



PIATTI QUARTET

Michael Trainor violin
Rebecca Chan violin
Tetsuumi Nagata viola
Jessie Ann Richardson cello

University Concert Society 60th anniversary performance

Beethoven Quartet in F, Op 18 No 1 (1800)
Dvořák Quartet in F, Op 96 *American* (1893)
Mark-Anthony Turnage *Winter's Edge* (2016) – last movement

Tuesday 24 November 2020 - 8pm UK Time

Welcome

Our latest online performance, in a year where live music for an audience in the venue has been so notable by its absence, is a moment not only to profile one of the country's leading chamber ensembles, but to celebrate a landmark in the history of classical music in Southampton. 60 years ago, on 24 November 1960, the Martin String Quartet gave the inaugural recital of the University Concert Society to herald a series which in subsequent years would bring some of the great names in classical music to the city and to the campus where, since its opening in 1974, Turner Sims has been located. Singers Janet Baker and Alfred Deller, the Amadeus Quartet and Melos Ensemble, and pianists Annie Fischer and Charles Rosen, were among the rollcall of artists who performed as part of the Society's series.

The Piatti's programme includes two works - by Beethoven and Dvořák - which were heard on that opening night in 1960. They conclude with new music by one of our leading contemporary composers, Mark-Anthony Turnage, who celebrates his own 60th birthday this year. The Quartet has a close relationship with Turnage, and co-commissioned and premiered the work which we will hear.

I'm most grateful to the Piatti Quartet for being with us all for this special occasion. With further online events from the concert hall planned for the coming weeks and months, do let us know about your audience experience - and of course what you would like to see. As we move closer to the end of a year unlike anything we might have imagined or planned for, I hope we can continue to bring you musical treats, much as our predecessors who founded the Concert Society wanted to do, and did, 60 years ago.

KEVIN APPLEBY

Concert Hall Manager, Turner Sims

PROGRAMME NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Quartet No 1 in F, Op 18 No 1

Allegro con brio

Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Allegro

In 1792, Beethoven left his native city of Bonn to seek his fortune in the imperial capital, Vienna. Five years earlier his patron, the Archbishop of Cologne, a scion of the imperial family, had sent him to Vienna, where he had hoped to have lessons with Mozart. His plans were frustrated by the illness and subsequent death of his mother, which made it necessary to return to Bonn and before long to take charge of the welfare of his younger brothers.

Beethoven's father, overshadowed by the eminence of his own father, Kapellmeister to a former Archbishop, had proved inadequate both as a musician and to the family, of which his son now took control.

As a boy, Beethoven was trained to continue family tradition as a musician and had followed his father and grandfather as a member of the archiepiscopal musical establishment. In 1792

he arrived in Vienna with introductions to various members of the nobility and with the offer of lessons with Haydn, from whom he later claimed to have learned nothing. There were further lessons from the Court Composer, Antonio Salieri, and from Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, and an initial career of some brilliance as a keyboard virtuoso. He was to establish himself, in the course of time, as a figure of remarkable genius and originality and as a social eccentric, no respecter of persons, his eccentricity all the greater for his increasing deafness. This last disability made public performance, whether as a keyboard-player or in the direction of his own music, increasingly difficult, and must have served to encourage the development of one particular facet of his music, stigmatised by hostile contemporary critics as 'learned', the use of counterpoint. He died in Vienna in 1827.

In his sixteen string quartets, the first set of six published in 1801 and the last completed in 1826 and published in the year of the composer's death, Beethoven was as innovative as ever, developing and extending a form that seemed to have already reached a height of perfection in the later work of Haydn and of Mozart. The earliest mention of a string

quartet comes in the recorded request of Count Apponyi in 1795. This had no immediate result, but it seems probable that Beethoven in these years was influenced by Emanuel Aloys Förster, a musician 22 years his senior, whose proficiency as a teacher of counterpoint he admired and recommended to others, while himself perhaps profiting from the example of Förster's own quartets. The first group of string quartets by Beethoven, published as Opus 18, consisted of quartets written between 1798 and 1800 and was dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz. The third of these, in D major, was the first in order of composition, followed by the work we hear this evening, the Quartet in F major. This last was completed in its original version by 25th June 1799, the date of an inscription by the composer on the first violin part, addressed to his close friend Karl Amenda, who had taken up residence in Vienna in 1798, serving first Prince Lobkowitz and then as music-teacher in the Mozart family. The friendship of Beethoven and Amenda had started at a quartet evening in a friend's house, when the composer turned the pages for Amenda, playing first violin. In 1799 Amenda was obliged to return home to Courland after the death of his brother. Beethoven's note to his friend reads: 'Accept this quartet as a small token of our friendship. Whenever you play it to yourself, remember the days we have spent together and at the same time the sincere affection I felt and will always feel for you, your warm-hearted and true friend.' In a letter to Amenda of 1st July 1801 he warns him not to lend the quartet to anyone, since he has made various changes in it.

The F major Quartet opens with an exciting first movement in which the opening figure, announced by all four instruments, assumes dramatic importance in the central development section. Beethoven is reported to have played the D minor slow movement on the pianoforte to Amenda, who heard in it the parting of two lovers, an image that the composer approved, telling his friend that he had had in mind the scene in the burial vault in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The Scherzo and Trio make a lively contrast, after the sustained beauty, tinged with tragedy, of the Adagio, while the finale explores contrapuntal possibilities, a considerable movement that significantly extends the technical potential of the form.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Quartet in F, Op 96 *American*

Allegro ma non troppo

Lento

Molto vivace

Finale: vivace ma non troppo

How *American* is the *American* Quartet? It is true that it was written in Spillville, Iowa, when Dvořák was on holiday from his duties as Director of the National Conservatory of Music of America. But Spillville was no ordinary American community. It was a Czech settlement with a general commitment to the Czech language and with its own St Wenceslas Church. Dvořák, reunited at last with his family (which had been split between Prague and New York for the last six months), described it as 'a completely Czech place...where I am very happy'.

The *American* Quartet reflects in musical terms the curious national ambiguity of a little Bohemia in the mid-west. American commentators have found just as much evidence to claim a native or black American origin for certain themes as have Czech commentators to claim a Bohemian origin for the same themes. The fact is that pentatonic melody is common to many primitive cultures. Both the two main themes of the first movement are pentatonic - the brisk statement made by the viola in the opening bars, under quiet violin tremolandos, and the exquisitely nostalgic second-subject melody whispered by first violin over sustained harmonies in the rest of the ensemble.

Whatever its source, American or Bohemian, the expressive melody of the *Lento* is given Dvořák's undivided attention throughout. Everything is arranged to present it in its most alluring colours, to extend it and to develop its expressive potential in the middle section. It makes a last appearance in D minor on the cello accompanied by quiet chords, alternately plucked and bowed, on the other three instruments.

The second theme of the F major scherzo, presented high on the E-string of the first violin over an ostinato accompaniment, is based on the song of the scarlet tanager that the composer noted down on a walk in the woods by the Little Turkey river. Until Czech ornithologists find a bird on their own territory with a similar song this must be a point in

favour of the Americans. The pentatonic first theme remains common property, however, and so do the F minor variants which so effectively offset it in the two trio sections.

The main theme of the last movement, a rondo in F major, is another pentatonic tune, this one accompanied on its first appearance by an ostinato pattern somewhat dubiously identified as an Indian drum rhythm. The same rhythm persists on second violin and viola through much of the lyrical first episode in A flat major. It then disappears and remains out of hearing during the first return of the rondo theme and a thoughtful second episode which is said to be an echo of the little organ in St Wenceslas Church. The dancing rhythm reappears only at a point half-way through the recapitulation, on the recall of the first episode, but for no more than a few bars before it is swept aside by an increasingly vigorous and sonorous coda.

Programme note © Gerald Larner

Mark-Anthony Turnage (born 1960) ***Winter's Edge* (2016) - last movement**

A composer of international stature, Mark-Anthony Turnage is indisputably among the most significant creative figures to have emerged in British music of the last three decades. His first opera, *Greek*, established Turnage's reputation in 1988 as an artist who dared to forge his own path between modernism and tradition by means of a unique blend of jazz and classical styles.

Three Screaming Popes, *Kai*, *Momentum* and *Drowned Out* were created during his time as Composer in Association in Birmingham with Simon Rattle between 1989 and 1993, followed by *Blood on the Floor*, his unique score written for the distinguished jazz musicians John Scofield and Peter Erskine, and Martin Robertson. His opera, *The Silver Tassie*, was premiered by English National Opera in 2000, winning both the South Bank Show and the Olivier Awards for Opera. *Anna Nicole* played to sold-out houses at Covent Garden in 2011 and has also been staged in Dortmund, New York and Nuremburg, while his opera for family audiences *Coraline*, was staged by The Royal Opera at the Barbican Theatre in 2018, travelling on to Freiburg, Lille, Stockholm and Melbourne. Turnage has written ballet scores for both Sadler's Wells (*Undance*) and the Royal Ballet (*Trespass* and *Strapless*).

Turnage has been resident composer with the Chicago Symphony, BBC Symphony, and London Philharmonic Orchestras. Collaborations with the London Symphony Orchestra have included two new works, *Speranza* premiered under Daniel Harding in 2013 and *Remembering* which Simon Rattle conducted in London and with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 2017. A *Piano Concerto* for Marc-André Hamelin and a drumkit concerto featuring jazz drummer Peter Erskine were premiered in 2013. Recent chamber works have included *Contusion* for the Belcea Quartet and *Shroud* for the Emerson Quartet. Other recent scores include *Frieze* conducted by Vasily Petrenko at the BBC Proms, *Passchendaele* commemorating the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, the double violin concerto *Shadow Walker* written for soloists Vadim Repin and Daniel Hope, his setting of Ukrainian texts for soprano and orchestra, *Testament*, with first performances conducted by Kirill Karabits, and the song cycle *Refugee* written for tenor Allan Clayton and the Britten Sinfonia. Much of Turnage's music is recorded on Decca, Warner Classics, Chandos and the LPO and LSO labels, while *Scorched*, on Deutsche Grammophon, was nominated for a Grammy. Turnage is Research Fellow in Composition at the Royal College of Music, and is published by Boosey & Hawkes. He was awarded a CBE in the 2015 Queen's Birthday honours.

Winter's Edge, Turnage's fourth string quartet, comprises four movements, and bears the dedication 'for my Mother's 80th birthday'. The title belongs also to a metal band and to various works of fantasy fiction, but seems to have no programmatic connotations here; it may simply reflect the fact that the work was written at winter time. There are no expressive tempo markings, and very few verbal tempo instructions at all; tempos are indicated throughout by metronome markings. The last movement is all at one slow tempo, with a middle section, mostly over a recurring ground bass, in which a sinuous melody rises to the top of the texture, and with outer sections of still chords and little fragments of melody. Co-commissioned by the Piatti Quartet, the Wigmore Hall and Flagey ASBL, the work was premiered by them at the Klarafestival, Brussels in 2019, and received its UK premiere at the Wigmore Hall, London.

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Piatti Quartet

The Piatti Quartet are one of the most distinguished quartets of their generation. Prizewinners at the 2015 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, they have performed in all the major venues and festivals around the UK, and given concerts throughout the world, with national broadcasts on BBC Radio, ABC (Australia), RTÉ (Ireland) and France Musique (France).



The Piattis are renowned for their diverse programming and for passionate interpretations across the spectrum of quartet writing. World premieres are regularly performed alongside old masterpieces and the Piattis are particularly known for expanding the quartet genre through their collaborations with leading British composers. In 2020 the Piatti will record a new disc of works by Mark-Anthony Turnage (*Delphian*), featuring three world premiere recordings. They will also perform a new string quartet by Emily Howard at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in April 2021 (a Concertgebouw co-commission). Other current commissions and recent premieres include new works by Darren Bloom, Simon Holt, Freya Waley-Cohen and Jacques Cohen.

In 2019, the Piattis continued their connection to Mark-Anthony Turnage with the world premiere of his fourth string quartet, *Winter's Edge*, at the Klarafestival, Brussels. Co-commissioned by the Quartet, the Wigmore Hall and Flagey ASBL, they gave the UK premiere at the Wigmore Hall. The quartet have collaborated with artists such as Ian Bostridge, Michael Collins, Krzysztof Chorzelski, Julius Drake, Charles Owen and Guy Johnston.

The Quartet previously commissioned Joseph Phibbs' String Quartet No 1 and a recently released disc for the Champs Hill label features this work alongside the premiere recording of Turnage's *Twisted Blues with Twisted Ballad*, with classics by Britten and Bridge. Amongst glowing reviews, a quote from BBC Music Magazine; '... from soothing pastorate to euphoric rock anthem, this excellent album traces an intriguing path through modern British works for quartet... The Piatti Quartet are on ferociously fine form...'

The Quartet's other lauded recordings have been released on the Linn Records, NMC and Champs Hill labels. Recent seasons have included debuts in Rotterdam, Istanbul, and Barcelona, and at the Aldeburgh Festival.

At the 2015 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, the Piatti Quartet won 2nd Prize as well as the St. Lawrence SQ prize and the Sidney Griller Award for the best performance of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Contusion*. The Piattis are keen to pass on their passion to future generations and regularly coach chamber music at the Purcell School, Trinity Laban Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Music. The Quartet would like to thank the Britten Pears Foundation, the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust, the Hattori Foundation, the Razumovsky Trust, the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust, and the Fidelio Trust for their support.

The Piatti Quartet takes its name from the great 19th-century cellist Alfredo Piatti, who was a leading professor and exponent of chamber music at the Royal Academy of Music.

A short history of the University Concert Society

The following history of the University Concert Society was published in the programme for the 100th concert presented by the Society, which took place on 1 November 1977:

ON Tuesday, 12th July, 1960, an informal meeting was held at the University to consider the formation of a Concert Society which would present a series of subscription concerts at the University. This casual meeting heralded the start of a rich and rewarding concert life, not only for those on the campus but for townsfolk as well. Professor P. B. Morice, Professor of Civil Engineering, recalls that when he was appointed to the University in 1957 (before the establishment of a Music Department), he was disappointed to find that there was no live music on the campus, indeed, nothing to compare with the chamber concerts he had attended at Bristol University. With the approval of the then Vice-Chancellor, Gwilym James, he discussed the idea of forming a Concert Society with several interested and enthusiastic people-amongst whom was Richard Strange, an undergraduate in Botany and a keen amateur violinist. The latter suggested that his acquaintance with the Martin String Quartet might enable him to persuade them to initiate the concerts. He obviously succeeded, for the first subscription concert was given by this quartet on 24th November, 1960.

The concerts were first held in a general purpose room at the University under difficult conditions, and then later transferred to the Nuffield Theatre. In 1974 the opening of the University's Turner Sims Concert Hall, with its fine acoustics, at last gave the Concert Society a splendid permanent home and, with the subsequent exciting proliferation of musical events generally on the campus, it was felt that the time was ripe to provide an additional series of concerts. There are now nine professional concerts per year run as two series on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the second one unified in theme or instrumental medium.

This year, on 1st November 1977, the Concert Society celebrates its hundredth concert with a performance of Schubert's 'Die Winterreise' by the distinguished baritone, Benjamin Luxon, partnered by David Willison. A list of some of the artists who have been engaged by the Concert Society since its inception appears below:

THE MARTIN STRING QUARTET; JOHN WILLIAMS; THE MELOS ENSEMBLE; ALFRED DELLER; DAVID WILDE; JANET BAKER; ALBERT FERBER; JOHN SHIRLEY QUIRK; ROBERT TEAR; ALLEGRI, NEW HUNGARIAN, BARTOK and AMADEUS QUARTETS; MARGARET PRICE; IFOR JAMES; JOHN ALLDIS CHOIR; THURSTON DART; JAYE CONSORT OF VIOLS; DAVID MUNROW AND THE EARLY MUSIC CONSORT; PETER KATIN; WILLIAM PLEETH; PETER FRANKL; GYÖRGY PAUK; KENNETH BOWEN; TAMAS VASARY; HEINZ HOLLIGER; RAFAEL OROZCO; VALERIE TRYON; FELICITY PALMER; ANNIE FISCHER; DMITRI ALEXEEV; RALPH KIRSHBAUM; ANTHONY ROLFE JOHNSON; KENNETH GILBERT; CHARLES ROSEN; CONSORT OF MUSICKE; TUCKWELL WIND QUINTET.

Programme for 24th November, 1960 **THE MARTIN STRING QUARTET**

Beethoven	QUARTET IN F, Op 18 No 1 (1800)
Schubert	QUARTET in A Minor, Op. 29 (1824)
Dvořák	QUARTET in F, Op. 96 (1893)

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