

Carducci String Quartet

Winners of the 2004 Kuhmo International Chamber Music competition in Finland, the Carducci String Quartet was formed in 1993 and is recognised today as one of Britain's top young string quartets. Prize-winning graduates of the Royal College, Royal Academy, and Royal Northern College of Music, they have studied with members of many leading quartets including the Amadeus, Albani, Takacs and Chilingirian. They were also major prize winners at the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition in Japan in 2002 and at the "Charles Hennen" International Chamber Music Competition in Holland. In 1997 they were awarded the Gold Award at the Castagnetto-Carducci Festival in Italy and adopted the name "Carducci" with the blessing of the Mayor. Tours abroad have taken them to Greece, Germany, Italy and Belgium, where they were invited to perform and work as assistants on the Junior European String Teachers Association Course in Brussels. For the last three years they have been artists in residence at the Beaumont Festival in France and they recently studied with Paul Katz of the Cleveland Quartet in Paris as part of the ProQuartet young professional training programme. They were selected for the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme for the 2004-5 season, and they have also collaborated with the Henri Oguike Dance Company in performances of Shostakovich's Ninth String Quartet.

Matthew Denton (violin) graduated from the Royal College of Music where he studied with Felix Andrievsky. He won The Kathleen Long Chamber Music Prize at the Royal College for two consecutive years and in 2000 he returned as a Junior Fellow in Chamber Music. He has won many prizes for his chamber music performances, including the Parkhouse Award and the Royal Overseas League Prize and combines playing chamber music with recital and concerto work. He is well known for his performances with the Eimer Piano Trio and is in much demand as a teacher.

Michelle Fleming (violin) studied at Cork School of Music in Ireland, where she was awarded the Pro Musica Trophy [1999-2001] for the most outstanding student in the Department of Strings. With generous support from the Arts Council of Ireland, Michelle continued her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, where she studied with Wen Zhou Li. Michelle has been the leader of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland and a member of the European Union Youth Orchestra. She has worked with Camerata Ireland, Manchester Camerata and performs frequently as a soloist.

Graham Broadbent (viola) is also a prize-winning chamber musician. As a founder member of the Newbold Piano Quartet he performed on recital schemes sponsored by The Tunnell Trust and the Tillet Trust Young Artists Platform, including recitals at the Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room. Graham, graduated from the Royal College of Music, where he was awarded the Bernard Shore viola prize (in memory of Lionel Tertis), the Margo Stebbing Viola Prize and the Ernest Tomlinson Viola Prize for outstanding performance.

Emma Denton (cello) studied at the Royal Academy of Music with David Strange, where she received many of the Academy's top awards including the Louise Child Prize for the highest overall degree, the David Martin/Florence Hooten Concerto prize and the Max Pirani and Harry Isaacs chamber music prizes. She was the winner of the Croydon Symphony Orchestra Soloist Award 2002 and the 2001 Muriel Taylor Scholarship for cellists. Emma plays on a Gilkes cello with generous financial assistance from The Countess of Munster Musical Trust.

NEXT SEASON

Our first concert will be the Sacconi Quartet at St. Mary's Church on Sunday 16 October 2005, at 4pm, followed by the AGM.

Our full programme for the season will be sent out in the beginning of September. Preview details will also be available from our page on the village website:

<http://www.e-bergholt.net/svam/svabase.htm>

Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-fourth
season
2004-5

4.00pm
Sunday
3 April
2005

St. Mary's Church
East Bergholt



Carducci String Quartet

Matthew Denton *violin*
Michelle Fleming *violin*
Graham Broadbent *viola*
Emma Denton *cello*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)
String Quartet in A major K.464

Allegro
Minuetto & Trio
Andante
Allegro

Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)
String Quartet No 1 in D major Op 25

1. *Andante sostenuto - Allegro vivo*
2. *Allegretto con slancio*
3. *Andante calmo*
4. *Molto vivace*

INTERVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)
String Quartet in E minor, Op 59 No 2

Allegro
Molto Adagio
Allegretto
Finale *Presto*

SVAM is a member of NFMS and a Registered Charity (No 276640)

Programme Notes

In February 1785, Leopold **Mozart** visited his son Wolfgang in Vienna, and wrote to daughter Nannerl of a quartet party at which Haydn had said to him the now famous words: 'Before God and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition'. The six quartets dedicated to Haydn were published later the same year: Mozart's warm, florid Italian refers to the older composer as his 'most dear friend' and describes the music as being 'the fruits of long and laborious endeavour'. His claim is borne out by alterations in the autograph and also the existence of numerous rejected sketches. He sought to emulate Haydn's Op 33 quartets: like them, Mozart's quartets have textures which are conceived not merely in four-part harmony, but in four-part discourse, with the actual musical ideas born of a new, integrated conception of the medium. The use of counterpoint to intensify the texture is another notable development of Mozart's style in these pieces. Each of the principal themes of K464 is soon subject to imitative treatment: even the opening of the minuet. The trio is in the rare (for Mozart) key of E major – the texture here is looser, the melody played first over a descending scale on the cello and then beneath rippling triplets on the first violin. The *andante* is the only slow movement in the six quartets in variation form, on a theme which lends itself to florid treatment. The finale is in sonata form, and exhibits supreme economy of what may be termed 'thematic material', for of melody in the accepted sense, there is precious little. This is the only one of Mozart's quartets to end with a whisper.

In 1939 **Britten** left London, where he had settled after leaving the Royal College of Music, and sailed to North America. He had an introduction to the patroness Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, who was passionately devoted to the cause of chamber music. She commissioned Britten to write a new string quartet, and the piece was dedicated to her. The first movement opens quietly with a plangent, wistful melody played in the highest register. Like much of Britten's early music, the opening of the quartet is lyrical, almost vocal in character, though the use of the high register also imparts a slightly eerie quality. There follows a more brisk, imitative texture, but the haunting melody remains the soul of the movement. It returns in the middle, and again at the end, an intensified, hushed reprise. As in the other two quartets, the second movement is more frenetic; a 'volatile and highly stylised march-scherzo' one critic called it. Sardonic marches appear in many of Britten's important works of this period, including the *Sinfonia da Requiem*, the song cycle *Our Hunting Fathers*, and the Violin Concerto of 1939. Britten's friend and executor Donald Mitchell has claimed that these often exaggerated marches and "dance of death" scherzos reflect the composer's unease over the rising tide of fascism in Europe. This scherzo forms a short interlude between the lyricism of the first movement and the slow nocturnal third movement, the spiritual heart of the quartet. This can be heard as a prophecy of the "Very calm" middle movement of the third quartet, and also, more immediately, of the "Moonlight" interlude of the

opera, *Peter Grimes*, stirring in Britten's mind as the quartet was being written. The surface of the movement is indeed calm, but underpinned by a kind of melodic restlessness: yearning, cadenza-like melodic lines that strive upward throughout the second half of the movement. Like much of this quartet, the finale is crisply economical with its thematic material, showing Britten's debt to the similarly focused invention of Haydn's string quartets. The finale is indeed Haydn-like in its skittish, light mood, but this fleet energy concludes with a series of pungent chords which could come only from the pen of Britten.

The two years beginning in 1806 must be regarded as one of the most prodigiously fertile of **Beethoven's** entire career. A stream of completed works appeared, many of them on the largest scale. In 1806 alone came the three string quartets dedicated to the Russian ambassador Count Rasumovsky, the *Appassionata* Sonata (some of which had been composed earlier), the Fourth Symphony, the Violin Concerto (op. 61), and in all essentials the Fourth Piano Concerto. They were quickly introduced to the public, and all were enthusiastically received, with the exception of the first two quartets, which were thought 'difficult'. Certainly the musical discourse often has an intensity which is remarkable even for this most serious of composers. All four movements have the same key centre of E (major or minor): something he did only rarely, seemingly with a special purpose. The first movement establishes its key with two brief chords and an opening theme, but immediately contradicts it by repeating the theme a semitone higher. The relationship thus established (which occurs also at the openings of the *Appassionata* sonata and the Op. 95 quartet) is exploited in various ways throughout the work. Of the second movement, two of Beethoven's friends testified independently that he had told them that the idea came to him whilst he was gazing at the starlit sky. He is known to have read Kant, and was fond of the philosopher's famous phrase about the starry heavens above and the moral law within. Although not religious in a conventional way, Beethoven associated the heavens with what he called 'the source of all creation'. The third movement (scherzo) opens with a restless, brooding quality. Goethe once wrote of Beethoven: 'His talent amazed me, but unhappily his is a character utterly lacking in self-control' – possibly a fair observation about Beethoven the man, but, as Basil Lam drily observes, the music never lacks control, and in any case these quartets are not directed towards social occasions. Each 'Rasumovsky' quartet was supposed to include a Russian melody, as a delicate compliment to the dedicatee: in this case it is the trio section which presents the 'thème russe'. During several repetitions, it is presented in a humorous canonic effect – humorous because the theme will not allow the canon to work properly. The finale, like that of the Fourth Piano Concerto (written the same year) begins in the 'wrong' key. The driving rhythm of the theme causes an exhilarating build-up of energy as the movement progresses.