

## CHIAROSCURO QUARTET THURSDAY 14 OCTOBER 2021

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### Welcome

After such a turbulent and unsettling period it's not only a relief to be bringing live music back to Turner Sims, but a cause for much excitement to be welcoming our new Associate Artists – the Chiaroscuro Quartet - for the first time in that role.

As Associate Artists the Chiaroscuro will be regular visitors over the next two years, bringing their wonderful playing and insightful interpretations to a raft of works. I'm delighted that the quartet have accepted the invitation to join us and know that they are looking forward to developing their relationship with the concert hall and you the audience.

It's especially pleasing that, thanks to the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust, we are able to offer complimentary tickets to 8-25 year olds for every concert in the series. The ticket scheme is a fantastic opportunity for young people to experience chamber music and we are most grateful to Cavatina for their support. More details on how to access the offer can be found [here](#)

Thank you for your support of Turner Sims, and enjoy this evening's concert as we begin a brand new musical journey with these exceptional musicians.



**Kevin Appleby**  
Concert Hall Manager

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### Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) String Quartet in B minor, Op 33 No 1

- 1 Allegro moderato
- 2 Scherzo: Allegro di molto
- 3 Andante
- 4 Finale: Presto

While Haydn may not have invented the string quartet, he developed the genre from its Italian roots, first cultivated by Scarlatti and Sammartini in works entitled Sinfonia a Quattro. But Haydn largely patented the medium, cultivating its special potential over the half-century that separates his Op 1 quartets from his final essay in the genre. In his hands, quartet texture gradually changed from melody-plus accompaniment (the leader primarily at the helm) into a dynamic, fluid entity where lively dialogue between the instruments became a central feature. In the six quartets of Op 33 he recast the essential character of the medium by introducing a lighter mood, not least in the witty finales. These works bear the nickname, '*Gli scherzi*' (*The*

*Jokes*), owing to the titles of the minuet movements named as either *scherzo* or *scherzando*. But they are also known as the 'Russian' quartets as the set was dedicated to the Grand Duke Paul of Russia following a performance of one of the works in his Viennese apartment on Christmas Day 1781.

A gap of some ten years separates these works from the previous group (Op 20) when he had virtually ignored the medium largely resulting from Haydn's obligation to write and direct stage works for a new 400-seat opera house in the grounds of the Esterházy palace. During this period he had appreciably developed his technique and declared in a letter to potential subscribers that his latest quartets were written 'in an entirely new and special manner'. To some degree this was pure marketing, a 'pre-release' strategy, yet some features may be regarded as new. Without a doubt Haydn had brought the string quartet to its highest technical and expressive peak. He forsakes the strenuous endeavour and fugal rigour of the Op 20 group for a more relaxed manner, and fashions a more collaborative relationship between the instruments, bringing to mind Goethe's

observation that a string quartet is 'a conversation between four intelligent people'.

A shared interaction between instruments is readily apparent in the 'Allegro moderato' of Op 33 No 1; nominally in B minor but beginning and ending in D major. Discernible too is Haydn's economy of means, building the entire movement on a single two-bar idea (incorporating an obsessively repeated figure), that on its first appearance soon passes from first violin to cello. The movement's close thematic unity is underlined by the continual exploration of this theme throughout the harmonically rich development, and its rhythmic variant merely emphasises Haydn's preoccupation with a monothematic construction. Driving rhythms propel the 'Scherzo' where smooth contours in the central Trio (now in the tonic major) frame lively arpeggio figuration. Its vigorous manner yields to an elegant 'Andante', its two-part structure supporting two main themes: a somewhat formal 'how do you do?' and a probing idea, both subject to elaboration in the second half. The finale inhabits an unstoppable energy, relaxing only momentarily in its tightly organised design, but never relinquishing its emotional tension.

### Joseph Haydn

#### String Quartet in C, Op 33 No 3, *The Bird*

- 1 Allegro moderato
- 2 Scherzando: Allegretto
- 3 Adagio
- 4 Rondo: Presto

'Always rich and inexhaustible; forever new and surprising, forever noble, even when he seems to laugh'. So wrote the 18th century lexicographer Ernst Ludwig Gerber, whose generous assessment of Haydn could be targeted specifically to his six quartets (Op 33) published in 1782. Their circulation throughout Europe brought them to the attention of Mozart for whom they provided a significant influence when he embarked on his own series of quartets published with a dedication to Haydn in 1785.

Op 33 No 3 bears the nickname 'The Bird' owing to the chirruping grace notes that decorate the first movement's principal theme. Heard over a quietly pulsing rhythm from second violin and viola, it creates a marvellously arresting opening gambit. Grace notes and repeated pitches also mark the trim secondary theme. Recurring motifs form a significant part in generating rhythmic cohesion to a movement where tensions later develop when the bird calls appear within a series of quietly disturbing suspensions.

The sobriety of the 'Scherzando', a deliberately ambiguous title, may come as a surprise. More hymn-like than dance-like, despite the waltz metre, Haydn marks it to be played *sotto voce* and limits the

pitch range to the instrument's lowest strings until we reach the Trio. Bird song resumes here with the two violins now duetting amicably on A and E strings.

A subdued manner returns for the courtly 'Adagio' in F major, a modified sonata form movement of accumulating interest in both startling harmonic excursions into darker keys, and the increasing embellishment by the first violin of the opening material. The closing 'Rondo' is one of Haydn's most comic utterances. Its irrepressible energy derives from its madcap refrain (built on an obsessively oscillating pattern of thirds) and the sudden lurch into a minor key dance episode, clearly evoking the sound of a Hungarian gipsy band complete with hurdy gurdy. Witty, imitative writing abounds, and in the truncated coda, where the music seems to evaporate, Haydn's jesting is no less comic and surely supports his claim for advertising his quartets with 'an entirely new and special manner'.

### INTERVAL

#### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

#### String Quartet in F, Op 59 No 1 *Razumovsky*

- 1 Allegro
- 2 Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando
- 3 Adagio molto e mesto
- 4 Theme Russe: Allegro

Most of Beethoven's seventeen string quartets were written to fulfil specific commissions, and many immortalised the names of his aristocratic patrons: Prince Lobkovitz was the dedicatee behind the Op 18 and Op 74 quartets, while the Russian cellist Prince Galitzin prompted three of the last five works in 1822. Some years earlier Count Rasumovsky - the Russian ambassador in Vienna and an amateur violinist of no mean ability - commissioned a set of three quartets in 1805. Completed the following year and known as the 'Rasumovsky' quartets, each work, at the Count's request, was to incorporate a Russian folksong. In the event, Beethoven obliged only in the first two quartets, although some have discerned a Russian flavour in the mournful slow movement of the third.

Between the four years that separate the completion of the six Op 18 quartets and the Op 59 works Beethoven had considerably lengthened his compositional stride. These years include expansive works such as the 'Eroica' symphony and the 'Waldstein' piano sonata and suggest a composer consciously pushing against the confining boundaries of the Classical tradition. While his Op 18 quartets were influenced by Haydn and Mozart, the Op 59 group belong to a different world.

The scale of Op 59 No 1 is made clear by its

unprecedented length. The opening 'Allegro' begins with an elegant cello theme, soon held aloft by the first violin, which generates most of the melodic material for the entire movement. Between this and an innocent secondary theme (so self-effacing one might miss it) is a passage of sweetly harmonious thirds and four strikingly dissonant bars. But Beethoven is more interested in the six quavers from the first theme which he scatters like confetti across the development section; the start of which we are fooled into thinking is the customary repeat of the exposition. A pianissimo fugal passage based on a new idea provides further interest before the return of the main theme.

There follows a scherzando movement of extraordinary drama, quasi-orchestral sonorities and emotional ambivalence. It is built largely on two contrasting ideas; one skittish, the other lyrical, and both juxtaposed by recurring pulsing chords that act as a structural pillar within its extended sonata form design. To this Beethoven adds a third theme, its minor tonality and wistful character offsetting the playful and turbulent spirits.

The mood deepens for the heart-easing 'Adagio', a movement of unceasing interest in the development of its two themes and their ever-resourceful accompaniment. Following a cadenza-like passage for the violin, the music leads without a break into the closing 'Allegro' that incorporates Count Rasumovsky's request for a Russian folksong. Its musical argument is swept along by driving rhythms and a lightness of touch that, at its first performance, provoked bewilderment from amongst the first musicians to play them. Ignaz Schuppanzigh, the first violinist, boldly declared in Beethoven's hearing, 'it's not music', only to be told 'Oh, they're not for you, but for a later age'.

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## CHIAROSCURO String Quartet

Formed in 2005, Chiaroscuro Quartet comprises violinists **Alina Ibragimova** (Russia) and **Pablo Hernán Benedí** (Spain), the Swedish violist **Emilie Hörnlund** and cellist **Claire Thirion** from France. Dubbed '*a trailblazer for the authentic performance of High Classical chamber music*' in **Gramophone**, this international ensemble performs music of the Classical and early Romantic periods on gut strings and with historical bows. The quartet's unique sound – described in **The Observer** as '*a shock to the ears of the best kind*' – is highly acclaimed by audiences and critics all over Europe.

Recent releases in their growing discography includes Schubert's '*Death and the Maiden*' and Haydn Opus 76 (1-3) and Beethoven Op 18 (1-3). Future planned recordings will complete these two pillars of the quartet repertoire in addition to Mozart 'Prussian' quartets.

Chiaroscuro Quartet was a prize-winner of the German Förderpreis Deutschlandfunk/Musikfest Bremen in 2013 and received Germany's most prestigious CD award, the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik in 2015 for their recording of Mozart's Quartet in D minor, K. 421 and Mendelssohn's Second String Quartet in A minor, Op 13. Among the ensemble's chamber music partners are renowned artists such as Kristian Bezuidenhout, Trevor Pinnock, Jonathan Cohen, Nicolas Baldeyrou, Chen Halevi, Malcolm Bilson, Christian Poltera and Christophe Coin.

Recent engagements included their enthusiastically

received debut concerts at Vienna Konzerthaus and Philharmonie Warsaw, their debut at Carnegie Hall as part of their first US tour and a return visit to Japan. Other highlights have taken the ensemble to the Edinburgh International Festival, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, London's Wigmore Hall and King's Place, Auditorio Nacional de Música Madrid, The Sage Gateshead, Auditorium du Louvre Paris, Théâtre du Jeu-de-Paume in Aix-en-Provence, Grand Théâtre de Dijon, Gulbenkian Foundation Lisbon, Boulez Saal and Beethoven Haus Bonn. They have been artist-in-residence in Port-Royal-des-Champs since 2009, with a concert series dedicated to the string quartets of Mozart.

In addition to taking up their residency at Turner Sims the 21-22 season sees them appear at Philharmonie Luxembourg, return to Wigmore Hall, Boulez Saal, and Gstaad Festival, and undertake tours in Japan and Sweden. Chiaroscuro Quartet are grateful to Jumpstart Jr Foundation for the kind loan of the 1570 Andrea Amati violin.

## Alina Ibragimova

Performing music from baroque to new commissions on both modern and period instruments, Alina Ibragimova has established a reputation as one of the most accomplished and intriguing violinists of her generation. As soloist, Alina appears with orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Sinfonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Deutsches

Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, London Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony, Boston Symphony, Montreal Symphony and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and has performed at chamber music at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Mozarteum Salzburg, Musikverein Vienna, Carnegie Hall New York, Palais des Beaux Arts Brussels, and at festivals including Salzburg, Verbier and Aldeburgh. Born in Russia in 1985, Alina studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Royal College of Music with teachers including Natasha Boyarsky, Gordan Nikolic, Christian Tetzlaff and Adrian Butterfield. She was also a member of the Kronberg Academy Masters programme.

### **Pablo Hernán Benedí**

Pablo Hernán Benedí was born in Madrid and began studying at the Padre Antonio Soler Conservatory of San Lorenzo de El Escorial with Polina Kotliarskaya. In 2009 he moved to London to continue his studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with David Takeno and András Keller and was supported by scholarships from the Martin Musical Scholarship Fund, Juventudes Musicales and La Caixa. Since the age of 14, Pablo had regular contact with Gordan Nikolic who helped shape and nurture his development. Pablo is also a founding member of Trio Isimsiz. Current winners of the Borletti Buitoni Award Fellowship, the trio has also won 1st prize and the audience prize at the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition and 2nd prize at the Haydn Vienna Competition. As a soloist Pablo has performed with the Philharmonia, London Chamber Players and Concerto Budapest amongst others. He also works regularly as leader or section leader with Arcangelo, Concerto Budapest, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Swedish Radio Orchestra.

### **Emilie Hörnlund**

Emilie was born in Gothenburg, Sweden. Formally a member of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Emilie has held the position of Principal Viola at the Swedish Royal Opera since 2010. Emilie works with many other leading orchestras in the UK and Sweden, including BBC Philharmonic, London Chamber Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Kungliga Filharmonikerna Stockholm. In 2006 Emilie became the first viola player to reach the final of the Ljunggrenska Tavlingen (Swedish Soloist Competition) in Sweden. Emilie studied at the Falun Music Conservatory, Guildhall School of Music and the Royal College of Music with teachers including Timothy Boulton, Jack Glickman, David Takeno and Andriy Viytovych. She also studied baroque viola with Annette Isserlis.

### **Claire Thirion**

Born in France, Claire Thirion studied at the conservatoires (CNR) in Marseille and Boulogne- Billancourt, then at the Paris Conservatoire (CNSM), before entering the Royal College of Music in London to study with Jérôme Pernoo and Catherine Rimer (Baroque cello). In 2006 she was awarded the prestigious Tagore Gold Medal. Since completing her studies, Claire has been in great demand for the performance of both modern compositions and Baroque works. In 2008-2010 she held the position of principal continuo player with Emmanuelle Haïm's ensemble, Le Concert d'Astrée. As an active chamber musician, she is a member of the Ensemble Fragonard, which also performs on period instruments. Since 2006, she's part of a duo with Karine Selo, piano, and regularly performs in different Festivals in France and European countries. She is frequently invited as a guest leader for projects on period instruments with various ensembles.

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