

The movement generates great power and strength as it proceeds – the forceful, minor-key ingredients taking up a much larger proportion of the movement than the more relaxed elements. Towards the end, fugal passages and a *cantus firmus* (theme in slow notes around which other material is woven) create an even more imposing sense of drive as the music moves on relentlessly towards its concluding chords.

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The Bronte String Quartet

The Bronte String Quartet was founded at the Dartington International Summer School in 1997. Its members have been working together full-time since September 2001. They spent a year based at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where they worked with, amongst others, the Takacs and Vellinger String Quartets, the Florestan Trio and Sir Colin Davis. They have also participated in masterclasses with Gabor Takacs at IMS Prussia Cove and with members of the Amadeus, Mosaiques, Alban Berg, Bartok and Smetana Quartets at the Internationale Sommer Akademie in Reichenau, Austria. Here, as winners of the Siemens Prize for the best performance of a Viennese Classical work, they played in Vienna on Austrian National Radio. The quartet now holds a Junior Fellowship at the Royal College of Music .

Winners of the 2003 Royal Overseas League Chamber Music Competition, the Bronte Quartet is in much demand for concerts. They perform regularly in London and have played in such venues as the Wigmore Hall, the Linbury Theatre at the ROH, St-Martin-in-the-Fields and St James' Piccadilly, as well as at music festivals and venues throughout the UK. Future plans include a tour of Italy and the USA.

The quartet actively believes in the promotion of new music. They are also deeply committed to Music Outreach and have given many workshops in schools and community centres. They were involved in the Chamber Tots series at the Wigmore Hall and are part of the Live Music Now! Scheme.

The Bronte Quartet is grateful for support from the Cripplegate Foundation, the Jerwood Foundation, the Nicholas Boas Foundation, the Wingate Trust and the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, as well as a number of private sponsors.

We hope you have enjoyed this season's concerts and look forward to seeing you next season for a very good series of concerts. As always SVAM needs sponsors to help with the cost of the concerts. If you would like to help, please contact Alicia Herbert (01206 298769) or Birte Kelly (01206 299448)

STOUR VALLEY ARTS & MUSIC

52nd Season: 2002-2003

Bronte String Quartet

Sara Trickey *violin I* Katharine Gorsuch *violin II*
Jon Thorne *viola* Daisy Gathorne-Hardy *cello*

Sunday 6 April 2003 at 4pm

St. Mary's Church East Bergholt

PROGRAMME

String Quartet in D major, Op. 71 No.2 **Joseph Haydn**
(1732-1809)

Adagio—Allegro - Adagio cantabile - Menuetto: Allegro
Finale: *Allegretto—Vivace*

String Quartet No 2 ('Intimate Letters') **Leos Janacek**
(1854-1928)

Andante - Adagio - Moderato - Allegro

INTERVAL

String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131 **Ludwig van Beethoven**
(1770-1827)

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo
Allegro molto vivace - Allegro moderato
Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile con moto
Presto - Adagio, quasi un poco andante - Allegro



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PROGRAMME NOTES

In July 1792, **Haydn** arrived back in Vienna after eighteen spectacularly successful months in London. He had unveiled new compositions of all kinds, and earned a considerable sum of money. The vibrant London concert scene, served by many of Europe's leading musicians, was in marked contrast to musical life in Vienna, where political uncertainty was causing rapid inflation and a consequent decline in noble patronage for music. Haydn had already agreed to make a further visit to England, and soon began work on the new compositions which would be needed, amongst which were Symphony No. 99, and the quartets we now know as Opus 71. Several stylistic features confirm that these were designed for the grand public arena of Salomon's London concerts, rather than the more intimate circumstances in which many earlier quartets had first been heard. The first movement of No. 2 begins with a brief introduction of no great musical significance, which suggests that its purpose was mainly to subdue society chatter and focus the attention of the large audience on the start of the musical argument proper. This *does* need to be heard, because it is innovative from the very first note of the *Allegro*. The bold downward leaps of each instrument in turn proclaim the 'public' style, as does the instrumental writing, which takes for granted the virtuosity of Salomon and the members of his quartet. The textures are often widely-spaced and sonorous, in part because they had to succeed in a large auditorium, but also because Haydn is consciously expanding into his new role as a celebrity. Almost nowhere does the first movement relax into broad lyricism, though the second compensates for this from its very start. The finale is a rondo which makes witty alternations between major and minor before speeding up for its final flourish.

Janacek's second string quartet (1928) was inspired by his long platonic friendship with the beautiful Kamila Stosslova, a married woman forty years his junior. The quartet was intended to reflect through its unpredictable changes of texture, colour and rhythm the character of their relationship, as revealed in the more than six hundred letters they exchanged. The viola, which assumes the persona of Kamila, has a dominant role in the quartet. Janacek's initial intention was to substitute the old viola d'amore (a fretless member of the viol family with sympathetic strings behind the bowed strings), but he compromised by making liberal use of the *sul ponticello* effect. Bowing close to the bridge produces an eerie, somewhat nasal sound reminiscent of the older instrument - we hear it in the intense first subject of the Andante. This, and the strange, partly unaccompanied second theme depict the couple's first meeting in 1917. The Adagio, a set of variations, portrays events during summer vacations at the Moravian spa town of Luhacovice, which include the composer contemplating Kamila giving birth to a son. (In actual fact, Janacek was quite attached to her real-life son. He went on holiday with Kamila, her husband and her son shortly after completing the quartet, catching, whilst hunting for the boy in the woods, a chill which led to his death from pneumonia). The third movement presents contrasts of mood through two themes of varying tempos and textures - the second is a love song related to the original theme of the Andante. The finale was described by Janacek in terms of his fears and longings for Kamila

resolving into contentment and fulfilment. An energetic folk-like melody and a second tune characterised by wide intervals alternate in a kind of rondo, combine, and finally emerge as a single theme, one last symbol of the spiritual union of the seventy-four-year-old composer and his young muse.

Beethoven considered Op. 131 his greatest quartet. The entire work is designed to be played without a break: its seven sections move continuously towards the finale, and are weighted in such a way that it forms the inevitable climax of the work. The measured pace and contrapuntal texture of the opening fugue generate a sense of gravitas, though not drama, because this is to be a dominant feature of the finale. After such an intense opening, the second movement cultivates a more easy-going lyricism. A short recitative section makes the transition to the central movement, an expansive set of variations. In the course of these, themes and textures undergo radical transformations: Beethoven's ideas are so fluid that landmarks can be difficult to recognise, but such is the strength of the musical logic that we are drawn forward irresistibly. The scherzo exhibits a species of melody of an unusually simple directness. The clear four-bar phrases, abundant repetition and drone-like accompaniments make us think of folk tunes or even nursery rhymes. This type of melody contrasts pointedly with such a theme as the probing fugue subject, or that of the variations, which by contrast seems almost self-consciously artistic. Beethoven introduced these quasi-folk tunes in his late works because of this contrast: he was preoccupied with reconciling opposites, with integrating highly diverse elements into a whole. This was a process which had to be planned carefully. Each movement had to be provided with the most appropriate type of melody for its purpose within the overall expressive contour of the work. The fugue needed a theme that was pregnant with many different kinds of developmental possibilities: the second movement a type of melody that was less intense and with a more friendly face. The finale, as the work's climax, would need themes of great import and seriousness: these could best be thrown into relief by a scherzo whose melodies were self-contained and easy to listen to. Essentially, a string of pleasant tunes would achieve the desired effect, as Beethoven demonstrates to perfection.

The function of the sixth movement is subtly ambiguous. It is not long enough to feel like an independent movement - it appears to be an extended slow introduction to the finale. Yet it is separate, because it is in a different key. The contrast between scherzo and finale would be too great if they were directly joined: this short, minor-key interlude bridges the gap, the smooth lyrical style of all four parts providing a foil to both what went before and what is to follow - a sonata-form structure of magisterial proportions. The contrast between its first and second theme could not be greater: the first loud, in minor key, with demonic leaps and stabbing rhythms; the second soft, major key, smooth and flowing - some commentators suggest this was intended to represent an ethereal view of heaven.