



# ***Tilford Bach Society***



## ***Solem String Quartet***

***Amy Tress - violin***  
***Catherine Landen - violin***  
***Alistair Vennart - viola***  
***Stephanie Tress - cello***

***31 October 2015***

***[www.tilbach.org.uk](http://www.tilbach.org.uk)***

**We especially thank Lord David Lea of Crondall, a TBS member,  
for very kindly sponsoring this concert**

# **Programme**

***This concert is dedicated to the memory of our joint President  
Sir David Willcocks CBE MC, who died on 17 September***

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## **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

### **String Quartet No 10 in E flat major, Op 74 "The Harp"**

*Poco adagio — Allegro; Adagio ma non troppo (A  $\flat$ ); Presto (C);  
Allegretto con variazioni*

Beethoven's deafness was well established by the time this quartet was composed in 1809. It was not all "Sturm und Drang" however, as it was a year in which he composed two other works in the same key with a similarly genial character, the Les Adieux Sonata and Emperor Concerto. The nickname relates to the use of pizzicato in the first movement which was unprecedented in a string quartet at the time.

The work opens with a contemplative slow introduction followed by a dignified and confident Allegro in which the celebrated pizzicati soon follow. The development contains a wonderfully exultant C major treatment of the main theme, and the coda creates one of the most original and powerful passages in quartet writing — the first violin breaks out into brilliant bravura, as if he were suddenly the soloist in a concerto, and while he lets fly the texture thrillingly deepens and solidifies beneath until the four instruments sound as if the whole world is singing. The gentle slow movement is a rondo in A flat, the beautiful main melody recurring at intervals, with episodes that tend to melancholy. Then comes a very strong C minor Scherzo, its rhythm reminding us of the Fifth Symphony (composed over the previous few years), the suggestion reinforced by a rushing C major Trio. However, instead of the blazing finale of the symphony, he gives us some typically mixed variations on a deceptively accented theme which teases us as to where the main beat lies. The six variations have alternately a boisterous or reflective character, the second featuring a viola solo, and the fourth an almost "Brahmsian" air. The slightly faster sixth variation places the theme over a pulsing cello pedal with a harmonic shift to D flat before the final coda ratchets the tempo up further, finishing with two nonchalant piano chords.

## **Dimitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)**

### **String quartet No 8**

*Largo; Allegro Molto; Allegretto; Largo; Largo*

As the most prominent composer of the soviet era, Shostakovich had to walk a tight-rope between genuine expression of his artistic talents and the demands of the soviet apparatchiks who could and would make his life a misery if he did not turn out "approved" music. So a lot of his music has a superficial programmatic element to satisfy the party music critics, but with an inner meaning for those who appreciated it, which was much more expressive of his true feelings. His string

quartets probably reflect his inner feelings more than his other compositions. Shostakovich could compose masterpieces remarkably quickly; the 8th quartet, his most popular and most frequently played quartet, was composed in 3 days in 1960. He had been taken to East Germany, ostensibly to compose music for a film about the devastating bombing of Dresden. His immediate reaction instead was to produce this piece of tragic intensity. Dedicated "In Remembrance of the Victims of Fascism and War", it reflects something of the horror of that act of war. However, the quartet does also contain numerous references to his own works and was recognised immediately to also be somewhat biographical. It includes the four note motif : D, E-flat, C and B. In German musical notation these notes are written as D, S, C, and H. These are the same letters that occur in the German spelling of his name, Dmitri SChostakowitsch. He wrote to a close friend "I reflected that if I die some day then it's hardly likely anyone will write a work dedicated to my memory. So I decided to write one myself. You could even write on the cover 'Dedicated to the memory of the composer of this quartet' ". As you listen to its searing intensity, you can see that it reflects both the horror of the wartime raid and also the pain of a truly creative artist entombed in the soviet monolith.

The quartet is in 5 short movements without breaks between them. In the first movement the instruments give a canonic treatment to a four note DSCH motif. There are quotations from the opening of the First Symphony and, before the movement ends, the development theme from the Fifth Symphony. In contrast to the slow lament of the first, the second movement, erupts violently. Suddenly it quotes the Jewish music from the last movement of Shostakovich's Second Piano Trio, introduced by the four note motif. A sense of respite is reached in the G minor third movement which again uses the DSCH motif to introduce a new quote: a theme from Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto. The cello is then used as a bridge to the next movement where the mutilated quotation becomes a source for its theme. The fourth movement in C sharp minor begins with a low drone and three rapid notes evoking thoughts of distant aircraft and anti-aircraft fire. But this movement also includes a beautiful quotation from a revolutionary song 'Exhausted by the hardships of prison', as well as a quotation introduced by the cello from Shostakovich's opera 'Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District'. The final, fifth movement contains no quotation other than the smallest hint of the First Symphony. Noticeable here, as the work builds up to its final emotional climax, is the ubiquitous DSCH motif.

### **Interval**

**Friday 6 November, 8-00pm Tilford Church GU10 2DD**

**Natalie Clein - Cello**  
**Bach Solo cello Suites 1, 2 & 6**

**Saturday 21 November, 7-30pm St Thomas on the Bourne**

**Reinhart Trio with Anna Hashimoto (clarinet)**  
**Beethoven, Reade and Glinka**

## **Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

### **String Quartet in A minor D.804 "Rosamunde"**

*Allegro ma non troppo; Andante; Menuetto: Allegretto-Trio; Allegro moderato*

Schubert grew up playing chamber music with his family and composed several youthful string quartets for these domestic affairs in which he generally took the viola part. His mature string quartets date from 1824, when he composed two quartets (this and the "Death and the Maiden" D810) which used themes from his earlier compositions. The gentle song of the slow movement is taken from an entr'acte for the play "Rosamunde" written a year earlier, hence the quartet's nickname.

The first movement is the most intense though like all four movements begins pianissimo. A wistful melody with an underlying rhythmic urgency sets a mood that is trademark Schubert: hopeful yearning surrounded by despair. Using multiple themes, flexible textures, strong dynamics and briefly alarming swatches of fugato, the music rises and falls, each new positive gesture thwarted by an ever-stronger darkness. The middle movements are much more subtle. The Andante with the theme from Rosamunde softly sings but still rises to a startling peak of anguish if only briefly. The Menuetto is a surprise: instead of a lively scherzo, Schubert writes an atmospheric character piece that only gains its rhythmic sway tentatively, demure and uncertain. Only the trio brings relief with its chaste simplicity waltzing into the light. This kinder spirit pervades the finale, surprisingly gentle for Schubert. A moderately paced folk dance, it has a hint of the gypsy style in its theme, with its 'Hungarian' grace-notes. They make a return, transferred from violin to cello, at the movement's climax, and again during the closing bars. The main second idea, like the first, is given out pianissimo—this time in the style of a distant march. At the end, the music seems on the point of fading away, before Schubert appends two peremptory chords to bring proceedings to an emphatic close after all.

### **Solem String Quartet**

Winners of the 2014 Royal Overseas League Ensemble Competition, the Solem String Quartet was founded in 2011 at the University of Manchester, takes its name from the University motto "arduus ad solem" = "striving towards the sun".

The quartet has enjoyed success in numerous competitions including the RNCM Nossek Prize, the RNCM Barbirolli Prize for String Quartets and the Britten Centenary Intercollegiate String Quartet Competition. They have recently been awarded the Junior Fellowship in Chamber Music 2015/16 at the Royal northern College of Music, including coaching undergraduate chamber ensembles and giving concerts.

They perform at venues including Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Holywell Music Room and the Edinburgh Festival. They have benefited from inspirational teaching from some of the world's greatest chamber musicians including Gábor Takács-Nagy, Miguel da Silva, Peter Cropper, Thomas Riebl and others.

#### **TBS Secretary**

1 Adams Drive, Fleet, GU51 3DZ

Tel: 0845 519 8184 Email: [secretary@tilbach.org.uk](mailto:secretary@tilbach.org.uk)

[www.tilbach.org.uk](http://www.tilbach.org.uk)