

## Henschel Quartet

Christoph Henschel – violin    Markus Henschel – violin  
Monika Henschel-Schwind – viola    Mathias Beyer-Karlshøj – cello

In 1995 the Henschel Quartet were prize-winners of no less than five prizes at International String Quartet competitions in Evian, Banff and Salzburg for the best interpretation of works ranging from Mozart up to contemporary composers. In 1996 they won the first prize and gold medal at the coveted Osaka International String Competition. Highly acclaimed debut concerts in many of Europe's prestigious concert halls helped to establish the Henschel Quartet firmly as one of today's leading string quartets. Constant critical acclaim has led to an impressive international career.

The Quartet performs regularly in prestigious chamber music cycles worldwide and is a guest at numerous renowned music festivals and concert halls such as the Tanglewood Festival (USA), Kuhmo Festival (Finland,) the Schubertiade Feldkirch, the BBC Proms concerts in London, the Aldeburgh Festival, Festival de Wallonie (Belgium) Rheingau Festival, Schwetzingen Festival the Kissinger Summer Festival (Germany) and the Concertgebouw , Amsterdam.

The Henschel Quartet has not only received the highest praise for its concert appearances: the ensembles recordings have likewise received reviews nothing short of euphoric and have been awarded a number of top prizes.

The splendid instruments of the Henschel Quartet, two violins by Stradivari, a viola by da Salo and a cello by Hjort, contribute to the ensemble's acclaimed richness of sound and inexhaustible wealth of colour.

### Forthcoming events

Friday 14 March 8 pm, Constable Hall East Bergholt

**Annual Lecture: Gainsborough** by Diane Perkins;

Friday 4 April 8 pm, Dedham Parish Church

**Kungsbacka Piano Trio**

Saturday 17 May 7.30 pm, Constable Hall East Bergholt

**Jazz Concert and Supper** – tickets now on sale

Further information: [www.svam.org.uk](http://www.svam.org.uk) – or phone 01206 298491 or 01206 299448

# Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-seventh  
season  
2007-8

4.00 pm  
Sunday  
24 February  
2008

St. Mary's Church  
East Bergholt



SVAM is a member of Making Music  
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## Henschel Quartet

Christoph Henschel *violin*  
Markus Henschel *violin*  
Monika Henschel-Schwind *viola*  
Matthias D Beyer-Karlshøj *cello*

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**  
String Quartet B flat major, Op 18 No 6

*Allegro con brio*  
*Adagio ma non troppo*  
*Scherzo*  
*Adagio – Allegretto quasi allegro*

**Bela Bartok (1881-1945)**  
String Quartet No 5

*Allegro*  
*Adagio molto*  
*Scherzo*  
*Andante*  
Finale - *Allegro vivace*

INTERVAL

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**  
Quartet in G major Op 161. D887

*Allegro molto moderato*  
*Andante un poco mosso*  
*Scherzo – Allegro vivace*  
*Allegro assai*

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## Programme Notes

Before composing any quartets, **Beethoven** copied out all six quartets of Haydn's Opus 20, as well as Mozart's K.387 and 464, in order to familiarise himself with string quartet texture. These works exemplify the architectural assumptions of eighteenth century classicism: a first movement whose sonata form carries the main intellectual weight of the work, a slow movement displaying the composer's lyrical gifts, a dance movement, and a light-hearted or high-spirited finale. During the course of his career, Beethoven transformed this scheme by shifting the expressive 'centre of gravity' from the first movement to the last. Philosophical and political developments - the aspirations, if not the actual events, of the French revolution - and changing ideas about the status of the individual, in particular the artist, in relation to society all played a part in shaping his approach. Imbued with the aspirations of the Enlightenment, he came to see large-scale works as a progression from 'darkness' to 'light'. He wanted the nature and tone of the finale to define the whole work as a symbolic process of growth or striving towards a higher ideal: obvious amongst many examples of the idea in practice would be the *Fifth* or the *Choral* symphonies. In Op.18 N° 6, we find one of his early experiments with the idea that the finale might be the place for a work's most serious musical ideas. He gives it a slow introduction with the slightly puzzling title *La Malinconia* (melancholy) and the instruction "This piece is to be played with the greatest delicacy." The forty-four bars which follow contain the most serious music in the whole of the six Op.18 quartets, with dramatic dynamic contrasts, some very mysterious harmonies, and a short passage of *fugato*. When the main body of the finale begins, its three-in-a-bar suggests not 18<sup>th</sup> century light-heartedness, but rather a sense of purpose. The slow introduction returns to interrupt before the movement reaches its brief final *prestissimo*.

Although he earned his living mainly from teaching and playing the piano and was a relentless collector and analyst of folk music, **Bartók** is recognised today principally as a composer. Like all Modernists, he aimed to extend and develop long-established traditions, but without recourse to nineteenth century musical language. He therefore needed to forge a new vocabulary. He found its raw materials in Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak peasant music: irregular rhythm patterns, scales with unusual, often small intervals, and modal patterns. To these elements he applied a compositional rigour learnt from Beethoven and Bach: intense motivic developments and transformations, often contrapuntally conceived. It is also possible to hear the influence of contemporaries such as Debussy, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg. The Fifth String Quartet (1934) was commissioned by Elizabeth Sprague-Coolidge, who spent much of her father's Chicago wholesale-trading fortune in trying to establish chamber music, particularly string quartets, in the United States. The five movements are arranged symmetrically: fast-slow-scherzo-slow-fast. The driving, percussive patterns which open the quartet reappear in various transformations throughout the work. The second and fourth movements each explore a world of intense feeling: the second uses ancient modal patterns in the lower parts as an accompaniment to the modernistic chromatic melody above. A central Scherzo and Trio in Bulgarian metres (patterns of nine beats grouped into four-plus-two-plus-three) forms the central point of the work. The fourth

movement includes a most unusual effect – plucked notes which then slide – a technique reminiscent of the sliding sound known as *vina* in Indian music. The finale bursts with drive and energy: Bartók's interest in variation techniques is seen nowhere better than in a short, banal 'barrel-organ' interlude near the end, which leads the piece to its final flourishes - it is actually a major-key version of the movement's opening chromatic theme.

During his schooldays at Vienna's Kaiserlich-königliches Stadtkonvikt (Imperial and Royal City College), **Schubert's** evident promise secured him composition lessons with Antonio Salieri. In 1825 the latter died, and his deputy Josef Eybler was named to replace him as Imperial court composer. The twenty-nine year old Schubert applied for the vacant position of second court composer. Not until January the following year did he learn that the position had been abolished and a court organist appointed instead. It is entirely possible that Schubert's lifestyle, politics and unreliability in keeping appointments prevented his obtaining this or any other regular post during his lifetime. Meanwhile he was living at the apartment of his friend Schober, and working ceaselessly at a number of major works. In January 1826 the famous Schuppanzigh Quartet rehearsed the recently completed D minor 'Death and the Maiden' Quartet in Schubert's presence, after which Schuppanzigh, a keen advocate of new music, is reported to have said: 'My dear fellow, this is no good, leave it alone; you stick to your songs!' Schubert seems to have been not at all discouraged, because in June he began work on, and quickly completed, his next string quartet in G major, a work of striking originality. It was due to be his last, and is contemporary with Beethoven's last quartet, Op.135. Though formally less sophisticated than Beethoven's, it is revolutionary in the way it makes the contrast between major and minor modes the basis of much of the structure. Schubert's harmonic language throughout his life had exploited the contrast between major and minor; but during the course of his career local colouring was gradually supplanted by longer-range strategies, of which the G major quartet provides the most far-reaching and disturbing example. The rapid alternations of major and minor are reinforced by contrasts of dynamics, spacing and texture, with a telling use of pizzicato. Some regard the first movement, with its tremolandos and chords, as having been conceived as if for orchestra. Alfred Einstein describes it as 'something like a pre-Bruckner symphonic movement, except that Bruckner never wrote a movement of such lively construction and such unity of design.' Of the slow movement he says it 'became the model for many of Brahms's movements...an elegiac melody predominates in the bass...with changes of colour provided by agitated interludes'. The Scherzo, also in a minor key, bristles with energy as individual voices leap out of the general bustle. In complete contrast, the trio section is a *ländler* (Austrian peasant dance) - the languorous pastoral lilt of its main idea emerging from an exquisitely calculated texture. The sudden jump back to the needle-sharp entrances of the scherzo is dramatic. The finale has been described as a perpetual-motion movement - a tarantella-like rondo, with contrasting episodes along the way. Schubert completed the entire work in just two weeks.