



DORIC STRING QUARTET

Haydn

String quartet in C major, op 50 no. 2

Beethoven

String quartet in F major, op 18 no. 1

Wednesday 8th December 2021

King's Hall

PROGRAMME NOTES

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN
(1732-1809)

String quartet in C major, op 50 no. 2

Vivace

Adagio cantabile

Menuetto: Allegretto

Finale: Allegro assai

The classical string quartet as we know it today is chiefly the creation of Haydn from the 1750s. He is known as the ‘father’ of the string quartet because he developed the genre into a mature form, one that influenced both Mozart and Beethoven. Mozart honoured Haydn’s mastery of the genre in his own six *Haydn* quartets, published in 1795 with a dedication to ‘... my dearest friend’.

Haydn’s six opus 50 string quartets are commonly known as the *Prussian Quartets* owing to their dedication to King Frederick William II of Prussia, who was a keen amateur cellist. Haydn wrote the quartets between 1782 and 1785 but he was notoriously casual in business matters and sold them almost simultaneously to his Viennese publisher Artaria and, without Artaria’s knowledge, to William Forster in London who published them as opus 44. They were eventually published as opus 50 by Artaria in 1787. In the course of its history, the opus 50 set was split up and the original manuscripts of quartets 3-6 did not surface until 1982, when they were discovered in Melbourne, Australia.

The opus 50 set occupies an important place in Haydn’s huge output of sixty-eight quartets as he had written nothing in the genre for five years after his opus 33 set (1781-2). The influence of Mozart’s *Haydn* quartets is clear. Each of the six quartets has four movements, conventionally arranged with a minuet and trio forming the third movement. Haydn had to respond to the challenge of incorporating a cello part suitable for an amateur player, so the first quartet begins with two bars from the solo cello while the *Adagio* of the second quartet has an elaborate cello part. Boccherini and Mozart were also commissioned to write quartets for King Frederick William and both were careful to give prominence to the cello.

The second quartet is representative of the entire set and shows the resourcefulness of Haydn’s creativity. The first movement – *Vivace* – is based on two main subjects, the first chromatic and rhythmically strong and the second characterised by a rich harmonic digression from the principal key of C major. Both these subjects are explored in the development section before moving back to the recapitulation in the tonic key.

The second movement – *Adagio cantabile* – resembles a serenade, with short phrases over an accompaniment. Its central section features a five-bar passage for the cello, almost certainly specially written for King William. The first violin is also prominent with an elaborate solo as the movement draws to its end.

The *Menuetto: Allegretto* is the turning point of the quartet, the *Menuetto* looking back to the serious first movement and the *Allegretto* forward to the light-hearted finale. To the conventional minuet and trio structure (theme, development, recapitulation), Haydn also adds an eighteen-bar coda.

The final movement – *Finale: Allegro assai* – is in sonata form, with a simple first theme, heard in the first two bars. Chromaticism links all four movements of the work and the fourth movement is no exception featuring, as it does, fast-moving chromatic interaction between the four parts which covers the total span of the ensemble from the bottom C of the cello to the top C (five octaves higher) on the violin.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN String quartet in F major, op 18 no. 1
(1770-1827)**

Allegro con brio

Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Allegro

A patron, Count Apponyi, first suggested that 25 year old Beethoven compose a string quartet in 1795 but it was not until the autumn of 1798 that he began work on his op 18 set. Although he had established a considerable reputation as a composer of chamber music and piano sonatas (including the *Pathetique* op 13), it seems that Beethoven hesitated before the achievements of Haydn and Mozart in the genre and, unusually, initially he lacked confidence in the finished work. He wrote to his friend, Karl Amenda, in July 1801 to ask that he refrain from showing anyone his copy of the score of op 18 no. 1 ‘because I have greatly changed it, having only just learned how to write quartets properly.’ The revision left the structure of the quartet unaltered but every bar shows changes in instrumentation, dynamics and harmonisation.

Whilst the quartet pays an obvious tribute to those of Haydn (who had published his own most celebrated set, the op 76, in 1797) there is also, especially in the driving, impetuous rhythms of the outer movements and the raw emotional charge of the *Adagio*, a clear sense of Beethoven seeking to move on from the refined classical structures of his teacher. The op 18 no. 1 was the second quartet to be composed but, perhaps because it is the grandest and most expressive, it appeared first on publication.

The first movement bristles with suppressed energy and explosive contrasts. Beethoven told Amenda that the extraordinary slow movement, the only one in the opus 18 set in a minor key, depicts the tomb scene in Act 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*. Grief is certainly present but also an early appearance of what would become a familiar Beethovenian trope, the individual’s struggle against Fate. The scherzo opens with a sturdy yet witty dance, the trio hammering out a four-bar phrase against swirling scales on the first violin. The effervescent finale contrasts a skittish initial theme with a more spiky second idea which emerges *legato* in the cello and is then transformed into a fugue-like passage in the development before Beethoven brings both themes together to round off matters in style.

Last performance at ICC 18/06/1991

Duration: approx. 30 minutes

DORIC STRING QUARTET

This is a welcome return for the Doric String Quartet who first came to Ilkley in 2012. **Alex Redington**, first violin and cellist **John Myerscough**, who met as 8 and 9 year olds and started to play quartets together in their mid-teens, remain the core of the quartet. Joined by **Ying Xue**, as second violin, and viola player **Hélène Clement** (who we last saw in Ilkley when she came with the Benyounes Quartet in 2019 to perform Mozart Quintets) the Doric has flourished as a leading quartet of world renown, performing in all the major concert halls and festivals.

Highlights of the current season include returns to Stockholm Concert Hall, Haydn String Quartet Festival and Festspiele Mecklenburg Vorpommern, with other tours taking the Quartet to Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Israel. The Doric will also perform John Adams' *Absolute Jest* with the Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Mainz as well as returning to the Wigmore Hall for performances including a two-concert cycle of the complete Bartok Quartets. The Quartet returns to the US for its annual tour, where they will revisit their partnership with Jonathan Biss for performances including Philadelphia, Boston and Dallas. In Europe, collaborations include performances in Germany and the Netherlands with Cuarteto Quiroga as well as rescheduled performances with Alina Ibragimova and Cedric Tiberghien at the Vienna Konzerthaus and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie.

Currently at the peak of their careers, recordings by the Doric of quartets by Mozart, Haydn and Britten have received high praise and the quartet members are all Professors at the Royal Academy. Once again we are privileged in Ilkley to hear such outstanding musicians.

NEXT CONCERT – 19th JANUARY 2022

Two identical performances

6pm (Doors open 5:30pm) | 8:15pm (Doors open 7:45pm)

BENJAMIN APPL baritone and **SIMON LEPPER** piano

Ilkley Concert Club

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