

Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

17 November 2013 – 3.30pm

JUBILEE STRING QUARTET

Violin - Tereza Privratska | Violin - Alma Olite | Viola - Stephanie Edmundson | Cello - Lauren Steel

PROGRAMME NOTES *by John Woollard*

Haydn (1732 – 1809) - String Quartet in C major Op. 54, No. 2

1. Vivace
2. Adagio
3. Menuetto: Allegretto
4. Finale: Adagio - Presto - Adagio

Joseph Haydn composed six string quartets which are his Opus 54 and Opus 55 during the summer and autumn of 1788. He was then 56 years of age, and had spent the previous thirty years as the Kapellmeister (Head of Music perhaps) for the Esterhazy family. He was at the height of his powers as a composer, and these are very unusual string quartets.

Johann Tost is one of those people remembered, if at all, for his connection with one of the immortals, Joseph Haydn. That link is not entirely savoury, however, in spite of Tost's being the dedicatee of Haydn's String Quartets, opera 54, 55, and 64. As far as can be determined, Tost was a violinist in the Esterházy orchestra from 1783 to 1789, the last few years of Haydn's tenure as Kapellmeister of that court. It appears that Tost went abroad in 1789 with the intention of selling the rights to some of Haydn's symphonies and quartets to publishers in both Paris and Vienna, without the permission of the composer himself.

According to letters from the composer to two publishers at that time, Tost's machinations included an attempt to pawn off a symphony by the obscure Bohemian Adalbert Gyrowetz (1763-1850) as one by Haydn. Tost apparently found such business dealings so much to his liking that he quit music-making, married, and became a wealthy cloth merchant in Vienna.

Be that as it may, Haydn wrote twelve quartets for the violinist Tost, among which are the three of Opus 54. The Quartet in C major, like its siblings, finds Haydn at his inventive peak, taking inspiration from the younger Mozart but always travelling his own road toward the heights.

Perhaps it is worth noting that after his early successes in Vienna's business world, Johann Tost was himself reduced into harder times. At that point late in his life, he had to return to the violin to make ends meet. One wonders if Haydn's music came to his financial rescue once again.

Haydn's dedication of this set "To the Wholesaler Tost" is a wry comment on his friend's change of fortunes (and perhaps reflects a touch of irony on the composer's behalf).

Mozart (1756 – 1791) - String Quartet No. 15 in D minor, K. 421

1. Allegro moderato
2. Andante
3. Menuetto and Trio: Allegretto
4. Allegretto ma non troppo

Mozart's Quartet No 15 in D minor (K421) is notable for a number of reasons. Not only is it the only mature quartet in a minor key but also, and appropriately, it was one of six quartets which Mozart dedicated to Haydn.

Whilst the history of classical music tends to suggest a timeline of Haydn to Mozart to Beethoven, it is easy to overlook that whilst Haydn was already a famous composer when Mozart was a child, he also outlived Mozart by 18 years. Much of Haydn's success only came some time after Mozart's death. Haydn was the paid employee of the Esterhazy family until 1795. He worked for the family, wearing court livery and was required to spend his time at the family seat in Eisenstadt. Only at about the time of Mozart's death did he start to work for himself and travel abroad to Paris and London, earning for the first time substantial sums of money. In breaking

free from his employer and making a self-employed career for himself, he was following Mozart's example, rather than the other way around.

Haydn was greatly impressed by what he heard of Mozart's music. Haydn freely praised Mozart, without jealousy, to his friends. For instance, he wrote to Franz Rott, "If only I could impress Mozart's inimitable works on the soul of every friend of music, and the souls of high personages in particular, as deeply, with the same musical understanding and with the same deep feeling, as I understand and feel them, the nations would vie with each other to possess such a jewel."

To the musicologist Charles Burney, he said "I have often been flattered by my friends with having some genius, but he was much my superior." In a letter to his friend Marianne von Genzinger, Haydn confessed to dreaming about Mozart's work, listening happily to a performance of Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Mozart's wife Constanze is said to have told Vincent and Mary Novello that the rising melodic figures used throughout the unconventionally phrased second

movement Andante were a reference to her cries from the other room while she was in labour with their first child, Raimund, on the 17th of June 1783. Mozart carried on composing during the delivery, occasionally joining his

wife to console her about the pain before returning to his manuscript next door, and in the process incorporated, perhaps unconsciously, his wife's distress.

----- Interval -----

Janáček (1854 – 1928) - String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters"

1. Andante - Con moto - Allegro
2. Adagio - Vivace
3. Moderato - Andante - Adagio
4. Allegro - Andante - Adagio

Of all composers, Leoš Janáček has to have had one of the most unusual career paths. Born near Brno in Moravia he spent the first fifty years of his life in relative obscurity. He had an extensive musical education, and then set up an organ school in Brno. He specialised in performing and composing church music, but was little known outside his own area.

In 1904 he composed an opera, *Jenůfa*, which at first achieved no more than modest success. He carried on writing music and operas without achieving great fame. In 1916 *Jenůfa* was finally performed in Prague, and received great acclaim for the first time. The change to his life was dramatic. Janáček grudgingly resigned himself to the changes forced upon his work. Its success brought him into Prague's music scene, and in contact with a far wider circle.

This quartet was composed after a request from the Bohemian Quartet who, in 1923, requested Janáček to compose two string quartets for them. Unusually for a classical work, the nickname "Intimate Letters" was given by the composer, as it was inspired by his long and spiritual friendship with Stösslová, a married woman. The composition was intended to reflect the character of their relationship as revealed in more than 700 letters they exchanged with each other.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

First prize winners of the 'Val Tidone International Chamber Music Competition' and recipients of the Tillett Trust 'Young Artists' Platform' and the Philharmonia Orchestra MMSF 'Charles Henderson Ensemble Award', the Jubilee String Quartet was formed in 2006 at the Royal Academy of Music, London, where they currently hold a Leverhulme Chamber Music Fellowship. During this time, they were given instruction under professors such as Thomas Brandis, Garfield Jackson, Martin Outram, and Jon Thorne, and have received masterclasses from the Skampa and Chilingirian Quartets, Pierre Colombet, Miguel da Silva, Hatto Beyerle, and Sylvia Rosenberg.

The quartet have performed extensively in the UK and their continental tours have included a performance in the presence of former Czech president Vaclav Havel. They also enjoy a variety of outreach work as part of the 'Live Music Now!' scheme.

In May 2012 the quartet performed Chausson's Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet with Jack Liebeck and Katya Apekisheva at the Purcell Room, and last summer participated in the Lake District Summer Music and St Magnus Festivals.

In November 2012 the quartet were finalists in the Joseph Joachim International Chamber Music Competition, Weimar. Recent engagements include concerts around the UK and Italy, including a Purcell Room recital in May 2013 and in September the quartet attended the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition, having been preselected.

The quartet currently play on fine instruments kindly on loan from the Royal Academy of Music for the duration of their fellowship.

Next Season

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