



St Mary's Church, Cratfield  
Sunday 16 July 2017

## ZEMLINSKY QUARTET

Frantisek Soucek *violin*  
Petr Strizek *violin*  
Petr Holman *viola*  
Vladimir Fortin *cello*

Concerts at Cratfield

## TODAY'S CONCERT

Although we programme in our chamber music concerts a wide variety of different instrumental combinations plus the occasional vocal and solo piano recital, the heart of our programming is music from the large string quartet repertoire of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which represents composers writing their most intimate and deeply felt utterances and has left us music lovers with a wonderful legacy of great works from composers we love and revere. Today we present the first of our two string quartet programmes this season.

Music of the Czech Lands is music from Bohemia, Moravia and Czech Silesia and has its roots in a thousand years of Sacred Music. Traditional music from Bohemia includes the playing of the Bagpipe; whilst the traditional music of Moravia is associated with the Cimbalom. Several Czech composers from the Baroque era are known today and receive occasional concert performances and recordings. Jan Dismas Zelenka (1678-1745) wrote a huge amount of liturgical music. Jan Vaclav Stamic (1717-1757) better known by the Germanised Johann Stamitz was writing music more in the then fledging Classical style with 58 symphonies to his name. The same is true of Franz Xavier Richter (1709-1789) who wrote seven symphonies and seven string quartets. Mozart (1756-1791) achieved massive success in Prague which is still felt today, as any visitor to the city would attest to, with ad-hoc concerts of his music performed daily in various venues throughout the city. As well

as the famous world premiere of his opera *Don Giovanni* in 1787 at the Estates Theatre which is still operational today, his late opera *La Clemenza di Tito*, the Clarinet Concerto and Symphony No.38 known as the *Prague*, were all first performed in that city. The all-Czech programme we have today, played by an all-Czech string quartet, is a special delight. The four most famous Czech composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were Bedrich Smetana (1824-1884), Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904), Leos Janacek (1854-1928) and Bohuslav Martinu (1890-1959). Two out of these four are being represented today, together with a slightly less well-known figure Josef Suk (1874-1935). Suk was Dvorak's son-in-law and wrote music very much in the Czech tradition of Smetana and Dvorak, but certainly in his later works adapting to a more modern 20<sup>th</sup> century style. The odd-one-out to a certain extent, is Janacek who although in his early compositions followed his Czech musical predecessors, in later works his music became uniquely his own, having studied the folk music of his native Moravia. His operas, which have in the past half century entered the repertoire of the world's major opera houses are based on Janacek's idiosyncratic use of speech patterns that follow the natural rhythms of the Czech language.

## TODAY'S PERFORMERS

The multi award winning Zemlinsky Quartet making their Cratfield debut this afternoon are rooted firmly in the Czech tradition. Founded in 1994 whilst still students, they won the first grand prize at

the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition in 2010. They have also been awarded top prizes at the Banff International String Quartet International Competition (2007) as well as winning competitions in Prague (2005) and London (2006) where they also received the Audience Prize. The Quartet was a recipient of the Alexander Zemlinsky Advancement Award in 2008; they perform all over Europe, the USA and Canada. Their repertoire contains more than 200 works. They record exclusively for the French record label *Praga Digitals*. Their recording of a 4CD set of Dvorak's early works won the prestigious French award *Diapason d'or*. Between 2006 -2011 the Zemlinsky Quartet was assistant Quartet in Residence at Musikakademie Basel in Switzerland.

Zemlinsky Quartet is named after the Austrian composer, conductor and teacher, Alexander Zemlinsky (1871-1942) whose enormous contribution to Czech, German and Jewish culture during his 16 year residence in Prague was underrated until recently. His four string quartets belong to their basic repertoire and they have maintained a special relationship with the Zemlinsky Foundation in Vienna.

JOSEF SUK  
(1874-1935)

Suk's Quartet No.1 is new to Cratfield; during the 1994 Cratfield season we did programme his Four Pieces for Violin and Piano Op.17. Suk was born in Krecovice, Bohemia and studied organ, violin and piano with his father Josef Suk senior, and

with the Czech violinist Antonin Bennewitz. The composer, Josef Bohuslav Foerster who lived a long life (1859-1951) and is not totally forgotten today, taught Suk musical theory and Hanus Wihan guided him towards writing chamber music. But Suk's greatest influence was another of his teachers, Antonin Dvorak. In 1898 Suk married Dvorak's daughter, Ottilie, but tragically his wife died in 1905, just 14 months after the death of Dvorak. This double grieving culminated in Suk writing his greatest work, the symphonic masterpiece *Asrael* Op.27 (1905). Suk's best known early work, his Serenade for Strings Op.6 (1892) was promoted by no less a figure than Brahms, who had earlier encouraged Dvorak by introducing the older composer to his publisher. Another major work of Suk's is *Ripening* Op.34 (1912-17); his symphonic poem for orchestra and chorus. His later works experimented with poly-tonality and his work is indeed a bridge between the romantic style and the modern compositional movement. Unlike many of his Czech contemporaries Suk did not incorporate folk or literary motifs into his works. In 1922 he became professor of music at the Prague Conservatory and one of his pupils was Bohuslav Martinu; so one can follow a direct line of Czech music from Smetana, Dvorak, Suk to Martinu, who lived until 1959. The great violinist Josef Suk, who died as recently as 2011, was the composer's grandson and the great grandson of Dvorak. Suk the younger, became a great concert hall favourite in London during The 1960's & 1970's and

conductors such as Georg Solti favoured him as the soloist in the Violin Concerto repertoire, particularly in the Dvorak and Bartok Concertos. Josef Suk, the violinist, was also a formidable chamber music performer and has left many fine recordings of mainstream repertoire as well as Czech music.

Suk wrote an early string quartet in D minor as a 14 year old boy in 1888 but only two movements survive. So today's quartet in B flat major is his official string quartet No.1. He later revised the 4<sup>th</sup> movement during 1915, but today we hear the original 1896 version. In fact Suk only wrote one further string quartet dating from 1911, which contains more fingerprints of 20<sup>th</sup> century musical style than the No.1 we hear today and which is very much in the Czech romantic tradition.

STRING QUARTET NO.1  
OP.111 IN B FLAT MAJOR  
(1896)  
ORIGINAL VERSION

*ALLEGRO MODERATO*

*INTERMEZZO - TEMPO DI  
MARCIA*

*ADAGIO MA NON TROPPO*

*ALLEGRO GIOCO*

About 27 minutes

The *Allegro moderato* 1<sup>st</sup> movement opens with a tranquil lyrical theme and immediately in the 6<sup>th</sup> bar a beautiful solo is given to the 2<sup>nd</sup> violin. Suk himself was a virtuoso violinist who played 2<sup>nd</sup> violin throughout his career in the Czech Quartet. Further into the exposition following, the 2<sup>nd</sup> violin playing five bars of dotted rhythm again gets the limelight in an expressive solo. Finally, as we arrive at the 2<sup>nd</sup> subject the 1<sup>st</sup> violin gets the chance to shine but again some bars later the 2<sup>nd</sup> violin is given the limelight, immediately followed by a *molto espresso* solo for the cello. A double forte marked *marcato* brings in the development, which contrasts energetic

sections with more lyrical music reminiscent of the tranquil opening. And it is tranquil music that dominates the recapitulation, where finally the viola gets his solo moment and lovely it is too. Towards the end of this fine movement, the music marked *pesante* (heavy and ponderous) is quickly followed by a beautiful solo for the 1<sup>st</sup> violin, the music returning to the tranquil mood which has never been allowed to vanish despite the occasional outbursts of more forceful music, and the movement ends serenely.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> movement is a short *intermezzo* with a steady March rhythm and as with a Scherzo or Minuet movement, the first part is repeated. The music contains much *pizzicato* playing for the cello, and some solo bars for the viola. The tempo picks up for the fast middle section, again with repeat markings. The slower music returns but the fast tempo dominates the final bars which end in an emphatic double forte.

As with so many works in sonata form, the heart of this excellent and underrated string quartet, lies in its beautiful slow movement. It begins with a slow heavy tread and following a short cadenza for the first violin, a sad melody emerges played by the 2<sup>nd</sup> violin and viola. The melody is worked through 24 bars, accelerating to a climax with the music, then dying away with just the 1<sup>st</sup> violin playing. Then the clouds clear, the sun comes out and we are in 'Bohemian Woods & Fields' territory. Following in the footsteps of Smetana and

Dvorak, this is Czech romantic music at its finest. The music eventually returns to the initial sad theme and towards the end, the theme is played on the viola accompanied by cello alone. The movement concludes with gentle repetitions of the sad music. Although Suk wrote an alternative finale for this quartet in 1915, when his style had already developed towards modernity, this original 1896 version fits the preceding three movements like a glove. A jolly dance dominates the movement reminiscent of a Dvorak Slavonic Dance. It is a movement full of *joie de vivre*. Lots of dotted rhythm throughout, with fewer solo opportunities compared to the previous movements. At the conclusion the music gradually speeds up to an ‘on your toes’ finish.

LEOS JANACEK  
(1855 -1928)

Janacek’s String Quartet *Intimate Letters* has previously been performed at Cratfield in 2010 by the Badke Quartet. Leos Janacek, son of a schoolmaster, was born in Hukvaldy, Moravia, then part of the Austrian Empire. The family were not well off and although Janacek showed an early musical talent in choral singing, his father encouraged him to follow the family tradition into teaching. However Janacek enrolled at the Abbey of St Thomas in Brno, as a choral scholar and later joined the Prague Organ School. He was anti-authoritarian and freely criticised his teachers. Interestingly, he spoke in a staccato speech rhythm manner, which was reproduced later in life by his characters in his famous operas. Janacek’s early compositional style

was in the romantic tradition, having become friends with Dvorak, but his mature style is more influenced by composers such as the Russian, Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) than the German musical high priest, Richard Wagner (1813-1883). In fact his late style anticipates the late style of Bela Bartok (1881-1945). Janacek's breakthrough work was the opera, *Jenufa*, first performed in Brno in 1904, when he was almost 50 years old. All the great works of Janacek were written during his senior years.

STRING QUARTET NO.2  
*INTIMATE LETTERS* (1928)

ANDANTE

ADAGIO

MODERATO

ALLEGRO

About 26 minutes

Each of the three string quartets being performed this afternoon play for just under 30 minutes but whilst the Suk and the Dvorak quartets are expressive, lyrical, expertly constructed and deeply satisfying as musical experiences, the 30 odd minutes of Janacek's 2<sup>nd</sup> String Quartet, is on a totally different plane altogether. This is not your subtle high art 30 minute string quartet; this is raw searing passionate and deeply emotional, a composer aged 74 pouring out his feelings of unrequited love for a married woman 37 years younger than himself. The woman concerned, Kamila Stosslova, met the composer in 1917 at a health spa in Moravia. Kamila was Janacek's inspiration for several of his operas, *Kata* in *Katya Kabonova*, the *Vixen* in *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Emily Marty* in *The Makropulos Affair*. Other works were also inspired by his passion, and they include, *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, *Glagolitic Mass* and Janacek's best known work *Sinfonietta*. It seems that

like Wagner, Janacek needed the stimulus of being passionately in love to write his music. How else can one explain the composer's motivations: to continuously pursue a young lady, not only unavailable to him, but also a lady that did not appreciate his music? However despite Kamila's lukewarm response to him, both personally and musically, Janacek wrote over 700 letters to her!

A note in the Philharmonia study score gives the quartet a sort of personal programme. The first movement describes the impression of the first meeting with Kamila, whilst the second concerns the summer events at the spa where they originally met. The third is happy and jolly, but melts into a vision resembling Kamila's image. The fourth movement is about fear for Kamila's wellbeing and the music morphs into longing and wishful fulfilment. On the other hand one could listen to this music without knowing anything about the composer's romantic addiction and just feel the passion of the music itself, appreciate the intense lyricism of Janacek's themes and the total individuality of his style. This string quartet has such immediacy of expression, that any attempt at formal analysis is probably not the best way to approach it. Pointers to the listener may be more useful.

Janacek originally wanted to use a viola d'amore for this particular string quartet, but rejected that idea for the standard viola. Many passages for viola and cello

are marked, *sui ponticello* (bow near the bridge) especially in the first movement. This gives the music a nasal tone and metallic quality. To contrast this harsh tone, the frequent lyrical passages of exquisite beauty, gives the sound a continuous yin and yang of mood and expression. Janacek works in small blocks, and throughout the work, tempo changes are numerous and extreme fast to extreme slow and many in-between speed markings, interchange continuously. Repeat markings are in place in all four movements, although less so in the first movement. And like the frequent tempo changes the repeat instructions are used for small blocks of passages only. Each of the four movements contain a kaleidoscope of musical emotions, creating its own world in a string quartet of beauty power, and amazing originality.

## INTERVAL

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

ANTONIN DVORAK  
(1841-1904)

Dvorak's *American* String Quartet was previously performed at Cratfield in 2011 by the Sacconi Quartet. Dvorak was born in Nelahozeves, a Bohemian village north of Prague. He was the first-born of nine children, his father was a butcher and innkeeper. At 12 years old he moved to Zlonice to live with an aunt and uncle and started to study harmony, piano and organ. As a young music teacher in the 1860's Dvorak tutored the sisters, Josephina and Anna Cermakova and, although originally falling in love with the elder sis-

ter Josephina who rejected him, he married the younger sister, Anna. Their early years of marriage were darkly shadowed by losing three of their children and struggling financially. Dvorak won an Austrian government award which brought him into contact with Johannes Brahms and formed a close friendship with the famous German composer who was a big help to Dvorak in furthering his career. Dvorak travelled to America in 1892 and became director of the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York City. He wrote his best known works whilst there; the *New World* Symphony and the Cello Concerto, as well as the String Quartet we hear this afternoon. Dvorak returned to Bohemia in 1895. Dvorak composed nine symphonies, nine operas and 14 string quartets, as well as other chamber works, concertos, sacred works and many other compositions in a variety of genres.

STRING QUARTET NO. 12  
OP. 96 AMERICAN  
IN F MAJOR

ALLEGRO MA TROPPO

LENTO

MOLTO VIVACE

VIVACE MA NON TROPPO

About 27 minutes

His 12<sup>th</sup> string quartet in F, known as the *American*, is his most well-known and most often performed of the *oeuvre*. One is unsurprised by its popularity as it is one of the most tuneful quartets in the repertoire; the tunes being a combination of Czech folk music tinged with a hint of native North American spirituals. Written in just two weeks the string quartet has a wonderful spontaneity. With the composer himself playing the first violin part, it was first performed privately in Spillville, Iowa where Dvorak was living when in the USA.

In 1894 the first professional performance

took place in Boston played by the Kneisel Quartet. The quartet opens with a theme in the *pentatonic scale* (five notes without semitones). The theme as much Bohemian as American is taken up by the viola and continued by the first violin. The A major 2<sup>nd</sup> subject is a lovely tune introduced by the first violin, reminiscent of the composers *New World Symphony*. Following a repeat of the exposition, the viola brings in the development which leads to short fugal section in F minor. During the recapitulation the cello takes centre stage with a beautiful expressive melody and on the return of the second subject, the first violin again kicks off the tune followed by the cello. The music winds down to, one feels, a peaceful conclusion but the music picks up its energy again for the remaining few bars and ends emphatically.

The *Lento* second movement in D minor is basically a ‘song without words’ with a gorgeous melody alternating between the first violin and the cello, leading to a glorious expressive climax. Towards the close of the movement, the cello again takes up the tune with the three other instruments accompanying with a mix of *pizzicato* and *arco* bars: a lovely effect.

The third movement is a variant of a scherzo in an ABACA form. The second violin and cello start the movement with a lively theme. The B section in F minor is thought to be based on the song of a bird named, *Scarlet Tanager*, which Dvorak heard in the woods near Spillville. Following a re-

peat of the first theme the C section is also in F minor but contrasted to the B section with much staccato dotted rhythm. The A section is repeated for third time and the movement ends *pianissimo*.

The finale a sonata-rondo in the home key of F major, begins with a jaunty gallop; the *Lone Ranger* coming to mind! It could also be a reference to ‘trains’ as Dvorak was the original train-spotter! The tune that follows led by the first violin reminds one of the composer’s Slavonic Dances. Two separate middle sections are contrasted with the jaunty main theme, containing quiet expressive music recalling the church music of Bohemian Spillville, in which the composer and his wife, were regular attendees. The quartet concludes with a return to the jolly happy good feel factor music of the finale’s opening.

MUSIC ON CD  
TODAY’S PERFORMERS  
AND WORKS

The Zemlinsky Quartet, record exclusively for the French record label Praga. They are one of only a few quartets that have recorded the complete Dvorak String Quartets. They have recorded a wide range of repertoire, including the Suk String Quartet they play for us today, and string quartets by their composer namesake, Zemlinsky.

Suk, String Quartet No.1: The Gabrieli String Quartet have recorded the the two Janacek String Quartets on the Eloquence label, with the Suk String Quartet, played by the Musikverein Quartet on the same

disc, at bargain price. Two of our afternoon pieces on the one disc seem an obvious recommendation.

Janacek String Quartet No.2: Top recommendation would be the award winning Pavel Haas Quartet; the disc including the two Janaceks and the Pavel Haas String Quartets. This is a full price disc. For a bargain choice, as well as the Eloquence disc mentioned above, the Talich Quartet on La Dolce Volta couple the two Janaceks with Schulhoff's String Quartet No.1.

Dvorak String Quartet No.12: Naxos at bargain price have an excellent version by the Vlach Quartet, coupled with Dvorak's String Quartet No.13. And of course we highly recommend today's artists version on Praga coupled with the No.14 and the Terzetto and available as a SACD at medium price.

## PROGRAMME CHANGE

In our final concert on 10 September the Brodsky String Quartet will play Bach's Art of Fugue (excerpt), Mendelssohn's Fugue from Op.81 and Borodin's 2<sup>nd</sup> String Quartet. After the interval they will play Beethoven's String Quartet No.14 in C Op.131. What a wonderful way close their concert and our thirtieth season!

## Concerts at Cratfield

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