



T B S



Zoë Beyers - violin

Ian Watson - violin

Carol Ella - viola

Richard Jenkinson - cello

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Programme

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

String Quartet in D major, Op. 76 No. 2 "Fifths"

*Allegro; Andante o più tosto allegretto;
Meno Mosso - Allegro ma non troppo; Vivace assai*

Written in 1797, this quartet shows Haydn's quartet craftsmanship to be virtually unsurpassable. The characteristic feature of the **first movement** is the opening motif, a pair of falling fifths, which give the quartet its name. The descending fifth motif occurs more than eighty times because Haydn constantly changes its mood, its expression, and its meaning.

The D-major key and different rhythm of the **second movement** provide a strong contrast with the opening one. The overall format of the movement is A-B-A. The central section is in the minor key, and the repeat of the first section is as a variation in which the first violin is prominent.

The **third movement** is known as the Witches' Minuet. Again, the mood changes. The minuet is a two-voice canon between the two violins and the viola paired with the cello. The serious energy and vigour of the minuet contrasts strongly with the trio which is the major key, although this is cleverly hidden at first. The oscillation between major and minor keys is noteworthy. The **finale** is much influenced by folk music, and the syncopated rhythm and the use of intervals characteristic of Hungarian music make for a lively conclusion.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

String Quartet No. 16 in F major, Op. 135

*Allegretto; Vivace; Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo;
Grave, ma non troppo tratto - Allegro*

Beethoven's last five string quartets have long been considered his greatest achievement and one of the pinnacles of all musical thought. Between the years 1818 and the early 20s he wrote little of significance. Suffering continual ill-health, he was now completely deaf, received rebuffs in love, had problems with his nephew Carl, lost many of his patrons and had difficulties with his publishers. All added up to a time of great unhappiness, but it seemed that this was only a gestation period for great things still to come: the *Missa Solemnis* (1823), the *Ninth Symphony* (1824), and the 'Late Quartets' (1824-6).

In these five quartets Beethoven explored the heights and depths of every human emotion in musical forms which created new structures and principles, and demanded more from players than ever before. It could be said that in this music he transcended all human feelings and attained a completely new spiritual level. The very last quartet, Op.135, is one of his shortest, and rather than displaying an intensity of emotion, has a deep sense of calm and peaceful resignation. He found great difficulty in its composition. It is known for the motto which heads the last movement: "*The difficult decision: Must it be? It must be! It must be!*". The quartet dates from 1826 but it was not performed until after the composer's death.

A five-motif group with a warm conversational tone comprises the **first subject**, to be followed by a playful second theme. The material is then brilliantly developed until a coda, based on the opening music, ends the movement.

With a lively, off-beat theme the **Vivace** follows - a scherzo with an acrobatic first violin leaping over the ostinato figure of the other instruments.

A theme with a simple set of four variations forms the profoundly calm **slow movement**.

Mention has already been made of the motto which heads the final movement with the words set to the slow introductory figure and, exultantly, to the opening bars of the **Allegro** section. Later in the movement the *Muss es sein?* motif appears in a more menacing form, casting shadows of doubt.
(Notes by John Dalton)

Interval

Johannes Brahms (1863 - 1945)

String Quartet in C Minor Op.51 No 1

Allegro; Romanza: Poco adagio; Allegretto molto moderato e comodo; Allegro

Growing up under the far-reaching shadow of Beethoven, Brahms hesitated to compose either a symphony or a string quartet because he feared adverse criticism and the inevitable comparisons that would follow. He destroyed some 20 earlier drafts of string-quartets before he finally summoned the courage to complete his first pair, published as Op. 51. He need not have worried; both are masterpieces. The first is tautly-constructed, intense, and almost overly stern – Brahms was a highly self-critical, strict disciplinarian.

Brahms modelled this Quartet on Beethoven's Op. 59 (Razumovsky) Quartets. The themes in the first movement dominate the whole work; their recurrence in other movements integrates the whole quartet. Annotator Steve Coburn noted: "The work's overall coherence results from the close tonal relationships and integrated key structure of the four movements."

The opening **Allegro**, in sonata form, begins with a rising, dotted rhythm over a pulsating accompaniment. Each new theme evolves logically from its predecessor, and thick, quasi-orchestral textures dominate the whole movement.

The simpler texture of the ensuing **Romanze**, in which all the themes are derived from the opening Allegro's main theme, masks the movement's extremely complex structure. Brahms includes some ravishingly beautiful string writing.

The **Allegretto** comprises a scherzo and trio. The Scherzo's main theme is derived from the central section of the Allegro's first theme; the Trio is a Ländler – an imitation of an Austrian peasant dance.

The bustling **Allegro** finale brings together all the themes and structural components of the entire work. The energetic coda that concludes the movement includes a minimally changed recall of the Quartet's opening subject.
(Notes by Ted Wilks)

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Dante String Quartet

The Dante Quartet, one of the UK's finest ensembles, is known for its imaginative programming and impassioned performances. It was founded in 1995 and chose its name to reflect the idea of an epic journey. The Quartet has been honoured with the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber Music and has also received international awards for its recordings.

Frequently heard on Radio 3, the Quartet has appeared many times at London's Wigmore Hall and Kings Place, and at some of the UK's foremost festivals and music societies. Abroad, they have played in France, Germany, Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Finland, the Czech Republic and Poland, and has twice toured Japan.

The Dante Quartet has made a series of acclaimed recordings for Hyperion, winning the BBC Music Magazine Award and the French Diapason d'Or. They have also recorded for Signum and Toccata Records and their recording of the string quartets by Herbert Howells was released on the Naxos label in 2019. The Dante Quartet has recently recorded the eight string quartets and two quintets of C.V. Stanford on the SOMM label.

The Quartet has performed cycles of the complete Beethoven and Shostakovich string quartets in single marathon weekends. They have collaborated with playwright Clare Norburn (author of concert-drama 'Breaking the Rules') on a dramatized version of Beethoven's quartet cycle, featuring actor David Timson as the composer. This innovative format has proved popular and has been performed many times.

Future Farnham Concerts

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Farnham Pottery Summer Concerts

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4-00pm Sunday 1 September: Ryan Corbett - accordion

4-00pm Sunday 22 September: Amanda Cook - guitar

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www.tilfordbachfestival.com

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