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King's Hall

Wednesday 12th April 2017

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ROBERT PLANE



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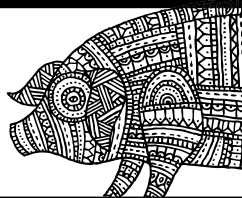
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TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

Haydn

String Quartet no 61 in D minor op 76 no 2

(Last performance at ICC 12/01/2005)

Bowen

Phantasy Quintet, for bass clarinet and string quartet, op 93

(First performance at ICC)

INTERVAL

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

Mozart

Clarinet Quintet in A major K581

(Last performance at ICC 18/05/2005)

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PROGRAMME NOTES

JOSEPH HAYDN
(1732-1809)

String Quartet in D minor op 76 no 2

Allegro

Andante o più tosto allegretto

Menuetto & Trio – Allegro ma non troppo

Vivace assai

According to Hoboken who catalogued his compositions, Haydn wrote 68 string quartets, of which 46 were assessed as ‘great’ by Hans Keller, whereas his contemporaries Mozart and Beethoven wrote 10 and 16 ‘great’ quartets respectively. Haydn is rightly known as the father of the string quartet. Much more than that, he was an innovator who, over 43 years, developed the form that has come to be regarded as a true test of the composer’s art. In ICC’s 71 Seasons (some 500 concerts) Haydn quartets have been played in only 28 concerts and only 18 of the 46 ‘great’ quartets have been heard at ICC. Why is this? Clearly part of the reason is that there are just too many to take in. That is a dilemma for programmers because amongst the ‘great’ quartets there are so many gems to delight audiences and players alike. The ‘Fifths’ quartet was published in 1797 some six years after the death of Mozart and a couple of years before Beethoven composed the op 18 quartets.

In the first two bars the first violin plays the minims | A D | E A | – these two falling fifths then appear in many different guises: upside down, syncopated between the four instruments, in different keys with different intervals all having the same four minim pattern. Listen to the many variants of those first four violin notes that the composer managed to invent. The slow movement is a set of increasingly elaborate variations on a simple melody. The so-called ‘Witches Minuet’ is unique in that the two violins play a rather sinister tune, followed just three beats later by the viola and cello playing the very same notes. This *canon* or round is about as far from a graceful minuet as one can imagine. In several of Haydn’s quartets it pleased him to make his minuets almost non-danceable – maybe that is why Haydn started to use *scherzo* (joke) rather than minuet for 3 in a bar

movements. The 4th movement is *vivace assai* (very lively) and is a characteristically exhilarating Haydn finale starting, as the first movement did, in D minor with memories of those four minims, before breaking like sunlight into bright D major.

(Duration: 20 minutes)

**YORK BOWEN
(1884-1961)**

**Phantasy Quintet,
for bass clarinet and string quartet, op 93**

Born in London, the son of a whisky distiller, Edwin York Bowen made his concert debut as a pianist at the age of eight and, whilst still a teenager, was called the ‘most remarkable of the young British composers’ by Camille Saint-Saëns. He performed his own first piano concerto under Henry Wood at the Proms in 1905. Bowen later became a professional horn player, performing in the Band of the Scots Guards in the First World War, as well as a prolific composer. He has been dubbed the ‘English Rachmaninov’; his works, written in a rich, late Romantic style that fell out of fashion by the 1930s, included four symphonies and four piano concertos. Many of his most important compositions remain unpublished, but some of his chamber music (including his greatest achievement, the 24 Preludes for solo piano) has been revived in the past decade.

The term ‘Phantasy’ requires some explanation. In 1905, the industrialist and amateur violinist, Walter Willson Cobbett, organised an annual competition to stimulate interest in English chamber music. A ‘Phantasy’ was Cobbett’s reinvention of the fancies and fantasias of Byrd, Purcell and Gibbons. Entrants were required to compose a ‘Phantasy’ piece of about 10-15 minutes in one continuous movement with contrasting sections and which treated the instruments equally in a loose, rhapsodic style. Cobbett hoped that such a piece would appeal to the ‘untrained listener.’ Winners of the competition included Frank Bridge and Vaughan Williams and, in 1932, the year in which Bowen’s quintet for the unusual combination of string quartet and bass clarinet

was premiered, the Cobbett Prize was awarded to the 19 year old Benjamin Britten's Phantasy String Quintet. In Bowen's quintet, the dark tones of the bass clarinet weave in and out of the unfolding themes in a style reminiscent of the autumnal colours of late Brahms.

(Duration: 10 minutes)

INTERVAL

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

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756-1791)

Clarinet Quintet
in A major K581

Allegro

Larghetto

Menuetto

Allegretto con variazioni

Three days after the storming of the Bastille in Paris, on 17 July 1789, Mozart wrote to his benefactor and fellow Viennese freemason, Michael Puchberg, 'The bad is temporary, the good is surely lasting ... I would not need such a large sum if it were not for the appalling costs regarding the cure of my sick wife ... I beg you to show your friendship and brotherly love for me by sending me whatever funds you can spare at once.' Puchberg, hit hard by the inflation rampant in Austria that year, send Mozart one third of the requested sum.

Mozart's reputation in Vienna had sunk to a new low; his own concerts were woefully undersubscribed and he was reduced to composing unattributed arias for insertion into operas by more fashionable composers such as Paisiello and Soler. His wife, Constanze, was constantly sick and the couple's fifth child would die an hour after her birth on 16 November 1789. To make matters worse, Mozart was,

despite his own mounting money problems, a soft touch to his sponging friend, the principal clarinetist of the Imperial Court Orchestra, Anton Stadler (another freemason) who borrowed large sums from the composer even though his own income was much greater.

And yet, out of this wretchedness Mozart fashioned two great masterpieces for clarinet, the Concerto and tonight's Quintet, both works inspired by Stadler's impeccable artistry. The first movement has three themes which are developed separately and are then brought together in a virtuosic recapitulation. The clarinet takes centre stage in the *Larghetto*, the string instruments muted. Unusually, the *Menuetto* contains not one but two trio sections, the first for strings alone and the second a country dance or *Ländler* for the clarinet. The last movement starts with a lilting theme followed by five variations and a coda. The third variation is a deeply melancholy solo for viola (which Mozart himself probably played at the premiere) whilst the fourth brings pyrotechnics from the clarinet. There follows an *adagio* before a final *allegro* brings back all the instruments in the glowing coda.

The Quintet was first performed at a concert for the benefit of musician's widows and orphans in December 1789, its movements played between sections of an oratorio, *The Birth of Apollo*, by Righini, a composer regarded by Mozart as a plagiarising, 'monstrous thief.'

As the great Mozart scholar, H.C. Robbins Landon, observed, 'If there is any work which sums up this unhappy year, this [Quintet] must be it – parts of it seem to reflect a state of aching despair but the whole music is clothed not in some violent minor key, but in radiant A major. The music smiles through the tears.' Mozart died in December 1791 at the age of 35. Stadler left the Imperial Orchestra and became the first clarinetist who was able to support himself freelance. Constanze became a highly effective businesswoman; she eventually paid back Puchberg in full and outlived her husband by 50 years. The Clarinet Quintet has become one of the best loved works in the chamber repertoire; 'the good is surely lasting' indeed.

(Duration: 32 minutes)

Programme notes (Haydn) © D. Wharmby

Programme notes (Mozart & Bowen) © C.N. Lane

THE SACCONI STRING QUARTET

Ben Hancox *violin*
Robin Ashwell *viola*

Hannah Dawson *violin*
Cara Berridge *cello*

Named after the outstanding twentieth century Italian luthier and restorer, Simone Sacconi, tonight's quartet was founded in 2001. Recognised for its compelling ensemble and imaginative approach, its four founder members continue to demonstrate a shared passion for string quartet repertoire, infectiously reaching out to audiences with energy and enthusiasm.

During the 2015/16 season the **Sacconi Quartet** focussed on the works of Jonathan Dove, Graham Fitkin and John McCabe, culminating in CDs of all three composers. Their commission, with Mark Padmore, of Jonathan Dove's new song cycle, *In Damascus*, with words by Syrian poet, Al Safar, was premiered at Aldeburgh, London and Folkestone. Other highlights of last season included return performances at William Walton's house on the island of Ischia, Italy, and collaborations with Freddy Kempf, Charles Owen, Roger Chase, Pierre Doumenge, Miloš Karadaglić, and many others. The quartet also recorded John McCabe's Horn Quintet with David Pyatt, (the other one, not ours!!)

Ten years ago, the group founded the Sacconi Chamber Music Festival in Folkestone. It has expanded year on year with exciting collaborations and challenging programming. The Sacconi's recording of Beethoven op 132 and Mendelssohn op 13 is the first commercial pairing of these closely related works and was recently released on Sacconi Records to a five star review. Their previous release, a disc of Czech quartets, was received with widespread critical acclaim, broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and tipped as a classical chart 'Hot Shot' by Classic FM.

An example of the group's ingenuity is the launching of HEARTFELT. A radical interpretation of Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor, op 132, HEARTFELT pushed the boundaries of chamber music performance through combining sound, light and touch, for a truly unique experience, in which the audience members connected with each performer's heartbeat through holding robotic 'hearts'. (See www.heartfelt.org.uk)

The Sacconi is Quartet in Association at the Royal College of Music and Associate Artist at the Bristol Old Vic. Robin is indebted to Ellen Solomon for the use of his viola. Ben, Hannah and Cara have all been generously loaned their instruments by the Royal Society of Musicians.

ROBERT PLANE

Today is Robert Plane's second visit to Ilkley. He was last here in 2011 with the Dante String Quartet, and it is a pleasure to welcome him back with the Sacconi Quartet, Robert is well known for his commitment to the English clarinet repertoire. When here in 2011, Stanford's Fantasy No 1 was included in the programme. Tonight a much-anticipated performance of York Bowen's Phantasy Quintet for Bass Clarinet is 'on the menu'. Amongst his many recordings of the magnificent English repertoire, that of Finzi's Clarinet Concerto is considered a benchmark, and is still a regular feature on both Radio 3 and Classic FM twenty years after its initial release. He has recorded discs of music by Bax, John Ireland, Howells, Alwyn, Holbrooke, Robin Milford and Stanford, including his clarinet concerto with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Since winning the prestigious Royal Overseas League Music Competition in 1992, Robert's solo and chamber career has taken him to venues across Europe and beyond. He has performed Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in Madrid's Auditorio Nacional de Musica with the City of London Sinfonia, with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra on tour in USA and throughout China with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, during which his performance at Beijing's National Centre for Performing Arts was broadcast live to a television audience of 6 million. In 2011 Robert made his solo debut at the BBC Proms in Simon Holt's Double Concerto, *Centauromachy*. He has given world premieres of Piers Helliwell's *Agricolas*, the clarinet concerto by Diane Burrell and Nicola LeFanu's Concertino.

Robert has performed and recorded with the Gould Piano Trio for over twenty years and their disc of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* was hailed by Gramophone magazine as 'the finest modern version' of the work. Among the many string quartets, he has collaborated with are the Maggini, Carducci, Skampa, Brodsky, Tippett and Cavaleri.

Alongside his solo and chamber work, Robert has held the position of principal clarinet with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, the CBSO and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He has played as a guest principal with the Royal Concertgebouw, the LSO and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He also teaches at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and has given masterclasses at the Royal College of Music, Trinity Laban, Birmingham Conservatoire, the Beijing Conservatoire and the San Francisco Conservatory.

Robert is married to the violinist Lucy Gould and lives in Cardiff with their three children. In his spare time (!) he enjoys distance running and is a regular marathon runner.
(*Biographical notes compiled by Sarah Warnes*)

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8 November 2017 **TRIO CON BRIO COPENHAGEN**

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Guide USA

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'... mezzo Stotijn offers a beautiful voice with consummate musical intelligence ...' La Scena

Musicale *'Julius Drake is one of Britain's most sought-after pianists for chamber music and Lieder'*

BBC Magazine

10 January 2018 **RUISI QUARTET**

Haydn, Pavel Fischer, Britten & Debussy

Winners of the Royal Philharmonic Society award for Young British String Players delivering

performances that are *'strikingly immediate, committed and direct.'* Chichester Observer, 2014

14 February 2018 **SEPTURA BRASS ENSEMBLE**

'Bridging la Manche' Josquin des Prez, Robert Parsons, J-P Rameau, Purcell, Debussy, Parry, Ravel & Vaughan Williams

'Septura, probably today's leading European brass group ... sheer unabashed virtuosity. Absolutely fabulous.' David Denton Yorkshire Post

14 March 2018 **SCHUBERT ENSEMBLE OF LONDON** piano & strings

Bruch & Dvořák piano quintets & Charlotte Bray piano quartet

The Schubert Ensemble have decided to bring their 35-year career to a close at the end of June 2018.

Their fourth visit to ICC by this distinguished ensemble will be therefore sadly be their last.

11 April 2018 **ALINA IBRAGIMOVA & CEDRIC TIBERGHIE**

Brahms: the three violin sonatas

'... what you noticed first here was a bowing technique that approached the supernatural in its expressive variety. A model partner, Mr. Tiberghien provided muted shadings and prickly outbursts ideally matched to Ms. Ibragimova's manner.' New York Times

2 May 2018 **TRIO APACHES** piano trio & **O DUO** percussion group

Rachmaninov trio, percussion compositions by O Duo, Granados, Glass, plus Shostakovich 15th symphony arranged for trio and percussion.

Trio Apaches return with percussion group O Duo with a very unusual programme. *'Shostakovich's Second Trio, surely a masterpiece, received a superb performance [by the Apaches].'* Geoffrey Kinder, Ilkley Gazette. O Duo are *'... brimming with style and panache.'* Daily Telegraph

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Mozart: An old favourite, that in my opinion has not been surpassed, is on Hyperion CDA66199 (full-price). Thea King (basset clarinet) and the Gabrielli String Quartet give superb readings of the Quintet and the Clarinet Concerto, the latter with the English Chamber orchestra conducted by Jeffrey Tate. A good budget alternative has Karl Leister (clarinet) and the Berlin Soloists on Apex 0927443502. The coupling is the Brahms Clarinet Quintet.

Bowen: Tonight's soloist, Robert Plane (bass clarinet), with Mia Cooper (violin), David Adams (viola) and the Gould Piano Trio, features on a well recorded Chandos CD-CHAN 10805 (full-price). The disc includes other Bowen works: – Clarinet Sonata, Rhapsody Trio, Piano trios in D minor and E minor. As a mid-price alternative, Timothy Lines (bass clarinet) and the Archaeus Quartet appear on Naxos 8.571366. Bowen's String Quartets nos 2 and 3 complete the disc.

Haydn: The Takács Quartet perform all six op 76 Quartets in lively and understanding performances on a naturally recorded Decca two disc budget priced set – 475 6213. For a slightly warmer performance the Kodaly Quartet play the first three op 76 Quartets on Naxos 8.550314 (medium-price). The Kodaly Quartet have successfully recorded all the Haydn Quartets, and they are at their best in op 76.

Raymond Waud. rayward@gmail.com

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major, K375 |
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Alauda Quartet

**Rescheduled from
14th October 2016**



The Alauda Quartet was formed at the Royal Academy of Music in London in 2011. An internationally diverse ensemble, the quartet hails from four different corners of Europe but shares a unifying passion for chamber music and a strong desire to explore the repertoire of the string quartet.

Programme

Haydn	Quartet in C Op.74 No.1
Mozart	Quartet in B flat K.458 <i>The Hunt</i>
Mendelssohn	Quartet in F minor Op.80

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