploring new music with Music Projects of London, Ensemble Exposé and the New Music Players. She performs with chamber music groups The Revolutionary Drawing Room, The Bach Players and Sopriola and explores repertoire for viola d'amore with both contemporary and baroque ensembles. Rachel's compositions have been performed at the London South Bank, Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square, in UK festivals and abroad in Europe, America and Japan. Her first string quartet, *Quiet Earth*, was commissioned for performance by the Fitzwilliam String Quartet at the 2002 Swaledale Festival and a second quartet, *The Enchanted Lyre*, was performed by the Dante String Quartet at the Wigmore Hall in 2005. *Winds Through a Symmetry*, composed for the Callino Quartet, was composed during a residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada in 2015, and her most recent quartet, *Euphonia*, was written for the Revolutionary Drawing Room during the lockdown in London, spring 2020. She has recently completed a commission from the Society for Strange and Ancient Instruments for their trumpet marine project.

Aside from her work as a viola player and composer, Rachel recently completed an MA in Creative Writing at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is interested in projects which combine musical and literary skills. She has written a series for BBC Radio 3 entitled *Harmony and Invention*, adapted the script for the Revolutionary Drawing Room's CD, *A Viennese Quartet Party*, and created the text for the recent Omnibus Classics release, *Odysseus and the Sorceress*.

Ruth Alford is a respected chamber musician and continuo-cellist who performs with many ensembles and chamber groups in London. She studied cello and chamber music with Bernard Gregor-Smith and the Lindsay Quartet at Manchester University, graduating with an honours degree in music and winning the Proctor Gregg Performance Award. Further studies followed at the Royal Academy of Music in London with David Strange, the Amadeus Quartet, Sidney Griller, Jenny Ward-Clarke and William Pleeth. During this time Ruth performed in a wide variety of musical genres ranging from solo recitals to jazz and music theatre. As well as the Revolutionary Drawing Room, Ruth plays in the period instrument chamber music ensemble DeNOTE and is a member of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, English Baroque Soloists and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique.

Indeed, Ruth still thrives on a broad musical diet from Baroque to Contemporary as well as sharing her enthusiasm for music through various educational outlets. She performs and records widely throughout Europe, the Far East and America as a principal player and continuo-cellist with the English Baroque Soloists, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment as well as chamber ensembles including Brandenburg Consort, The Music Collection, Fiori Musicali, Florilegium, Configure8 and The Revolutionary Drawing Room.

Further concerts in this series take place as follows:

Saturday 24th October 2020, 3pm

Beethoven - String Quartet in C# minor Op. 131

Rachel Stott - String Quartet No. 4 'Euphonia'

Sunday 25th October, 3pm

Beethoven - String Quartet in Bb major Op. 130

Beethoven - 'Grosse Fuge' Op. 133

Tickets for all concerts are available from the St John's Smith Square website at www.sjss.org.uk.

All four concerts will be available to view online from the week of Monday 26th October. For further details please visit the St John's Smith Square website.

St John's Smith Square

The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating effect on people's lives and their livelihoods. St John's Smith Square is a registered charity, We receive no regular public funding with all our revenue provided for by hiring out the hall, ticket revenue, catering receipts and generous donations. When we closed our doors on 16th March 2020 we immediately lost over 80% of our income.

We are delighted to now be able to re-open and to start to share the joy of live music in these challenging times whilst providing a vital base for artists to once again perform. Ticket sales alone only cover approximately 30% of the operating costs for these concerts. If you have enjoyed today and are able to consider making an additional donation your support would be greatly appreciated. Details of ways in which you can help can be found on our website at:

<https://www.sjss.org.uk/donations>. You can also make a simple donation by TEXT MESSAGE:

Text STJOHNS to 70450 to donate £10

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