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**ENDELLION QUARTET**

Wednesday 4th March 2020

King's Hall





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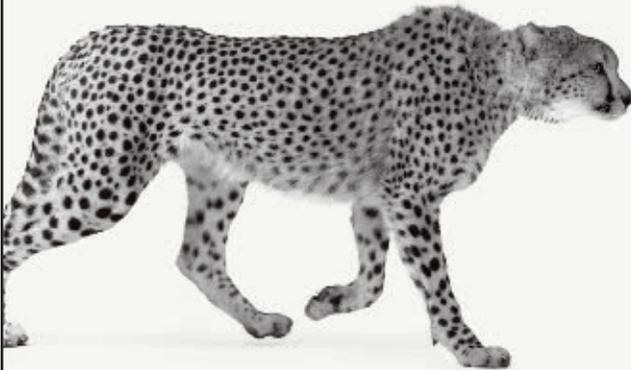
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# TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

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## Mendelssohn

String Quartet in E minor, op 44 no. 2

*(Last performance at ICC 16/02/2000)*

## Beethoven

String Quartet in F minor, op 95

*(Last performance at ICC 20/02/2013)*

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## INTERVAL

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*(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)*

## Ravel

String Quartet in F major

*(Last performance at ICC 10/11/1999)*

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# PROGRAMME NOTES

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**MENDELSSOHN** String Quartet in E minor, op 44 no. 2  
(1809-1847)

**Allegro assai appassionato**  
**Scherzo. Allegro di molto**  
**Andante**  
**Presto agitato**

Mendelssohn was prodigiously talented as a composer, having produced the astonishing string octet at the age of 16. He later composed six quartets in his maturity by which time he had an international reputation as composer, conductor and performer. Amongst his many talented contemporaries, he did not attempt to break the mould as did Beethoven for example, but made the most of existing classical forms to produce delightful compositions. Amongst them is this fourth string quartet, which he started to compose on his honeymoon in 1828.

The first movement starts with an optimistic ascending arpeggio often used at that time, but this is underpinned by a restless syncopated accompaniment in the middle parts. Other material to listen out for are passages of rapid semi-quavers, decisive dotted rhythms and delicate arpeggios for all four parts.

The second movement is a *Scherzo* that is very fast but also delicate and is reminiscent of his 'Midsummer Night's Dream' music.

The third movement 'at walking pace' is a very lovely melody played with an almost continuous semiquaver obligato accompaniment, mostly given to the second violin. Pianists may have played some of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words – this one is for a string quartet.

The finale is an extremely rapid and agitated relay race, driven by a relentless rhythmic accompaniment. It starts in E minor, changes to the major and finally returns to the minor *con fuoco* (with fire) for the precipitous coda.

(Duration: approx. 27 minutes)

**BEETHOVEN**  
**(1770-1827)**

**String Quartet in F minor, op 95**

**Allegro con brio**  
**Allegretto ma non troppo**  
**Allegro assai vivace ma serio**  
**Larghetto – Allegretto agitato – Allegro**

This is unique amongst Beethoven's 16 quartets in several respects: written without a commission; he dedicated it to a friend who was a cellist; unusually he gave it a name 'Quartetto Serioso'; written in 1810, it was not performed until 1814. Quite short, it does indeed feel serious, intensely personal, disturbed, and angry – that is, until the coda of the last movement.

The *Allegro* first movement opens with a dramatic and furious F minor scale. After a silence this is followed by 3 bars of leaping, spiky octaves. The mood changes for a calmer theme introduced by the viola in a distant key. This material is then developed very fully in a terse and concentrated manner. Towards the end of the movement there are fortissimo arpeggios for first violin and cello. The viola then obsessively repeats the opening five note turn until the others join in. A repeat of the angry opening gradually dies down leaving the cello to calm the mood.

The cello starts the *Allegretto* with a quiet but deliberate downward scale of detached notes that are then joined by other instruments in a melancholy melody. In the next section the viola announces a highly chromatic fugal subject that is soon interrupted by the solo cello's downward march. Both sections are repeated throughout the movement but with increasingly intricate development.

The final cadence of the *Allegretto* is a pianissimo pause – this turns out to be the opening note of the *Allegro assai*. This is a rapid section of stormy dotted rhythms for all parts. The trio consists of the lower three parts playing a series of spectral chorale-like chords that are decorated restlessly by the first violin in quavers.

After repeating these sections the movement closes with the stormy dotted section played fortissimo.

The final movement starts with a short serious *Larghetto* in 2/4 time that merges into a dance-like *Allegretto agitato* in 6/8 time. This section ends leaving the second violin and viola playing repeated fortissimo semiquaver chords, whilst the first violin and cello add brief interjections before returning to the original material. These two sections are repeated in ingenious variants as the music quietens and finally comes to a halt with a pianissimo chord that feels unfinished. The dark and angry F minor mood simply evaporates as Beethoven launches into a very quick and light coda in F major, as if to say ‘I’ll just ignore my problems and get on with life’.

*(Duration: approx. 22 minutes)*

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## INTERVAL

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*(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)*

**RAVEL**  
**(1875-1937)**

**String Quartet in F major**

**Allegro moderato – très douce**  
**Scherzo – assez vif – très rythmé**  
**Très lent**  
**Vif et agité**

Debussy’s string quartet (1893) was a remarkable departure in style and now feels quintessentially French – but it threw a long shadow over Ravel. Ravel’s only quartet was completed in 1902 and dedicated to his teacher Fauré. Although it clearly owed a great deal to Debussy’s quartet, it also integrated several individual styles Ravel had used in his earlier compositions. In the cafés and newspapers the two quartets generated a furore that a century later seems extraordinary: both

quartets are towering masterpieces that have had an enormous influence on French music. Debussy's advice was 'In the name of the gods of music, and mine, do not touch a single note of what you have written in your quartet'.

The first movement of the quartet has the pure classical form of Haydn, so admired by Ravel. But the sensual language that Ravel uses comes from his own distinctive harmony and colouring. The first theme is a warm melody from the whole quartet. After a climax the first violin and viola play a similar melody two octaves apart with a rather ghostly effect.

The second movement starts with a lively pizzicato passage with a complicated rhythm that sounds like Javanese Gamelan music. Those who watched 'The Camomile Lawn' on TV will remember this sound well. The pizzicato continues in the cello and the violin plays an accompanied melody derived from the first movement. A very slow muted section develops with material heard earlier but in contrast to the lively opening section. Finally, with mutes off the lively pizzicato appears again to end the second movement.

The *Très lent* third movement is made from numerous episodes with different speeds, different dynamics, and both with and without mutes. It reflects on and develops material appearing in the other movements.

The final movement begins in a very agitated fashion. Again there are many episodes, some with 5/8 bars that unsettle the rhythm. Just before the explosive end it quotes the theme of the first movement.

*(Duration: approx. 31 minutes)*

*Programme notes © David Wharmby*

## ENDELLION QUARTET

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Having just celebrated its 40th anniversary the internationally renowned **Endellion Quartet** should need little introduction. They first performed for Ilkley Concert Club in 1985 but, incredibly, have only returned once, some 28 years ago on April 1st 1992! A truly warm welcome is surely guaranteed after such a lengthy absence. Due to shortage of space, what follows is a brief account of their rise to the top tier of quartet playing along with some words from the players themselves. More details can be found on Endellion's website.

In 1979 the Endellions came second in the inaugural City of Portsmouth International String Quartet Competition. This success was quite extraordinary considering the players had previously performed only twice in public! Bizarrely, one of those engagements was at 11 Downing Street, at the invitation of the Treasury Music Society. The following day the Labour government fell and Mrs Thatcher came to power. So this remarkable partnership of players, three of which are of the original line-up, pre-dates the Thatcher era! Only the chair of the second violin has suffered a change of occupants. First owned by Louise Williams, then James Clark, it was finally claimed by Ralph de Souza who has been a member of the quartet for the last 34 years!

After the competition final, BBC broadcasts followed, and engagements poured in from music societies and festivals across the country. Overseas touring soon enlarged the itinerary and 1983 saw the Endellion travel around Europe, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand.

Over the years BBC Proms performances and annual summer series at Wigmore Hall together with a prestigious Residency at Cambridge University which began in 1991, have been some of the features of Endellion's busy calendar.

In the mid-eighties the Endellion launched their formidable discography with a highly regarded box set of the Britten quartets for EMI. Amongst their many acclaimed recordings, the 2009 complete cycle of Beethoven string quartets, viola quintets, along with studies and fragments and many other rarely heard works must rank as the pinnacle of their achievement thus far.

The Endellion has worked with guest artists including the former Amadeus Quartet, Sir Thomas Allen, Joshua Bell, Michael Collins, Benjamin Grosvenor, Marc-André Hamelin, Stephen Hough, Steven Isserlis and Mitsuko Uchida.

Committed to new music, the 40th Anniversary has been marked by commissions from Sally Beamish, Prach Boondiskulchok, Jonathan Dove and Giles Swayne. In the course of their worldwide career, the Endellions have demonstrated a mix of traditional and new and have formed new ways to showcase string quartets by, for example, collaborating with poets such as Wendy Cope and Ruth Padel.

So, what of the future? 'Ever onwards', says Garfield Jackson, 'if we still feel we have things to offer. Playing quartets is like having a wonderful God to serve ... that's what makes it all worthwhile'.

**Andrew Wilkinson** *violin*: 'I was born in Glasgow and, like most Scots who live abroad, am inordinately patriotic. At the age of ten I became one of the first pupils at the Yehudi Menuhin School and at sixteen I began 4 years of foreign study, first in Switzerland then in Leningrad. In 1976 I won 2nd Prize in the Carl Flesch Competition and started a frantic life of solo playing and freelancing in London. For the first twenty years of the Endellion's existence I also led and directed the City of London Sinfonia, as well as guest directing other chamber orchestras including the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. I still get to direct orchestras in Britain and abroad, play the occasional solo and am a member of the Galini Trio with my wife, cellist, Shuna Wilson. I have two lovely sons, Fred and Finlay, who do everything they can to avoid having anything to do with classical music!'

**Ralph de Souza** *violin*: (writing in the third person) was born in Bombay and began violin lessons with his father, a doctor who was a self-taught violin fanatic. His other pupil was Ralph's brother, Harvey. Ralph's mother cannot stand the sound of the violin not only because there are violins and bows cluttering up all corners of the flat, but mainly because she 'lost' both her sons to musical careers in the West! Ralph grew up speaking English as it was the only language in common between his Chinese mother and Indian father. At the age of ten, Ralph was put on a plane and sent to study at the Yehudi Menuhin School, where he found himself sharing a room with Messrs. Garfield Jackson and Nigel Kennedy. Having survived this culture shock, he continued his studies at the Curtis Institute in USA. In 1977 he won the Royal Overseas League Competition in London and his solo career included appearances with Yehudi Menuhin. He joined the Endellion in 1986 and for the last dozen years has been Artistic Director of the 'Sangit' Music Festival in Bombay.

**Garfield Jackson** *viola*: 'I was born in London into a family of jazz trumpet players with a wide appreciation of music. At the age of seven I volunteered to start violin lessons at my local primary school. After 18 months I was accepted as a pupil at the Yehudi Menuhin School. After nine tempestuous years there, playing both violin and viola, I entered the Royal Academy of Music on a scholarship. Chamber music played a major part in my musical life throughout school and college so it was for me an almost seamless progression into professional string quartets. Apart from music I have many interests, mostly outdoors, including walking, gardening, boating and horse racing. Recently I've had to become an expert on electric fencing for my wife's horses!'

**David Waterman** *cello*: 'I was born into a musical family in Leeds. Music was practised all around me. After false starts with the piano and violin I discovered the cello at the age of nine and was relieved that no-one within the family was qualified to teach me! For most of my teens I was determined not to play music professionally. I studied philosophy for six years at Trinity College, Cambridge, where I became a Research Scholar, was awarded MA and PhD degrees and ended up as tutor to philosophy undergraduates. At the same time, I studied the cello privately with Martin Lovett, William Pleeth and Jane Cowan, and having immersed myself in quartet playing 'for fun', began to feel the irresistible urge to pursue it professionally, despite my teenage resolutions. I am very fortunate to play on a wonderful cello by J.B. Guardagnini which I jointly own and share with my great friend, Steven Isserlis.'

*(Biographical notes compiled and edited by Sarah Warnes)*

# CLUB NOTES

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## CONCERT DATABASE

Thanks to Tony Hudson and others our club has the most amazing concert database. Here you can learn everything about our music and artists over the last 74 fabulous seasons – viewing the full programme for each concert; virtually every item of music that has been performed; and every artist or group that has appeared at the Concert Club.

However, you may have observed over the last few months that the Concert Database on our website has had an ‘under construction’ notice. Due to various changes in the underlying technology of the previous database we have had to make a significant change and move from the old software platform to a new platform. As often with IT projects, it has taken longer than we expected!

The database is now live again and is accessible from our website and at the following address:

[concerts.ilkeleyconcertclub.org.uk](http://concerts.ilkeleyconcertclub.org.uk)

## SYMPATHY FOR OUR ARTISTS

Many of you have told me how much you enjoyed our last concert but you will not realise how close it came to not taking place at all! The problem was storm Ciara – which caused the flight booked by the Dutch violist, Roeland Jagers, to be cancelled three times so that he only met the others late on the night before the concert. They were then only able to rehearse together when they arrived in Ilkley after a long drive from Glasgow.

Such is the life of the peripatetic musician! We should be immensely grateful that they succeeded in performing – and delighting us with their music.

## THAT 75TH SEASON...

Among the other treats planned for next season are performances of two giants of the 20th century repertoire – Messiaen’s *Quartet for the end of time* and Bartok’s *Sonata for two pianos and percussion*.

Chris Skidmore  
Chair, Ilkley Concert Club

# RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

**Mendelssohn:** The Escher String Quartet on BIS 1960 (Hybrid CD at full price) produce a superbly integrated performance of the work with the usual BIS excellent sound quality. The String Quartet no. 12 and an early Quartet in E flat complete the disc. As an alternative, the Aurora Quartet on Naxos 8.550862 (medium price) give a rather more animated performance with the same programme.

**Beethoven:** The Elias String Quartet are proving very popular with the critics, and their performance of op 95, coupled with op 18 no. 3 and op 130, on Wigmore Hall Live – WHLIVE0086/2 (2 CDs at medium price), is no exception. As an alternative on Naxos 8.554181 (medium price), the Kodaly Quartet give a more traditional, but very effective interpretation. Beethoven's op 59 no. 1 'Razumovsky' completes the CD.

**Ravel:** One of the finest chamber music CDs to have come my way over many years, is by the Quatuor Ebène on Virgin 5 19045 2 (full price). The well filled CD is completed by the Debussy and Fauré Quartets. The Melos Quartet Stuttgart provide an excellent alternative on DGG 479 0529. The Debussy and Kodaly no. 2 Quartets complete the programme.

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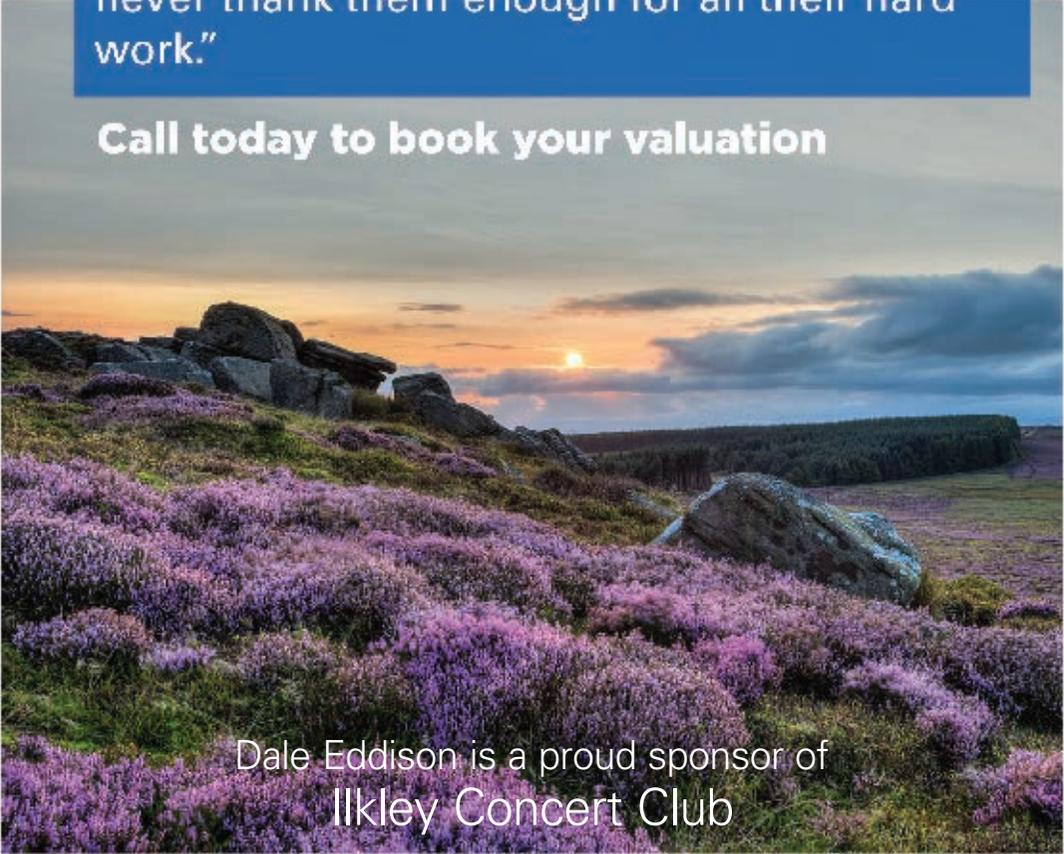
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