

The Aidan Woodcock Charitable Trust Concerts 2017 (www.maiastra.org)

Friday June 2 at 7:30 p.m. at The Musical Museum, Brentford
Saturday June 3 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Andrew's Church, Farnham
Sunday June 4 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Andrew's Church, Cobham

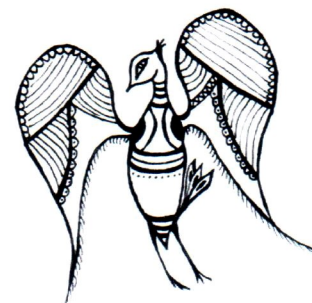
MAIASTRA

Akiko Ono - violin

Kana Kawashima - violin

Ana Alves - viola

Kieran Carter - cello



Programme

Mozart (1756-1791)

string quartet in B flat major K 458 'The Hunt'

allegro vivace assai Menuetto and Trio: moderato adagio allegro assai

When only fourteen years old, Mozart composed his first string quartet and within three years he had written a further twelve. These thirteen early quartets, although sometimes exhibiting moments of prophetic genius, are not often performed. Eight years later, inspired by Haydn's string quartets, Mozart returned to the medium and wrote a further ten which spanned the rest of his life. They are justly referred to as his 'Celebrated Quartets'. Each is a masterpiece.

The quartet we are to hear this evening, composed in 1784, is the fourth of a set of six which Mozart dedicated to Haydn. On their completion he wrote somewhat poetically: 'To my dear friend Haydn, A father who had decided to send his children into the world at large thought it best to entrust them to the protection and guidance of that famous man who fortunately happened to be his best friend as well. Behold here, famous man and dearest friend, my six children.' The six quartets, his 'children', were not written in response to a commission. He wrote them for his own purposes, such was his interest in writing for the genre. Now, the movements are expanded in their structure; the polyphonic textures are more daring and complex, and the ideas behind the writing are more subtle and profound.

The first movement of the B flat quartet opens with a theme which evokes the character of a hunt, although it was not Mozart who coined the nickname by which this quartet is popularly known. The sense of opera is never far away. After the first eight bars, for some, the music conjures up a forest: lovers teasing each other, one calling out from behind a tree before jumping out and hiding again, and laughing gleefully at all the hijinks. The second movement is full of the unexpected. Throughout it, Mozart confounds any prediction of what is going to follow. With its varying phrase lengths it would have been a challenge to dance to this minuet! The contrasting trio section can be seen as a return to the operatic stage. It is as if a clown is playing the role of a diva. The third movement exhibits an ambiguity of mood. It begins with a noble yet stern theme which gives way to one expressing vulnerability and uncertainty. The movement ends with a restatement of the noble opening theme only to be dashed in the very last bar by a subdued resolution. The fourth movement abounds with laughter and general merriment as Mozart often sets two players against the other two. In his letter to Haydn on the six quartets dedicated to him, Mozart wrote: 'You yourself have shown me your approval of them during your last visit. Your praise, above all, makes me hope that they shall not be entirely unworthy of your good will'. Haydn could only have marvelled at the genius of his erstwhile student.

Shostakovich (1906-1975)

string quartet no. 11 in F minor

Introduction: andantino Scherzo: allegretto Recitative: adagio Etude: allegro
Humoresque: allegro Elegy: adagio Finale: moderato

There are a few canons of string quartets in the repertoire, from the sixteen by Beethoven to the six by Bartok, which explore the full range of the extraordinary possibilities afforded by the medium. Almost rivalling the Bartok quartets in the twentieth century are the fifteen composed by Shostakovich, written between 1938 and 1974. It isn't clear what persuaded him to start writing string quartets at a time when he had already matured as a composer. It may be because chamber music in Russia at that time had the advantage of not having a strong locus in the public domain and so it was improbable that his quartets, unlike his works for larger forces, would attract adverse criticism. Many of Shostakovich's quartets were premiered by the Beethoven Quartet, formed in Moscow in 1923, which continued with the same players for more than forty years. They had the privilege of knowing and working with Shostakovich for decades. He was devastated to hear the news in 1965 of the sudden death of the second violinist, Vasily Shirinsky. The eleventh string quartet, written in 1966, is dedicated to his memory. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the music is heavily imbued with a sense of loss.

The work is divided into seven movements played without a break. The first movement is eloquent and clear but the expression is always restrained. Two themes are developed, one an open, wending melody in the first violin and the other a denser, more closed melody in the cello. The first violin prepares the second movement but this is not the playful movement the term scherzo usually implies. It seems to establish an underworld where hope does not exist. Contrapuntal motifs take hold and the texture is punctuated by slides up to glittering harmonics. Once the scherzo has condensed into a single viola line, the next three movements are presented in quick succession. The third movement is a terrifying Recitative, where the bottom three instruments make for a mammoth and dissonant chord while the first violin intones a brutal, three-note idea. This is not like any operatic recitative. Here we have a mood of bellowing and forbidding. Following in exactly the same tempo, the fourth movement features a spinning figure against a mournful chorale. This is soon subsumed into an angry fortissimo which gives way to the fifth movement, again in the same tempo. Here, the music swiftly reaches a fever pitch, at which point the second violin retreats innocently and almost impersonally into the wings alone. The sixth movement's funereal character is established by the lower strings with the second violin responding in a quiet and personal way. Later, the movement reaches an anguished climax against a held bass note, which remains hushed and uninvolved. The seventh movement is almost devoid of energy. Themes from the first two movements reappear. The movement ends with the first violin climbing higher and higher as the lower strings become increasingly resigned. There is no solace here, only a desolate truth, harsh but simple.

~ **Interval** ~

Smetana (1824-1884)

string quartet no. 1 in E minor 'From my life'

allegro vivo appassionato allegro moderato à la polka largo sostenuto vivace

It is often said outside the Czech Republic that Smetana founded Czech music but it was Dvořák who made it popular. This notion is not so readily perceived by musical tourists visiting Prague. Perhaps it was the historic connection between his musical style and his country's aspirations to independent statehood that to this day have led to Smetana being so highly regarded in his homeland. Although a naturally gifted composer, he at first found it difficult to make a career in Prague and consequently left for Sweden where he became a teacher and choirmaster. It was only

in the early 1860s that a more liberal political climate encouraged him to return to his favourite city. He continued composing and also started to conduct at the opera house. Controversy again took hold when some musical establishment figures felt that his association with the ideas of Liszt and Wagner was not consistent with furthering the development of a unique Czech style. By the end of 1874, he had become completely deaf which led him to devoting much more of his time to composition. In his last year he suffered mental collapse and was committed to an asylum.

Smetana is probably best known for his opera 'The Bartered Bride' and his symphonic cycle 'Má Vlast'. Of his four chamber works, it is his first string quartet which seems to be most beloved and often performed. Written in 1876 and subtitled 'From my life', it is necessarily autobiographical, illustrating the composer's youthful enthusiasm for his art, his friendships and loves, and the onset of his deafness. Such programmatic content in chamber music was uncommon at the time. The premiere of his first quartet was given in a private performance where the prominent viola part was played by Dvořák, seventeen years his junior.

Smetana wrote that the first movement depicts the 'inclination to art in my youth, romanticism predominating, the unspeakable yearning for something I could not express or definitely imagine'. Here Smetana introduces the movement with the portentous main motif, a sharply attacked whole note followed by a truncated downward leap. Of the second movement, he wrote: 'the quasi-Polka carries me back in retrospection to the happy life of my youth when, as a composer of dance music, I frequented the fashionable world, where I was known as a passionate dancer.' The slower middle section represents 'my impressions of the aristocratic circles in which I lived for many years'. The ardent, lyrical third movement 'brings to mind the bliss of my first love for the girl who later became my faithful wife'. The fourth movement starts off as a vigorous and joyful dance, abruptly cut off by a high whistling E which represents the tinnitus sound in his head. As Smetana described it, the finale presents the 'perception of the beauty of national music, and the happiness resulting from this interrupted by my ominous catastrophe – the beginning of my deafness'.

Programme notes by Keith Berry

The Aidan Woodcock Charitable Trust was established in 2001 with general musical objectives but focusing from 2006 on providing advanced level courses in chamber music for post-graduate music students, particularly those intent on adopting a professional performing career with chamber music as a component. The Trust has been running these courses for ten years, and the courses in their present particular form are believed to be unique in the UK.

The aims of the courses are to give participants the opportunity to get to know works in the main chamber music repertoire, and to achieve a standard that will allow audiences to enjoy the performances as musical events memorable in their own right.

The main courses are residential lasting ten days each and are held four times a year in Surrey. Each course is directed and led by an established professional player and culminates in the latter part of the course in a series of public concerts by the group performing under the generic title, MAIASTRA. In addition, shorter courses are held for very advanced students with two days' rehearsals only, and based on a more professional model of preparation.

For further information on MAIASTRA, including some recordings of past concerts, please look at the web site www.maiastra.org. If you would like to make a donation to support the training of classical music students by the Trust, you can either find out what you need to do from the website (www.maiastra.org) or send a cheque, payable to 'The Aidan Woodcock Charitable Trust', to Hugh Parry (Chairman), Mill Way House, Guildford Road, Westcott, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3LB. All donations can be Gift Aided and payments can be either one-off or regular. The trustees are most grateful for any contribution you would like to make.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 7 July 2017 at 7.30 p.m. - The Musical Museum, 399 High Street, Brentford TW8 0DU

Saturday 8 July 2017 at 7.30 p.m. - St. Andrew's Church, Church Street, Cobham KT11 3EJ

Beethoven String Quintet in C major Opus 29

Brahms String Quintet No. 2 in G major Opus 111

Akiko Ono – violin

Samuel Staples – violin

Ben Voce – viola

Leo Plashinov – viola

Joe Davies – cello

Profiles

AKIKO ONO launched her career after winning numerous prizes in prestigious competitions including first prizes at the Menuhin, Viotti-Valsesia and Forval Scholarship Stradivarius Japan. She was also a laureate of the Concours Reine Elisabeth, Paganini and Szigeti Competitions. Since then she has performed with major orchestras including the Weimar Staatskapelle, Belgian National Orchestra, London Mozart Players and NHK Symphony Orchestra. Her most recent album, *"Romance"* (2016) with Ichiro Nodaira, has received rave reviews. In 2016, Akiko launched a new summer violin course *MusicSpace* at Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge, in partnership with Cambridge Summer Music. Akiko is a violin professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and the Yehudi Menuhin School.

KANA KAWASHIMA was born in Japan in 1991. Brought to England at the age six, she studied with Eszter Katona and Natasha Boyarsky and was awarded a place at the Yehudi Menuhin School in 2003. In 2009 she moved to study at the Vienna Konservatorium under Pavel Vernikov where she completed both her Bachelors and Masters degrees. She has appeared as a soloist and in ensembles in major halls such as the Wigmore Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Barbican Centre and the Musikverein in Vienna. In 2016 she broadcast live on BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune'. Kana has attended festivals such as the Kronberg Academy 2015, Julian Rachlin and Friends Festival and Eilat International Chamber Music. She is a 2016-17 Professional Diploma student at the Royal Academy of Music with So-ock Kim as a recipient of the Florence Whitlock Scholarship and the Albert Cooper Foundation. She plays a N. Gagliano, Naples 1746, on kind loan from the Royal Academy of Music.

ANA ALVES started learning the viola in Portugal at the age of five, concluding high school with distinction Academic, Music and Artistic Merit Awards in 2012. Currently she is in the first year of her Masters in Performance Degree at the Royal College of Music as an RCM Barry Shaw Scholar, holder of a Help Musicians UK Postgraduate Award and St Marylebone Education Foundation Scholarship under the supervision of Andriy Viytovych. Previously in 2016 Ana concluded her Bachelor of Music Degree (Honours), First Class, at the same establishment under the supervision of Jonathan Barritt and Ian Jewel. Ana has performed extensively solo and with orchestra in the most renowned halls in Portugal, London Switzerland and Italy. She has also attended numerous masterclasses with renowned musicians and major conductors such as Norrington, Haitink and Jurowski. She has won first prizes in national Portuguese competitions, the RCM String Quartet Competition, and the Boconnoc Music Award.

KIERAN CARTER began playing the cello at the age of fifteen with Ethan Merrick in West Sussex. He then learnt with Gordon Pringle at Junior Trinity before starting his undergraduate degree at the Royal College of Music, where he is currently in his third year studying with Melissa Phelps and Maria Zachariadou. Kieran loves to play chamber music, with highlights including performing in the newly founded Uppingham International Music Festival, playing alongside the Sacconi Quartet at their festival in Folkestone and a performance of Mendelssohn's Octet at RCM with Thomas Zehetmair. Kieran also enjoys playing in the Fiesole Piano Trio, who have recently performed at the RCM, the Royal Festival Hall and the V&A Museum. Since starting at RCM he has been given the opportunity to play as principal cello in the RCM String Orchestra, Philharmonic Orchestra and Symphony Orchestra with conductors such as Haitink, Jurowski, Zehetmair, Collon and Wilson. Away from college he has also played in many orchestras around London such as the Arch Sinfonia, the Orion Orchestra and the Kantanti Ensemble. Kieran has taken part in masterclasses with Thomas Carroll, Natalie Clein, Leonard Elschenbroich and Johannes Goritzki. He plays on a 19th century Colin Mezin cello kindly on loan from the Cherubim Music Trust.