

# Chiaroscuro Quartet with Cédric Tiberghien

Tuesday 28 November 8pm

**Haydn** String Quartet in D minor Op 9 No 4

**Beethoven** String Quartet in E minor, Op 59 No 2

**Brahms** Piano Quintet in F minor, Op 34

## Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

### String Quartet in D minor, Op 9, No 4, Hob III:22

#### 1 Moderato

#### 2 Menuet

#### 3 Adagio - Cantabile

#### 4 Finale: Presto

When Joseph Haydn died peacefully at his home in Vienna in 1809, no previous composer in the entire history of music had enjoyed such universal acclaim. Celebrated throughout Europe, and notably in England during the 1790s, he was considered 'the pride of our age' by the 18th century lexicographer Ernst Ludwig Gerber. Despite working for much of his creative life in rural isolation, Haydn's reputation reached well beyond the palatial home of his employer Prince Nikolaus of Esterháza. From the 1760s publishers in Amsterdam, London and Paris competed for his works. In 1798, the French violinist and composer Jean Baptiste Cartier declared in his *L'art du violon* that if 'God wanted to speak to us through music, he would use the works of Haydn to do so'. Yet, a century later in a summatory essay for the Cambridge Haydn Studies, Robin Holloway concluded 'Haydn is the music of the future still. The true extent of his greatness is, for the connoisseur, a well-kept secret...'

Conceived around 1769, Haydn's Op 9 string quartets are also to some extent a 'well-kept secret'. They are unjustly neglected works, owing in part to the technical advance demonstrated in his Op 20 group. Though still named 'divertimenti' by the composer, the Op 9 quartets are of greater substance and complexity than their predecessors, a quality recognised by Haydn when he wished to include them in the first complete edition of his

quartets for the Vienna publishing house of Artaria. The set is the first of his quartets to include one in a minor key, the fourth standing apart from its neighbours for its expressive charge and embodying elements of the literary movement known as *Sturm und Drang* ('storm and stress') in its emotional unrest.

Cast in four movements, the first ('Moderato') already shows clear indications of an economy of means typical of his later style, everything unfolding with a natural ease from the succinct opening bars. Various sombre, turbulent and buoyant, the first movement inhabits an unpredictability, its drama deriving from impulsive contrasts of dynamic and texture, its short-lived motific ideas tossed around, the whole suffused with a logic, both intellectual yet readily accessible. The brilliance of the first violin writing owes much to the talents of Luigi Tomasini, the leader of the resident orchestra at the Eszterházy court. Restlessness continues in the asymmetric phrase patterns of the 'Menuet', an ardent character piece encompassing a 'Trio' written as a duet for two violins, the first playing in double stops. A more relaxed manner occupies the 'Adagio', an aria-like movement with decorated repeated sections clearly designed to showcase the *cantabile* of Tomasini. The finale is a masterpiece of concentrated polyphony, in which Haydn delivers an unequivocally rigorous and passionate conclusion to a quartet that anticipates the miracles of his Bonn-born successor.

## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

### String Quartet in E minor, Op 59, No 2

#### 1 Allegro

#### 2 Molto Adagio

### 3 Allegretto

#### 4 Finale (Presto)

In the early 19th century Viennese artistic life owed much to numerous aristocratic and cultivated patrons whose names were immortalised by Beethoven in specific dedications. Prince Lobkowitz was the dedicatee behind the Op 18 and Op 74 string 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, 'real or imitated'. 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 five years that separate the completion of the Op 18 set and the three of Op 59, Beethoven had considerably developed his compositional technique. These years include expansive works such as the 'Eroica' symphony and the 'Waldstein' piano sonata, suggesting a composer consciously lengthening his stride and pushing against the confining boundaries of the Classical tradition. While his earliest quartets bear the influence of Haydn and Mozart, the Op 59 group belong to a different world and, judging by their reception, were not easily understood. In 1807 the Vienna correspondent from the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* considered the set generally 'very long and difficult'. And in response to reservations from the Italian violinist Felix Radicati, who found them 'incomprehensible', Beethoven is reported to have replied 'Oh, they're not for you, but for a later age'. Certainly, the Quartet in E minor is notable for its elusive, mysterious character, one which contemporary audiences, even the connoisseurs, found problematic.

Misgivings might have been directed towards the first movement's arresting opening where two powerful chords and a series of furtive gestures, separated by unsettling silences, form a crucial element in the unfolding drama. The movement's mood swings, and absence of any sustained melodic impulse, may also have bewildered Beethoven's contemporaries. Despite its emphatic close, the restlessness never feels completely tamed. The profoundly

meditative 'Adagio' is said to have been inspired by words from the philosopher Emmanuel Kant who wrote of his awe of the 'starry heavens above'. For this E major movement (a key the composer reserved for his most sublime and other worldly music), a spacious main theme with a freely designed violin counterpoint soars heavenward in a central passage of great serenity.

The 'Allegretto' movement is one of Beethoven's most incisive, its obsessive syncopated rhythms worked out and prolonged with great ingenuity. Its intensity, redolent of the first movement's agitation, is relieved by a 'Trio', heard twice, drawing on a Russian folksong: a six-bar theme first heard in the viola later developing into a brief fugato. As a foil to the first three movements, the Finale ('Presto') embraces a main theme of irrepressible energy with a sinuous secondary motif that undergoes rigorous development before returning to the pulsing rhythms with which the movement began.

### Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

#### Piano Quintet in F minor, Op 34

##### 1 Allegro non troppo

##### 2 Andante un poco adagio

##### 3 Scherzo

##### 4 Finale: Poco sostenuto

Of all the 19th century composers after Beethoven it was Brahms who, over four decades of creativity, made the most substantial contribution to chamber music repertoire. Notable amongst many of these works is the inclusion of himself as a pianist, as a partner in trio and quartet combinations, reflecting both his formidable pianism and a reluctance, following the first version of this Piano Quintet, to write for strings without the supportive presence of a keyboard. After its first performance in 1865, the conductor Hermann Levi declared: 'The Quintet is beautiful beyond words. Anyone who did not know it in its earlier forms... would never believe that it was not originally thought out and designed for the present combination of instruments... You have turned a monotonous work for two pianos into a thing of great beauty...'

Even before the radical two-piano version, the work had begun life as a string quintet in 1862, scored for two violins, viola and two cellos, an

identical ensemble adopted by Schubert over thirty years earlier for his great C major Quintet D956. Despite assurances by the great violinist Joseph Joachim of this version's 'masculine strength and sweeping design', he had reservations about the effectiveness of its scoring. Clara Schumann, always ready to give advice, proposed further changes, believing something missing from the two-piano version, even suggesting the work's ideas could be shared 'among the whole orchestra'. 'Please, dear Johannes, do agree just this time, and rework the piece once more'. It says much for Brahms' forbearance that he agreed, and after destroying the original manuscript he finally settled on the piano quintet scoring, as if trying to arrive at an ideal fusion of his two previous versions.

Few movements by Brahms can match the richness and diversity of the opening 'Allegro non troppo' where its stark opening gambit and subsequent turbulence generates an intensely dramatic traversal of almost symphonic reach. Indeed, the first movement is built on the development of both the dark-hued initial statement and an impulsive flurry of seemingly unrelated semiquavers that follow. The lyrical 'Andante', now in the warm key of A

flat, seems to take refuge from the agitation and Beethovenian energy of the first movement. Although designed as an ABA structure and described by Clara Schumann as 'one long melody from start to finish', it's a movement tinged with melancholy owing as much to the prevalence of rising minor thirds in the string writing as the recurrence of the rhythmic patterns within the opening bars.

The nervous energy of the 'Scherzo' develops from the pulsing first entry of the cello and an ominous offbeat motif before a grandiose theme erupts, together generating a movement of vehement rhythmic intensity. Curiously, the demonic rhythm heard prior to the noble theme bears entirely coincidental reminiscences of the Nibelung's theme from Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, an opera conceived some ten years earlier. The central 'Trio' is dominated by a strongly characterised theme. A sense of mystery sets in motion the *Finale*, its tortuous chromaticisms yielding to the purposeful theme of the faster main section and outlined by the cello. The movement is not without drama and, despite showing signs of a resigned conclusion, culminates in an exciting final furlong.

**David Truslove, 2023**

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## Chiaroscuro String Quartet

Formed in 2005 and 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 include Beethoven Op 18, Mozart 'Prussian' Quartets and Haydn Op 33 (1-3) with future plans featuring Beethoven Op 74 and 130, and the second volume of Haydn Op 33. 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, Cédric Tiberghien 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.

The 23-24 season sees them with multiple appearances at Wigmore Hall, further visits to Kings Place and Boulez Saal, a return tour to Japan and a performance at BOZAR Brussels. It also marks the culmination of their residency at Turner Sims Southampton.

Chiaroscuro Quartet are grateful to Jumpstart Jr Foundation for the kind loan of the 1570 Andrea Amati violin.

**Cédric Tiberghien** is a French pianist who has established a truly international career. He has been particularly applauded for his versatility, as demonstrated by his wide-ranging repertoire, interesting programming, an openness to explore innovative concert formats and his dynamic chamber music partnerships.

Concerto appearances in the 2023-24 season include his debut with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestras as well as re-invitations to the London Philharmonic Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony and Orchestre National de Lyon. His solo and chamber appearances, the later with Alina Ibragimova and the Chiaroscuro Quartet, include performances in London, Brussels and Berlin. Cédric has a long association with the Wigmore Hall in London, where he is currently performing a complete Beethoven variation cycle, juxtaposed with works by other composers, illustrating the evolution of the genre.

Last season Cédric performed Messiaen's Turangalila Symphony with both the Berliner Philharmoniker (Simone Young) and Orchestre National de France (Cristian Macelaru). Other recent collaborations have included the Boston Symphony, Cleveland, London Symphony,

NDR Elbphilharmonie, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestras and at the BBC Proms with Les Siècles. His conductor collaborations include Karina Canellakis, Nicholas Collon, Stéphane Denève, Edward Gardner, Enrique Mazzola, Ludovic Morlot, Matthias Pintscher, François-Xavier Roth and Simone Young.

Cédric's most recent recording is volume one of a complete Beethoven variation cycle, repertoire which he is also performing at the Wigmore Hall. This is released by Harmonia Mundi for whom Cédric has also recorded the Ravel Concertos with Les Siècles/Roth, which has attracted superlative critical acclaim, including the accolade of 'Editor's Choice' in Gramophone Magazine. Cédric has previously recorded works by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Debussy for Harmonia Mundi. He has been awarded five Diapason d'Or, for his solo and duo recordings on Hyperion; his most recent solo project being a three-volume exploration of Bartok's piano works.

As a dedicated chamber musician, Cédric's regular partners include violinist Alina Ibragimova, violist Antoine Tamestit and baritone Stéphane Degout, with all of whom he has made several recordings as well as performing in concert. His discography with Alina includes complete cycles of music by Schubert, Szymanowski and Mozart (Hyperion) and a Beethoven Sonata cycle (Wigmore Live). Cédric is a member of the Académie Musicale Philippe Jaroussky, where he teaches regularly.

info@turnersims.co.uk

[turnersims.co.uk](https://turnersims.co.uk)

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