

## The Maggini Quartet

Formed in 1988, the Maggini Quartet is established as one of the finest British string quartets, both in performance and through their international award winning recordings.

The Quartet are renowned for championing British repertoire, with worldwide sales of their recordings for Naxos's Gramophone Award winning British Music series exceeding 100,000 discs. Their CD of Vaughan Williams won the Gramophone Chamber Music Award of the Year 2001, and was nominated for the Classical Brit Awards Ensemble/Orchestral Album 2002. The Maggini's recordings of Ireland, Bridge, Bliss, Bax, Walton, Britten and E J Moeran have all been Editor's Choices in Gramophone and their CD of Bridge Quartets 2 & 4 and Phantasy Piano Quartet with Martin Roscoe was a Gramophone CD of the Month (May 2005). Their recording of Elgar with Peter Donohoe won a Diapason d'Or of the Year in France and was also a CHOC award winner for "Le Monde de la Musique", and their CD of Bax Quartets 1 & 2 won a 2002 Cannes Classical Award. They were also Grammy Award nominees in 2004 and 2005. Future releases will include works by Arnold, Rawsthorne, Berkeley and Alwyn.

The Quartet's recordings also include Haydn Op.33 Quartets (Simax), awarded a maximum ten star-rating in France's Repertoire des Disques Compacts, Szymanowski/Bacewicz quartets (ASV), Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' (ASV) and Haydn Op.77 Quartets (Claudio).

The Maggini Quartet's commitment to new music has led to important commissions, including James MacMillan's Second Quartet, Robert Simpson's Cello Quintet (his last work) and works by Eleanor Alberga and Roxanna Panufnik.

The Quartet currently have an exciting collaboration with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, to perform and record his ten new 'Naxos Quartets'. Commissioned by Naxos, the works fulfill the composer's long-held intention of bringing a major contribution to chamber music repertoire, and the project is providing a unique opportunity for performers and composer to work together over the five-year period. Eight quartets have now been performed, including premieres at the Wigmore Hall, Cheltenham Festival, Oslo Chamber Music Festival and the Purcell Room. All have been received with outstanding acclaim by audiences and critics, as have the three CDs released so far. The works also feature as part of the Maggini's long-standing residency at Canterbury Christ Church University College, which is hosting open rehearsals of all the new works and compiling a major archive of the project.

The Maggini Quartet appear regularly in prestigious concert series at home and abroad and are frequent media broadcasters. Their major initiative, *The Glory of the English String Quartet*, draws upon the wonderfully varied and distinctive repertoire, mostly from the first half of the 20th Century, which they are committed to bringing to a worldwide audience through concert performances and their ongoing series of recordings for Naxos.

In addition to their concert activity, the members of the Quartet have an international reputation as chamber music coaches. They hold several UK residencies, have worked at the UK's senior music institutions, and their educational activities abroad have included coaching at Yale and Oberlin in the United States and an annual coaching engagement for the Norwegian Chamber Music Society.

The Quartet's name derives from the famous 16th century Brescian violin maker Giovanni Paolo Maggini, an example of whose work is played by David Angel.

# Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-sixth  
season  
2006-7

4.00pm  
Sunday  
19 November  
2006

St. Mary's Church  
East Bergholt



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

## Maggini Quartet

Lorraine McAslan *violin I*  
David Angel *violin II*  
Martin Outram *viola*  
Michal Kaznowski *cello*

**Joseph Haydn (1732 -1809)**  
Quartet in E flat major, Op. 71 No. 3

*Vivace*  
*Andante con moto*  
*Menuetto*  
Finale: *Vivace*

**Lennox Berkeley (1903 – 1989)**  
String Quartet No 3, Op. 76

*Allegro Moderato*  
*Allegro Vivace*  
*Lento*  
*Molto Vivace – Lento - Tempo 1*

INTERVAL

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

*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*

## Programme Notes

In July 1792, **Haydn** returned to Vienna after eighteen spectacularly successful months in London. He had unveiled many compositions of all kinds, and earned a considerable sum of money. The London concert scene, served by many of Europe's leading musicians, was prosperous and vibrant, in marked contrast to Vienna, where political uncertainty caused by the French revolution had led to inflation and a consequent decline in noble patronage for music. Plans for a second visit to England were already under discussion, and Haydn soon began some of the new works which would be needed, amongst them the quartets we now know as Opus 71. Internal evidence demonstrates that they 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. Each has a brief introduction – a practical measure to ensure that the large audience was giving its full attention to the start of the musical argument proper. In the case of Op 71 No 3 the 'introduction' amounts to just one chord and a short rest! Haydn perhaps reckoned that audiences would develop appropriate habits as one concert succeeded another - after all, he had the experience of his previous tour on which to draw. The instrumental writing of Op 71 takes for granted the virtuosity of Salomon and his quartet, so that the textures often have a fuller sonority than earlier chamber works: Haydn cultivates a specific "London sound". In every dimension, the musical language is refined and sophisticated – for example, the first three phrases of the opening *vivace* have six, six, and seven bars respectively, whilst the second theme is a development of the first, rather than a new idea. The slow movement's variations alternate major and minor tonality whilst offering many ingenious - and often witty - perspectives on different elements of the theme. The finale combines elements of rondo and sonata forms: its ubiquitous energy and vivacity proclaim a composer at the height of his powers.

On graduation from Oxford (French, Old French, and Philology), Lennox **Berkeley** showed some of his compositions to Ravel, who suggested that he should study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He thus became acquainted with several French composers, including Ravel, Poulenc, Milhaud and Honegger. He always felt a much closer affinity with French style than with English predecessors such as Elgar and Vaughan Williams, though he became close friends with Benjamin Britten, whom he met in 1936. Berkeley's compositions include many songs, choral works, four operas, three symphonies, concertos, chamber and solo works. The third string quartet was first performed by the Dartington Quartet in 1970. Its opening theme reappears in various guises throughout the work: Berkeley observed that some of the reappearances happened more or less accidentally, or at all events subconsciously, as he had not set out to write a monothematic piece. There is a second theme contrasting in character with the first: there is no recapitulation, but both themes are alluded to rather than restated before a coda rounds off the movement. The scherzo is built on a phrase of six notes and its inversion. The music moves very fast, and no new thematic material is added. Berkeley had written a very simple unison setting of the hymn 'Hail Holy Queen', and now reworked its melody for the quartet's slow movement, only later realising that the beginning of the hymn tune is a descending sequence of notes not unlike the main theme of the Quartet. The last movement bears the closest resemblance to the first in the actual notes used, but they are given a quite different and much lighter character. About half-way through there is a pause: the main theme of the slow movement is repeated, differently harmonised, but quite soon breaks off. The quick tempo returns to conclude the work.

**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 an 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 irresistibly forward. The scherzo exhibits a species of melody of an unusually simple directness - 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. It was to achieve such contrast that Beethoven cultivated his quasi-folk tunes in the late works: he sought structures which could contain and reconcile opposites in all dimensions of the music, integrating highly diverse elements into a unified whole. As part of this process, 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 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 assimilate. The function of the sixth movement is subtly ambiguous. It is barely long enough to feel like an independent movement – it appears to be an extended slow introduction to the finale. Yet it is separate and distinct, 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. The movement generates great power and strength as it proceeds – the forceful, minor-key ingredients taking much more of our attention than the relaxed lyrical passages. Towards the end, fugal writing and a *cantus firmus* (theme in slow notes around which other material is woven) create an even more imposing sense of drive and grandeur as the music moves on relentlessly towards its concluding chords.

© Peter Shave 2006

**Next Concert is**  
**Friday 8 December (8pm) at the Constable Hall, Gandish Road, East Bergholt**  
**Ruth Palmer *violin* and Alba Ventura *piano***  
Mozart, Mendelssohn, Shostakovich, Gershwin/Heifetz