

# *Ilkley Concert Club*



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## **CONSONE QUARTET**



**Wednesday 8th March 2023**

**King's Hall**

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# PROGRAMME

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## **Haydn**

String Quartet in E flat major  
op 33 no. 2 'The Joke'

## **Fauré**

String Quartet in E minor, op 121

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INTERVAL

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## **Mendelssohn**

String Quartet in E flat major, op 44 no. 3

# PROGRAMME NOTES

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**JOSEPH HAYDN**  
(1732-1809)

**String Quartet in E flat major**  
**op 33 no. 2 'The Joke'**

Allegro moderato

Scherzo

Largo sostenuto

Rondo: presto

Haydn is popularly known as the 'Father of the String Quartet'. During his lifetime he was regarded throughout Europe as the unrivalled master of the genre, writing more than 70 quartets in all with 30 of these between 1762 and 1772. After about 1770 he became much engaged with orchestral writing and opera and did not return to the quartet genre until 1781.

Between 1781 and 1790 Haydn completed twenty-five quartets, comprising four sets of six and one single work. In early 1782 he wrote to three potential patrons saying that his most recent six quartets (the op 33) were written 'in a new and special way', eventually dedicating them to one of these patrons, the Grand Duke Paul of Russia, so giving rise to their sobriquet 'the Russian'. He also sent a copy to Mozart who was so impressed that, as a reciprocal gift, he wrote the set of six quartets that now bear Haydn's name.

Several of Haydn's quartets have been given nicknames: for example, 'The Bird' and 'The Frog' and tonight's quartet 'The Joke'. It is so named, according to Donald Tovey, because of the humorous way in which Haydn won a wager that 'the ladies will always begin talking before the music is finished' by trying (and presumably failing!) to spring a surprise in the final movement. What Haydn meant though by 'a new and special way' of composition was not humour but the replacement of the conventional minuet and trio by a scherzo and a fresh approach to thematic material that breaks the themes up into small motifs that can be combined and reworked in many ways. This is evident in the first movement of op 33 no 2 where the lively opening theme fragments and re-forms throughout.

The *Scherzo* still follows the older minuet format and resembles a

folk dance in triple metre with a contrasting tuneful trio. In the charming expressive *Largo*, Haydn wrote his first lengthy viola solo in a quartet (perhaps as a nod to Mozart, whose favourite stringed instrument it was), but it is in the coda of the fast-moving *Rondo* that the joke occurs for suddenly there is a grand pause followed by a portentous *adagio*. After another pause, the rondo theme is reprised, with every two bars separated a bar's silence. This pattern continues until ... has the quartet actually come to an end? Or is the joke finally on us?

*Last performance at ICC 08/01/1997*

Duration: approx. 15 minutes

**GABRIEL FAURÉ**  
**(1845-1924)**

**String Quartet in E minor, op 121**

Allegro moderato

Andante

Allegro

Gabriel Fauré was one of the most important and influential composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was Director of the Paris Conservatoire between 1905 and 1920 where he inspired a generation of French composers, including Ravel. The E minor op 121 is the only quartet that Fauré wrote for strings alone and it is his final work. Until he actually began its composition he had always maintained that pure string quartet writing was too difficult, and his chamber music hitherto had invariably included the piano.

Fauré customarily left Paris for the summer and, in 1923, went to Annecy. From there, in a letter to his wife, we are given a clue to his reluctance to approach the string quartet genre: 'I have begun a quartet for strings, without piano. This is a genre which Beethoven made famous and makes all those who are not Beethoven really afraid of it.' He worked on the quartet for a year, first sporadically and then intensively as it approached completion, eventually finishing it in September 1924. By this time his health had deteriorated and his hearing loss made any music sound very distorted so, although the quartet was premièred before he died, he refused the offer of a private performance and never heard it played. The work was finally published in 1925.

The first movement to be completed was the *Andante*, written while in Annecy, and this movement sets the tone for the entire quartet

which, overall, is serious, meditative and reflective. He wrote the first movement on his return to Paris, using two themes from an abandoned violin concerto of 1878, and the quartet was finally finished in the summer of 1824.

The first movement, in sonata form, begins with a sombre theme on the viola which is answered by the violin. The development section is an interplay of scales and thematic fragments with the recapitulation omitting the original viola theme. The *Andante* is not constrained by any traditional form but makes its way through what the French critic Nectoux calls ‘...variations of light-play’ with constantly changing dynamics and subtle harmonies that never resolve quite as we expect. The final *Allegro*, also in sonata form, is scherzo-like and brings the quartet to a lively and more cheerful E major conclusion.

*Last performance at ICC 02/12/1981*

Duration: approx. 24 minutes

## INTERVAL

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

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN**  
**(1809-1847)**

**String Quartet in E flat major**  
**op 44 no. 3**

Allegro vivace

Scherzo: assai leggiero vivace

Adagio

Molto allegro con fuoco

In a perceptive tribute to Mendelssohn, Schumann wrote in 1840, ‘He is the Mozart of the nineteenth century ... [he] sees through the contradictions of the age and for the first time reconciles them’. Mozart and Mendelssohn certainly had much in common; both were child prodigies and keyboard virtuosos, both left a formidable body of masterpieces and both died in their thirties. They also both

succeeded in combining their existing styles with the new musical ideas and changes that were coming into Classicism on the one hand and Romanticism on the other. Mendelssohn always preferred to look back to his predecessors – Mozart, Bach and Beethoven – and build his individual style on their established forms and working methods, achieving a fusion between the past and present in his own early Romantic compositions.

Mendelssohn began writing chamber music while very young, completing his first string quartet in 1821. Three string quartets followed between 1823 and 1829 and it was about this time that he began an intensive study of Beethoven's quartets, clearly modelling his own op 12 and op 13 on two of Beethoven's last works (op 130 and op 131).

After a creative crisis between 1830 and 1836, he was reinvigorated by his appointment at the Leipzig Gewandhaus in 1835-36 followed by his marriage in 1837. He also returned to chamber music in that year and began writing the three string quartets op 44, one of the great achievements of his mature period. In op 44, with no direct references to Beethoven and the past, Mendelssohn finally found his own unique quartet voice. The set was completed in 1838, published in 1839 and enthusiastically received.

The E flat major quartet opens robustly with one of the longest movements in Mendelssohn's chamber output. In classical sonata form with a significant coda, its rich orchestral texture is constructed through a myriad of small motifs that grow together, with independence and interest in every part. A *Scherzo* is always a Mendelssohnian signature movement, and, in this quartet, is a rondo in which the two episodes build up into a complex web of sound, as in a Bach fugue. The lovely *Adagio* is in a simple A-B-A form with a repeated note motif that underpins the melodic fragments that shift from instrument to instrument and the quartet concludes with a fiery *Allegro* that recalls both the *Scherzo* and Mendelssohn's celebrated and youthful Octet, also in E flat.

*First performance at ICC*

Duration: approx. 30 minutes  
(c) E. A. Keith and C. N. Lane

# CONSONE STRING QUARTET

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*The Consone Quartet are a young string quartet with a really big future. They play with perfect intonation, tremendous attack, and impeccable historical style. All the four instruments work together with such intelligence and imagination, that I would happily listen to them every day.*

Sir Roger Norrington

The **Consone Quartet** was formed at the Royal College of Music and launched professionally in 2015. That same year the quartet was awarded two prizes at the York Early Music International Young Artists Competition and a place on the EEEmerging Scheme in France, a large scale European cooperation project promoting the emergence of new talent in early music. They went on to win the Royal Overseas League Ensemble Prize the following year. In 2019 the Consone Quartet was the first period instrument quartet to become BBC New Generation Artists, specialising in classical and early romantic repertoire. Last year they were awarded a prestigious Borletti Buitoni fellowship.

The Consone Quartet has performed in concert halls and festivals across UK including Wigmore Hall and St John's, Smith Square in London, the Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Brighton and Buxton festivals. The English Haydn Festival and the Brighton and York Early Music Festivals have been loyal supporters and regularly host the group. Further afield they have appeared at festivals across Europe and in 2018 they toured South America. Just last month they made their debut in Canada.

The Consone's debut recording explored music by Haydn and Mendelssohn and was described by the Strad magazine as an album *that instantly leaps out of the stereo at you as something special*. They are currently recording the complete string quartets of Mendelssohn.

Music education is a core interest of the quartet and they have worked with students at the Royal College of Music, Chetham's School of Music in Manchester and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as Hans Keller fellows from 2020 to 2022.

**Agata Daraskaite** *violin* enjoys a busy and varied performing career on both modern and period instruments. Of Lithuanian-Polish descent she studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal College of Music, where, as a winner of the concerto competition, she performed Berg's Violin Concerto with Edward Gardner conducting. She graduated with Distinction, winning the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Rosebowl which she received from the then HRH Prince Charles.

Agata's love for the sound worlds created by gut strings and the immense chamber music repertoire led to the creation of the Consone Quartet to explore the classical and romantic repertoire on gut strings. From 2013 to 2019 Agata was a member of the Kremerata Baltica Chamber Orchestra led by Gidon Kremer with which she toured widely, visiting Europe, the Middle East, the Far East and North and South America. As well as playing with the Consone Quartet, Agata's current projects include a cycle of Beethoven's sonatas with her duo partner, pianist James Cheung, and freelancing with ensembles such as the Academy of Ancient Music, Solomon's Knot, La Serenissima, Florilegium, Aurora Orchestra, the 12 Ensemble and the London Contemporary Orchestra.



**Magdalena Loth-Hill** *violin* began her studies locally in Cumbria, progressing to Chetham's School of Music and on to the Royal College of Music. While there she was the concerto soloist in Bach's E major and Double Concertos and led the RCM Baroque and Classical orchestras under various eminent conductors including Christopher Hogwood. She graduated with first class honours and went on to gain a Master's degree with Distinction. She was awarded a Junior Fellowship at RCM, a post she held while studying for an Artist Diploma in baroque violin.

Magdalena has toured across Europe and North and South America as concerto soloist and recitalist. She has recorded with the Academy of Ancient Music and the English Concert. She joined Florilegium to record their acclaimed 25th Anniversary CD and performs with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, La Serenissima, the London Handel Orchestra, English Baroque Soloists and Ex Cathedra.

Magdalena plays a G B Guadagnini composite violin generously on loan from a private sponsor and a late 17th century Venetian instrument by an unknown maker.

**Elitsa Bogdanova** *viola* started her musical studies in her home country of Bulgaria at the National Music School in Sofia. After moving to London she completed her BMus and MMus degrees at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama studying with Rachel Roberts (who played for Ilkley Concert Club last month!). During her time at the Guildhall she developed a keen interest in historical performance.

As well as her busy schedule with the Consone Quartet, Elitsa is actively freelancing in the UK, dividing her time between chamber orchestras and smaller ensembles. On period instruments she has worked with the London Handel Orchestra, Florilegium, the Academy of Ancient Music, the Hanover Band and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Elitsa is also the principal viola of La Serenissima and regularly performs with the 12 Ensemble. She has also worked with the LSO, London Sinfonietta, Aurora Orchestra and others.

**George Ross** *cello* was a student at the Purcell School studying with Alexander Boyarsky. With success in several competitions he was given the Pierre Fournier prize in 2009 and awarded a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, continuing to work with Boyarsky on modern cello and Richard Tunnicliffe on baroque.

George has performed at the Wigmore Hall as soloist and in chamber groups on many occasions, as well as at many other prestigious venues in London. He joined the Chilingirian Quartet for a performance of Brahms Sextet and the Sacconi Quartet at Cadogan Hall. He has also worked with the Locrian Ensemble and the Adderbury Ensemble. The founder of the Consone Quartet, George is also busy as a continuo player, recently performing with the Ballo Baroque ensemble in Germany, Les Bougies Baroques in Malta, the Herschel Ensemble in the London Handel Festival, the Lawes Baroque Players, the Carillon Choir and Florilegium.

George is currently playing Kai-Thomas Roth's copy of a Testore cello (1700) and also has the privilege of playing a John Corsby cello (1828) kindly loaned by the Cherubim Trust.

# CLUB NOTES

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## **A view from the past**

A recent appeal for items missing from the Club's records yielded an unexpected gift, which gives an interesting slant on the Club in the 1960s. A current member who was then a new volunteer has preserved a record of the concerts in the 1965/66 season – programmes, reviews and personal experiences and reflections.

This was clearly a much more formal era when the 'artistes' were expected to dine with the Chairman of the Club after the performance. The chairman in this case was the formidable Dr Gott who so terrified the Polish pianist, André Tchaikowsky, reducing him to monosyllables, that he begged to be relieved of the duty. When this was arranged, Gott was by no means put out, confiding that he couldn't 'be bothered with such highly strung young artists'. Our friend then agreed to take the pianist back to Craiglands, where he was staying, and was lured into a night-time walk to the Cow and Calf, returning to his bed at 1 am!

Although our hospitality volunteers do still have to deal with awkward moments in supporting the players, such as last month's playing injury causing a complete rearrangement of the programme, making them welcome seldom if ever extends to late night walks!

## **Last month's concert and the aftermath**

I am sure that we were all tremendously grateful to Rachel Roberts and Gemma Rosefield for the impromptu concert they put together for us last month in the course of a couple of hours. We will hope to see them back in a future season under more relaxed conditions.

Some of you will have been surprised the following morning by BBC 3 Breakfast presenter, Petroc Trelawney, retelling the story of the night's events, courtesy of Nigel Walsh, who attended the concert. It also gave those of us who were listening a chance to hear again the Vieuxtemps viola *Capriccio* which Rachel played on the night. The only shame was that Petroc didn't name the Ilkley Concert Club!

Chris Skidmore, Chair

# NEXT CONCERT

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**WEDNESDAY 12 APRIL 2023**

**Introductory Talk 7:00pm**

**Concert 8:00pm**

**RACHEL PODGER violin**

**VOCES8 vocal ensemble**



*A Guardian Angel*

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**Members**

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