



Tilford Bach Society



Revolutionary Drawing Room String Quartet

25th Anniversary Concert

23 January 2015

www.tilbach.org.uk

Programme

Adrian Butterfield, violin

Kathryn Parry, violin

Rachel Stott, viola

Ruth Alford, cello

Dittersdorf Quartet No.6 in A major

Moderato; Menuetto Larghetto; Finale Presto

Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, who was a close friend of Haydn's and who is said to have given Vanhal music lessons, apparently wrote many quartets, but only a few seem to have come down to us, including this one in A major dating from 1789. It is written in three movements and opens with a substantial Moderato, which includes some surprising twists and turns of harmony as well as some unusual light-hearted pizzicato effects for the first violin. In the second movement the listener is well and truly drawn in to the party spirit. If the Menuetto suggests the gracious dancing of refined ladies and gentlemen, the Alternativo (another name for a 'trio' section) in contrasting 2/4 time, suggests the more riotous elements letting their hair down. The teasing end of the Finale perhaps reveals the influence of Haydn, who often enjoyed taking his audiences by surprise.

Haydn Quartet in E flat major Op.20 No.1

Allegro moderato; Menuetto Allegretto; Affettuoso e sostenuto; Finale Presto

Haydn's Op.20 quartets were written in 1772, the year in which he reached the age of 40. Towards the end of his life the composer related that it was at the age of 40 that he had decided to begin 'a complete course in composition' to improve his technique, and the three fugal finales in this set attest to that. The quartet in E flat major, which was destined to become his favourite quartet key, does not contain a fugue but there is still a great deal of contrapuntal writing, especially in the outer movements. The second-placed Menuet is light-hearted in mood and the Trio is, unusually, actually mostly for 3 instruments and finishes very inconclusively. The slow movement, in the subdominant key of A flat and in 3/8 time, is perhaps the highlight of the work. The idea of the quatuor dialogué was to present a musical conversation in which only one of the four parts was leading that conversation at any one time and yet in this Affettuoso e sostenuto, which is given the added special marking of *mezza voce*, the four parts play almost continuously in what one might describe as a communal prayer. The fact that Mozart's own E flat major 'Haydn' quartet K.428 contains an A flat major slow movement in 6/8 time with similar textural qualities can surely not be simple coincidence.

Interval

We invite you to make a donation of £1 at reception towards the cost of refreshments

Beethoven Quartet in E flat major Op.74

'The Harp'

*Poco Adagio - Allegro; Adagio ma non troppo; Presto leggieramente;
Allegretto con Variazioni*

1809 was a particularly difficult year for Beethoven. His former teacher Haydn died at the end of March as the bombs of the French army were falling on Vienna. The fear of war was exacerbated for him by his concern that the noise of the bombardment would destroy what was left of his hearing and this left him cowering in the cellar of his brother's house with pillows covering his ears. He had recently secured a job in Kassel but declined it when three of his Viennese patrons agreed to provide him with a lifetime annuity. Sadly for him, the value of this sum was eroded by rampant inflation due to the war.

In October he began writing the quartet that was to become his Op.74, his first in E flat major which happened to be the same key as the Op.20 No.1 quartet by Haydn that he had written out in score whilst studying with him in the 1790s. Not only is the overall key the same but the slow movement shares its A flat major tonality and 3/8 time-signature and there is a geniality and humour about the Finale too. Despite the turbulence of that period, then, this work turned out to be a surprisingly relaxed one and perhaps the reflections of a more mature former pupil can be seen at work. There is, on the other hand, no shortage of Beethoven's own personality on show here and a searching slow introduction, great extremes of dynamic, a unique use of pizzicato (which has given us the 'Harp' nickname) and a wild first violin semiquaver passage in the coda can all be found in the first movement alone.

The slow movement is a beautiful air that appears a number of times decorated in a wonderful variety of colours and textures. The third movement is a Scherzo in all but name and it shares the key (C minor) and characteristic rhythm of the 5th Symphony which he had completed a year before. The Trio section is in C major and alternates twice with the Scherzo, a form he had invented a few years earlier. The Finale is a set of variations, a favourite form of Haydn's, and it ends with a twinkle in the eye in a manner of which his former teacher would surely have approved.

Music at Lunchtime

Tuesday 3 February 1-10pm

Farnham United Reformed Church

Students from Lord Wandsworth College

www.musicatlunchtime.org.uk

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Revolutionary Drawing Room

2015 marks the 25th anniversary of The Revolutionary Drawing Room. The ensemble was founded in 1990 with the desire of exploring late 18th- and 19th-century chamber music on instruments of the period. A string quartet, producing a sound derived from the beauty and flexibility of gut strings, has always been at the core of the group but we also work with some of the world's top wind and keyboard players, such as Rachel Brown (flute), Colin Lawson (clarinet), Roger Montgomery (horn) and Geoffrey Govier (fortepiano), and their ground-breaking collections attest to the radical transformation their instruments were undergoing during this period in history.

The name 'Revolutionary Drawing Room' refers to the revolutionary years in Europe between 1789 and 1848. The 'drawing room' (the name deriving from the earlier 'withdrawing room') was the place where chamber music was performed in Georgian times in the houses of musicians and their patrons.

The ensemble has performed widely throughout the UK, Europe and North America. We have broadcast a number of programmes on Radio 3 and made a number of recordings including quartets by Boccherini and Donizetti for CPO and the Mozart Clarinet Quintet with Colin Lawson for Clarinet Classics. A further recording has just been released for the anniversary. It is a recording of quartets by Mozart, Haydn, Vanhal and Dittersdorf who played quartets together in Vienna in 1784. The actor Simon Russell Beale has recorded excerpts from the Reminiscences of Michael Kelly, the Irish tenor who describes the event, which has been interspersed with the quartets.

A Viennese Quartet Party

Revolutionary Drawing Room with Simon Russell Beale
Double CD: £15 on sale at reception

Forthcoming TBS Concerts

Friday 27 February 7-30pm

Farnham Methodist Church GU9 7RN

Ensemble Hippeastrum (period instruments)
Masterpieces of the German Baroque

Saturday 28 March 7-30pm

St Thomas on the Bourne GU9 8HA (corrected)

Waverley Trio
Beethoven, Rachmaninov & Schubert

£15 on door, £13-50 (£12-50 for members) in advance

Admission FREE for all 8-25 year olds AND for accompanying parents (of dependent children) and accompanying music teachers