



Tilford Bach Society



Emma Abbate (piano) **Tippett String Quartet**

John Mills – violin

Jeremy Isaac – violin

Lydia Lowndes-Northcott – viola

Bodizar Vukotic – cello

29 October 2016

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Programme

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

String quartet in D minor op. 103

Andante grazioso – Menuetto, ma non troppo presto

This quartet is a fragment, the only two movements of a work uncompleted at the time of Haydn's death. It probably represents the middle two movements of the four movement structure that Haydn had done so much to develop. Although probably composed about the same time as the Op 77 quartets, Haydn's failing health meant he could not concentrate sufficiently to complete the work and he allowed it to be published by itself, as opus 103. He added the following words to the score, a quote from his own chorale *Der Greis*: "Gone is all my strength, old and weak am I."

There is nothing in the gracious melody of the first movement to suggest the composer's infirmity, though some of the chromatic harmonies darken the mood somewhat, and the middle section plunges down a third to G flat major before finishing down a further third in D major. The reprise of the theme is again downwards in the home key of B flat before an elegiac coda finishes the movement.

The second movement is a minuet in D minor which alternates forthright, dotted-rhythm gestures with quieter, more uncertain interpolations, the most striking being an anxious four-note chromatic ascent that is passed back and forth between first violin and cello, uncertainty beneath the surface bravado. A more friendly trio intervenes in D major; this is vintage Haydn, complete with teasing hesitations, strange irregular phrase lengths and jocular embellishments. Then the gruff main section returns, ending with the first violin's flamboyant upward scale. Despite its fragmentary nature, this quartet feels like an authoritative exit line for the man who elevated the quartet genre to greatness for the first time.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Piano Quintet in E flat major, opus 44

Allegro brillante – In modo d'una marcia. Un poco largamente – Scherzo: Molto vivace – Allegro ma non troppo

Although the piano trio was well established when Robert Schumann wrote his piano quintet in 1842, previous examples of this genre, particularly from Boccherini and the famous Trout quintet by Schubert, were for the strings ensemble of violin, viola, cello and double bass. By the mid nineteenth century, however, the string quartet of two violins, viola and cello was the dominant combination for chamber works and by combining a piano with this ensemble, Schumann created a work that has some of the brilliance and scope of a concerto yet still retains the intimacy of chamber music. The work was intended for public performance and composed for and dedicated to Clara Schumann. However at the time of its first private performance in December 1842 she was ill, so he press-ganged a friend to sight-read the "fiendish" piano part, one Felix Mendelssohn! His suggestions from that exposure to the work led the composer to make minor revisions. Following its first public outing the next month with Clara at the keyboard, it became a firm favourite in the concert hall and salon and is considered one of Schumann's finest compositions.

The energetic main theme of the first movement is characterized by wide, upward-leaping intervals. The contrasting second theme, marked dolce, is meltingly romantic. Schumann does include concerto elements in the mix, but it is not all about the keyboard virtuosity, although that is certainly demanded in places, as the piano gives way to the strings which provide warm expansions and decorations of the marching main theme of the opening Allegro brillante. Indeed it is the cello and viola that take the lead in the transformation of that theme into the sonata-form movement's more dance-like second subject.

The minor mode is never far away in this work, and the second movement is a soft funeral march in C minor. Like the Scherzo that follows, it has two contrasting episodes. The first is a legato melody in the first violin and cello, with an unsettled, murmuring, three-against-four rustling in the other parts. The second, apparently suggested by Mendelssohn at that private first performance, is an agitated explosion in F minor dominated by the piano, which leads to a variation of the C-major episode, before the march returns to close the movement sombrely.

The main element of the dashing Scherzo is a rushing scale, slightly askew metrically. The first of its trios touches on the main theme of the first movement; the second is a manic dance in duple meter that whirls through some sharply contrasting keys. The finale returns the music to its marching mode, with rondo episodes that revisit the harmonic adventures of the March and Scherzo. To close, the composer creates an astonishing fugal coda that brings back the expansive opening theme of the first movement.

Interval

(Drinks are free but donations to costs are much appreciated)

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Piano Quintet in A major, op. 81

Allegro, ma non tanto – Dumka: Andante con moto; Un pochettino piu mosso – Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace; Trio: Poco tranquillo – Finale: Allegro

It is difficult not to wax lyrical about this Quintet in which Dvorak combines romantic lyricism with driving Czech dance melodies with the same flair that has made his symphonies so popular. So these notes will just provide a few details of the structure for the audience to sit back and enjoy what is acknowledged to be one of the peaks of the piano quintet repertoire.

The quintet had its genesis in an attempt by Dvorak to revise a much earlier work, but he soon gave up and wrote this in a burst of creativity between 18th August and 3rd October 1887. It had its première on 6th January 1888 in Prague. The first movement opens quietly with a lyrical statement of the first subject on the cello, interrupted by a muscular passage from the whole quartet before the first violin takes up the theme again. The second subject is stated by the viola with further interventions by the whole quartet with variants of both themes. After a repeat, the movement closes with a free recapitulation and exuberant coda.

The second movement is labelled Dumka, a form Dvorak used in his Dumky piano trio. It is technically a rondo with a melancholy theme on the piano separated by brighter sections with the theme returning with its texture enriched after each of

these sections. The ear is delighted by the textures of the music as the folk-like melodies are elaborated by various combinations of the ensemble.

The third movement is a scherzo in the form of a furiant, a fast Bohemian folk dance. It has a slower trio section in the middle of the relatively short movement. The finale is light-hearted and spirited with a quieter recapitulation of the theme before a joyous coda ends the work.

Notes by Trevor Gray

Emma Abbate

Described as "an amazingly talented pianist" by the leading Italian magazine Musica, the Neapolitan pianist Emma Abbate pursues a varied career as a chamber musician and vocal coach, working with some of the finest singers and instrumentalists of her generation. She has performed in duo recitals for international festivals and concert societies in Salzburg, Lisbon, Naples, Ischia, Kosciierzyna and Sorrento, and at many prestigious UK venues such as the Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre, Royal Opera House, St John's Smith Square, St George's, Bristol and Aldeburgh Festival, in addition to broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.

Emma is planning a series of recordings devoted to 20th century Italian vocal chamber music, the last of which is the world-première disc of Shakespeare Sonnets by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco with the baritone Ashley Riches for Resonus Classics. Emma also released L'Infinito for Urania Records with the mezzo-soprano Kamelia Kader. Her discography also includes world-premières of works for cello and piano by Krzysztof Meyer and Algernon Ashton with the cellist Evva Mizerska. Published by Toccata Classics, their performances have been praised by The Strad for their "great expressive range and impressive authority". Future projects include the world-première recording of Stephen Dodgson's Piano Quintets together with the Tippett Quartet.

Based in London, Emma is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Future Concerts

Saturday 26 November : 7-30pm; Farnham URC, GU9 7QU

Eisenach Ensemble - Baroque Arias and Favourites

Friday 27 January: 7-30pm Farnham Methodist Church, GU9 7RN

Natalia Lomeiko (violin) and Yuri Zhislin (viola)

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Tippett Quartet

For over a decade and a half, the celebrated Tippett Quartet has delighted critics and audiences alike with its animated, virtuosic performances and its inspired and attractive programming. They have performed at the BBC Proms, Cheltenham Festival, Snape Proms and numerous festivals throughout the UK and abroad, including tours of Europe, Canada and Mexico. The quartet regularly appears at Kings Place, Purcell Room, Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Bridgewater Hall and frequently performs on BBC Radio 3. Alongside a busy touring schedule, the Tippett Quartet pursues a keen interest in educational work with both schools and universities and was Ensemble in Residence at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University for 2012-13. In September 2015 they began an exciting new residency at Royal Holloway University, London.

Their broad and diverse repertoire highlights the Tippett Quartet's unique versatility. They are equally at home with the giants of the classical world as they are with great Hollywood composers. Their impressive catalogue of over twenty releases have not only topped the classical charts but have also entered the pop charts and received universal critical acclaim. They have recorded for Naxos, EMI Classics, Signum, Classic FM, Guild, Real World, Dutton Epoch and Tocatta Classics. The quartet has given numerous world and UK premieres including works by John Adams, Howard Goodall and Stephen Dodgson. 2013 saw them rediscover Gustav Holst's Fantasy on British Folk Songs which, with the help of the eminent musicologist Roderick Swanston, they were able to complete and give a world premiere on BBC Radio 3. They have also worked with Peter Maxwell-Davies for a performance of his 9th Quartet at the South Bank, and Hugh Wood on his String Quartet No.3 at the Presteigne Festival.

Lectures by Matthew Taylor

Wednesdays at 1-00pm

Farnham United Reformed Church

- 9 November Schubert's Impromptus
- 16 November Chopin and the Polonaise
- 23 November Piano music of Leonard Bernstein
- 30 November Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and the Fantasia

Tickets £7 per session, payable at the lecture.

Music at Lunchtime

Wednesdays at 1-10pm

Farnham United Reformed Church

Admission free, retiring collection

2 November



Gillian Lloyd, organ

A favourite with Farnham audiences, Gillian makes a welcome return visit to our Music at Lunchtime concert series. In addition to being a concert soloist, Gillian is organist at Guildford United Reformed Church.

7 December



Diana Vivian, soprano Claire Tester, piano

Diana is a well-known performer and teacher in the Farnham area. She has been a soloist with Scottish Opera and the European Chamber Opera. Diana is in demand as guest conductor with many operatic societies. We look forward to her giving us an interesting and varied programme.