



St Mary's Church, Cratfield
Sunday 10 September 2017

BRODSKY QUARTET

Daniel Rowland, Ian Belton *violins*
Paul Cassidy *viola*
Jacqueline Thomas *cello*

Concerts at Cratfield

TODAY'S PERFORMERS

Since forming in 1972, the Brodsky Quartet has performed over 3,000 concerts on the stages of the world and have released more than 60 recordings. A natural curiosity and an insatiable desire to explore, has propelled the group in a number of artistic directions, to ensure them not only a prominent presence on the international chamber music scene, but also a rich and varied musical existence. Their energy and craftsmanship have attracted numerous awards and accolades worldwide, as well as their ongoing educational work has helped them to stay in touch with the next generation of musicians.

Throughout their career of more than 40 years, the Brodsky Quartet has toured the major festivals throughout Australasia, North & South America, Asia, South Africa, Europe and the UK, where the quartet are based. Over the years, the Brodsky Quartet had undertaken numerous performances of the complete cycles of quartets by Schubert, Beethoven, Britten, Schoenberg, Zemlinsky, Webern and Bartok. It is however, the complete Shostakovich string quartet cycle that has now become synonymous with their name. Their 2012 London performances of the cycle resulted in their taking the prestigious title 'Artistic Associate' at London's Kings Place Concert Hall. Chandos recently released their second recording of the complete cycle, this time recorded live from the Musiekgebouw, Amsterdam.

TODAY'S CONCERT

A concert that has the whole of the second half taken up with one of, or possibly the greatest, string quartet in the whole of the repertoire, Beethoven's String Quartet No.14 in C sharp minor, Op.131, begs the question: what do you programme in the first half of the concert that is a suitable first course to the feast of the Beethoven as the main course? Our esteemed artists today have come up with an intriguing solution.

Starting the concert with two short fugal pieces, a couple of contrapuncti from Bach's *The Art of Fugue* and a movement titled *Fuga* from Mendelssohn's Four pieces for String Quartet Op.81 No.4. Bach's name is synonymous with music in fugal form and Mendelssohn, although an early romantic composer, rediscovered Bach for his generation by reviving such masterpieces as Bach's St Matthews Passion. So a movement marked *Fuga* from Mendelssohn's pen could be homage to his great hero, Johann Sebastian Bach? Beethoven inherited the string quartet form from Haydn and Mozart. Haydn in particular, is known as the father of the medium and wrote approx. 70 string quartets. His Op.20 set, known as *the Sun* quartets contain a good number of final movements in fugal form. Beethoven, a pupil of Haydn gave us the ultimate fugue in all string quartet music, the Grosse Fuge in B flat major, Op.133. This powerful but absolute monster of a fugue was originally written as the final movement of the Op.130 String Quartet, and it's still occasionally played in

the original conception, but as Beethoven wrote an alternative ending to that work, the Grosse Fuge is now generally played as a stand-alone hugely difficult piece to perform, but representing a monument to the genius of Beethoven. So there's a history of string quartets incorporating fugal writing, but where does Borodin, whose 2nd String Quartet completes the first half of today's programme fit in to this narrative? Well on first glance not at all. But if we dig a little deeper, we can trace the stirrings of Russian chamber music, a wholly new concept in Borodin's time to the influence of the great German masters. The 19th century saw a huge debate in Imperial Russia between the composers who wanted to develop their own music based on traditional Eastern folk elements, composers such as Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) and Millie Balakirev (1837-1910) with others who wished to follow the more academic Western route such as Borodin and Tchaikovsky (1840-1893). And of course the string quartet epitomises sonata form that derives from the great trio of composers, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. A programme consisting of one of the finest of all 19th century Russian string quartets, with one of the supreme examples of the genre (Beethoven's Op.131) and opening with a couple of fugal *amuse Bouche's* - played by one of the finest string quartets on the international concert circuit, is a programme *Concerts at Cratfield* are very proud to present as our final concert of the 2017 season.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN
BACH
1685-1750

DIE KUNST DER FUGE
(*THE ART OF FUGUE*)
BWV 1080 IN D MINOR
(1749)

CONTRAPUNCTUS I

CONTRAPUNCTUS 6 - IN
THE FRENCH STYLE

About 7 minutes

Extracts from the *Art of Fugue* were performed at Cratfield in 2009 by the Sacconi Quartet. The fugue of the mature Baroque was the final flowering of Renaissance and Baroque polyphony.

While most composers of Bach's generation had turned to other musical forms, Bach himself continued to write in 'older' styles, and was to become the unchallenged master of the fugue.

The *Art of Fugue* was written during the last years of his life, and was prepared for publication at the time of his death. *Die Kunst Der Fuge* is a work written for no specific instrument or instrumental combination, and although usually played on a keyboard instrument, such as harpsichord, piano or organ, it is sometimes played these days by a string quartet, as we hear the short excerpts today, although the concept of a string quartet as we know it, was unknown in Bach's lifetime.

The whole work consists of 14 fugues, placed in order of increasing complexity, plus four canons built on the same motto theme as the 14 fugues, and similarly placed in order of complexity, form a sort of coda to the whole. A final Fugue was left unfinished.

Contrapunctus 6, in the style of a French overture, is a tour de force of contrapunctus ingenuity

FELIX
MENDELSSOHN -
BARTHOLDY
1809-1847

FUGUE OP.81 NO.4 IN E
FLAT MAJOR
A TEMPO ORDINARIO

About 5 minutes

This piece has not previously been performed at Cratfield. It was written at the time Mendelssohn was completing his Quartet in A minor Op.13 (1827).

Op.81 consists of four pieces for string quartet that have no musical kingship, so they tend to be played separately. It's unclear whether Mendelssohn wanted to produce a collection of pieces for string quartet or whether they were beginnings of incomplete quartets? The gentle work cleverly conceals Mendelssohn's craftsmanship and fugal ingenuity.

ALEXANDER
PORFIRYEVICH
BORODIN
1833-1887

STRING QUARTET NO.2
IN D MAJOR (1881)

ALLEGRO MODERATO

SCHERZO (ALLEGRO)

NOTTURNO (ANDANTE)

ANDANTE

About 29 minutes

This is the first time music by Borodin has been performed at Cratfield. Borodin was born in Saint Petersburg as an illegitimate son of a 62 year old Georgian Nobleman, Luka Gedevanishili. To avoid a scandal Alexander was registered as the son of one of his servants, Porfiry Borodin, and he kept this surname all his life. Despite his inauspicious start, Alexander enjoyed a comfortable upbringing, thanks to his father's influence and his mother's attention. Alexander's mother, a young Russian woman, named Evdokia Antonova, encouraged his studies in both music and science. Borodin initially chose a career in medicine; he later changed tack to chemical research. Music had been one of his Alexander's hobbies since his youth, but meeting the brilliant pianist Ekaterina Protopopova in 1861 sparked a new period of musical interest. He began to learn composition under Mily Balakirev in 1862 and shortly after pro-

duced his first symphony. He and Protopopova were married the following year and in the decade afterwards he would produce most of his memorable compositions. His fame spread outside Russia after the composer, Franz Liszt, conducted performances of his compositions and he became known as one of the *The Five* group of Russian composers.

Despite having a dual career in music and science, Borodin also found time to campaign for equal education for women and for women's rights in general. He set up the first medical courses for women in Russia in 1872 and was one of the first people in the world to open medical education for women.

Borodin's great opera, *Prince Igor*, that includes the famous Polovtsian Dances, which he began 19 years earlier, was left unfinished at the time of his death at the early age of 54. Besides *Prince Igor* and other opera's, Borodin's compositions include three symphonies, two string quartets, 16 songs and the tone poem, *In the Steppes of Central Asia*.

Although Borodin's 2nd String Quartet is more lyrical than dramatic, don't be fooled that this quartet, written by a part-time composer, is lacking in formal rigorous structure. In fact the quartet is a fine example of sonata form writing, with three out of the four movements in sonata form, as well as much contrapuntal writing throughout this superb and much loved

string quartet. The D major opening theme is played by the cello in a high register, followed by the first violin. At *the transition* (bar 35), the key changes to A major with a gorgeous melody for the first violin, with *pizzicato* accompaniment of the other three instruments. The first violin sours high just before we reach bar 86, where the music becomes more animated, leading to the F major development, and following contrapuntal passages, the music returns to the home key of D major for the recapitulation. The gorgeous melody returns before the music again becomes animated but moves into tranquil mood as the movement comes to quiet close.

The F major *Scherzo*, and unusually for a scherzo, is in sonata form. It has a fleeting rhythmic pulse reminiscent of a Mendelssohn scherzo. The second subject marked *meno mosso* (reduced speed) is the first reference in this quartet to the adaptation made in 1950's for the one time popular musical *Kismet*. The tune for the musical was called, *Baubles, Bangles and Beads*. The development section is full of Borodin's contrapuntal ingenuity, before the BBB tune returns in the recapitulation. Towards the close the music becomes lively (*Vivace*) with dotted rhythm passages for the 1st and 2nd violins and the movement ends quietly with all four instruments playing *pizzicato*.

The beautiful slow movement (*Notturmo*) supposedly composed to celebrate 20 years from when Borodin met his wife, has become famous for its glorious main theme,

again adapted in the musical *Kismet* as, *And this is my Beloved*. The key is A major and the theme is played initially on the cello with 2nd violin and viola accompaniment. The first violin is silent for the first 24 bars and then magically takes over the tune in the high stratosphere – a wonderful effect! The middle section is slightly more agitated, but the main tune dominates the movement with all four instruments given their chance to shine. The movement at the close is marked *perdenosi* (dying away).

The finale in D major opens with a slow question and answer dialogue between the two violins and the lower instruments, before the music moves into vivace in dotted rhythm mode. Again the first violin is silent for 35 bars of the vivace section before taking over the main theme. The 2nd theme is marked *dolce cantabile* (sweet/singing) but the tempo remains vivace. At the start of the A minor development, the question and answer dialogue is reversed, with the lower instruments asking the question with the violins answering. The recapitulation, back in D major, again has the question and answer dialogue, but this time all four instruments are playing in unison. The movement works towards a lively finish with the first violin playing above the staff at the resolute conclusion.

INTERVAL

Refreshments are offered by a team from the parish, in aid of church funds

LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN
1770-1827

STRING QUARTET NO.14
IN C# MINOR OP.131
(1826)

ADAGIO MA NON
TROPPO E MOLTO
ESPRESSIVO

ALLEGRO MOLTO VIVACE

ALLEGRO MODERATO –
ADAGIO

ANDANTE MA NON
TROPPO E MOLTO
CANTABILE

PRESTO

ADAGIO QUASI UN POCO
ANDANTE

ALLEGRO

About 40 minutes

This piece was previously performed at Cratfield in 1995 by the Danel Quartet and again in 2011 by the Solstice String Quartet. Beethoven's 16 string quartets (17 if one considers the *Grosse Fuge* as a stand-alone piece, instead of the finale to number 15 for which it was written,) are not only the pinnacle of all string quartets but possibly the pinnacle of all chamber music. As with the symphony, where Beethoven expanded the form from the Haydn model, so with the string quartet. The quartets neatly divide into the three period of Beethoven's creative life, Nos. 1-6 the op.18 set, may be his early period, but they are full of vitality and deeply emotional in parts. The middle period consist of the three op.59 quartets, known as the *Razumovsky's*. These three quartets represent Beethoven at his most outward looking grand composer, writing difficult music for its time, but still seeking audience approval. Between the big *Razumovsky* quartets and the very different inward late quartets, there are two quartets which can be described as middle/late works: No.10 op.74 (*the Harp*) and No.11 op.95 (*Serioso*). The late Beethoven string quartets: No.12 op.127, No.13 op.130, No.14 op.131, No.15 op.132, No.16 op.135 and No.17 op.133 still sound modern in the 21st century. So much has been written about their quality and the feel of musical improvisation still shocks and fascinates listeners. The perceived sonata structure of a classical period string quartet goes out of the window with these quartets. Beethoven looks backwards to the baroque era and

uses fugal style music interspersed with late romantic sudden changes of mood and tempo. For many music lovers, the string quartet we hear today, No.14 op.131, is Beethoven's greatest string quartet, and there's evidence to suggest that Beethoven himself thought that it was his best work in the string quartet medium. The seven movements, lasting approx 40 minutes, are played continuously without a break. Schubert said of the quartet, "After this what is left to write". Robert Schumann thought that the quartet had a grandeur that words cannot express. The quartet is fully integrated beginning in C# minor and ending in C# major. The finale quotes the opening fugue and this style of cyclical composition was way ahead of its time in 1826.

The 1st movement is in C# minor. The slow stately fugue of the first movement opens with the first violin playing solo for the opening few bars followed by the second violin and then the other two instruments enter the proceedings. The mood is dark and serious, the music moving briefly into E flat minor for nine bars and B major for six bars, settling for 23 bars into A major. The final 39 bars are back in the home key of C# minor.

About 7 minutes

The 2nd movement is in D major. The music opens up into sunnier climes with the mood lightening, the key remaining in D major throughout the movement.

About 3 minutes

The 3rd very short movement in B minor is

basically an introduction to the 4th movement. Bar six is marked *adagio* followed by a solo flourish from the first violin to be played *piu vivace* (a little lively), before the music comes to full stop.

About 45 seconds

The 4th movement in A major is the longest movement of the work and it's in variation form. The theme is in two parts followed by six variations and a coda. Variation 1 is marked *piu mosso* (a little quicker) – variation two is marked *Andante moderato e lusinghiero* (moderate walking-coaxing). This variation starts with the lower instruments alone in serious mode, answered by the higher instruments in similar mode, but as the marking suggests, the music almost coaxes itself out of that mood with a glimpse of geniality. The *adagio* 3rd variation starts in a hesitant manner and is rather flat-footed but becoming more lyrical. Variation 4, *allegretto*, is the first variation with repeat markings. Variation 5 is marked *Adagio ma non troppo semplice* (slow – but not too slow and simple). The music has a stately steady gait, serious and soulful. Towards the end of this section, all four instruments have a solo recitative bar followed by four bars of trill for the first violin. Variation 6 *Allegretto* opens in C major, has the first violin trilling away as the key moves back to A major, whilst the other three instruments play in a sustained melodic manner, the movements main theme. The coda also marked *allegretto* opens in F major before returning to A major to close movement No.4.

About 14 minutes

The 5th movement in E major, lively and upbeat, is basically a scherzo with repeat markings. The key moves to A major, returning to E major for real zany coda where the strings are asked to play *sui ponticello* (bow near the bridge) – a sort of eerie spooky effect.

About 5½ minutes

The 6th movement in G# minor is brief but deeply emotional in its musical language; acting as an introduction to finale.

About 2 minutes

The finale 7th movement is the only movement in sonata form; the key is back to C# minor progresses at a steady pace in its resoluteness. The key moves to D major before returning to C# minor right up until the final bars, with the music pulling towards F# minor, C# major finally emerges at the close, but still leaving us with a somewhat unsettling conclusion to this masterpiece.

About 6½ minutes

What is one to make of this amazing string quartet? I would imagine it being as difficult to play, even after nearly 200 years since its composition, as it is for the audience to absorb. As a layman it seems to me that Beethoven threw everything but the kitchen sink at the piece, like a contemporary visual artist mixing his palette of colours onto the canvas in a haphazard fashion. All the musical forms and expressive devices that Beethoven used throughout his career are there, including Fugal writing, Variations, Scherzo, deeply felt emotional utterances, sadness and cries of joy, as well as humour and sheer craziness.

But the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The way Beethoven organises his key structure and contrasts the various musical forms, mood changes, tempi and instrumental colours is quite extraordinary and we can only look on with a sense of awe and wonder.

MUSIC ON CD
TODAY'S PERFORMERS
AND WORKS

The Brodsky Quartet, as one would expect, have a huge discography on various labels that include most of the standard repertory for and have recently, to great acclaim, a second recording of the complete Shostakovich String Quartets, recorded from live performances. They have also recorded a significant amount of rare and contemporary classical repertoire as well as extending their artistry in having recorded with musicians from other genres, such as Elvis Costello.

Bach *Art of Fugue* for string quartet: there is one outstanding recommendation for the complete *Art of Fugue* played by a string quartet and this is the Emerson Quartet on Decca.

Mendelssohn Four pieces for string quartet op.81: the Elias String Quartet who are no strangers to this Parish, have recorded op.81 with the composers second and sixth String Quartet on Alto label, at bargain price.

Borodin String Quartet No. 2: two bargain discs both neatly comprising a single disc of the two Borodin String Quartets,

the Shostakovich Quartet on Alto and the Budapest Haydn Quartet on Naxos. A new recording on Hyperion at mid-price features the Goldner String Quartet, which programmes as well as the 2nd Quartet, Borodin's Piano Quintet, with Piers Lane at the piano. The disc also includes a Cello Sonata by Mikhail Goldstein.

Beethoven String Quartet No.14 op.131: the list of recordings of Beethoven's late string quartets are too numerous to even attempt a recommended version here. If it helps I have in my collection, two outstanding sets which I find totally excellent in every way; they are the Takacs Quartet on Decca and the Belcea Quartet, on Zig-Zag Territoires.

OUR 2018 SEASON
OUTLINE
PROVISIONAL
PROGRAMME

ALL CONCERTS ARE
AT 3PM ON SUNDAYS
AT ST MARY'S CHURCH
IN CRATFIELD

1ST JULY
Leonora Piano Trio: Lalo, David Mathews,
Suk, Beethoven

15 JULY
Jack Liebeck *violin*, Katya Apekisheva
piano: Debussy, Messiaen, Faure, Franck

29 JULY
Allegri String Quartet: Mozart, Alec Roth,
Beethoven

12 AUGUST
Maxwell String Quartet: Tchaikovsky,
Schumann, Haydn.

26 AUGUST
Kathryn Stott *piano*: Bach, Grieg, Chopin,
Wagner, Ginastera, Richard Strauss, Ravel.

9 SEPTEMBER
Carducci Quartet & Craig Ogden *guitar*:
Mendelssohn, Boccherini, Piazzolla.

Concerts at Cratfield

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