

Maggini Quartet Biography

(from the quartet's website: www.maggini.net)

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

The Quartet is renowned for championing British repertoire, with worldwide sales of recordings for Naxos's Gramophone Award winning British Music series exceeding 100,000 discs. The ensemble's 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. Recordings of Ireland, Bridge, Bliss, Bax, Walton, Britten and E J Moeran have all been Editor's Choices in Gramophone and the CD of Bridge Quartets 2 & 4 and Phantasy Piano Quartet with Martin Roscoe was a Gramophone CD of the Month (May 2005). The 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 Bax Quartets 1 & 2 won a 2002 Cannes Classical Award. The Quartet were also Grammy Award nominees in 2004 and 2005

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 Maggini Quartet has much enjoyed their unique collaboration with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, performing and recording his ten 'Naxos Quartets' over a five-year period. Commissioned by Naxos, the works fulfilled the composer's long-held intention of bringing a major contribution to chamber music repertoire. Premieres have included the Wigmore Hall (which hosted performances of all the works), Cheltenham Festival, Oslo Chamber Music Festival and the Purcell Room and all have been received with outstanding acclaim by audiences and critics. The five CDs of the repertoire have also generated tremendous enthusiasm, with The Times hailing the cycle as "a 20th century landmark".

The Maggini Quartet appears frequently in prestigious concert series at home and abroad and makes regular media broadcasts. Recent European activities have included performances in the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark. The Glory of the English String Quartet continues to be an important ongoing initiative, drawing upon the wonderfully varied and distinctive repertoire which the Quartet is committed to bringing to a worldwide audience through concert performances and 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 Paulo Maggini, an example of whose work is played by David Angel.

Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-ninth
season
2009-10

4.00 pm
Sunday
22 November 2009

St. Mary's Church
East Bergholt



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

Maggini Quartet

Gina McCormack *violin*
David Angel *violin*
Martin Outram *viola*
Michal Kaznowski *cello*

Joseph Haydn (1732 -1809)
String Quartet in C major, Op 54 No 2

Vivace
Adagio
Menuetto: *Allegretto*
Adagio-Presto-Adagio

Edmund Rubbra (1901-1986)
String Quartet No 3
Largo ma molto flessibile –
Allegretto - (attacca) –
Adagio - (attacca) – *Allegro leggiero*

INTERVAL

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
String Quartet in E flat major, Op 12
Adagio non troppo – *Allegro non tardante*
Canzonetta: *Allegretto*
Andante espressivo
Molto allegro e vivace

*This St. Cecilia's Day Concert
is in memory of Gillian Walker,
and in gratitude for her legacy.*

Programme Notes

Haydn's Op 54 quartets are dedicated to the violinist Johann Tost, who led the second violins in Haydn's orchestra at Esterháza from 1783 until his departure for Paris in 1788. There he sold for publication the six quartets of Opus 54 and Opus 55 together with two new Haydn symphonies, transactions that seem to have caused some trouble. It appears that Tost was neither prompt nor straightforward in giving Haydn the proceeds: he had also tried to pass off a work by Gyrowetz as being by Haydn. Earlier during his time at Esterháza, he had suggested a lucrative scheme for pirating compositions belonging to the Prince. In 1790 he married the chief housekeeper in the service of Prince Esterházy, a woman of some considerable means, which enabled him to become a cloth-merchant. Nine years later, we hear of his approach to Spohr with the suggestion that he buy exclusive rights over the latter's chamber music compositions for a period of three years. He could then gain entry to the best houses in Vienna when Spohr's music was performed, in order to facilitate business contacts. Spohr agreed to the proposal and a sliding scale of fees was offered, rising or falling according to the number of instruments written for! Whatever view we may take of Tost's business methods, he seems to have been quite some violinist. The three Opus 54 quartets give the first violin part a prominence which at times threatens to unbalance the equality of part writing which Haydn had so assiduously cultivated in previous quartets. The C major opens boldly, with a movement that sometimes takes the first violin to unexpected heights, and maintains a lively spirit throughout. This acts as a counterbalance to the remarkably high proportion of slow music which is to follow in the rest of the work. The minor key second movement gives the first violin highly expressive embellishments of the slow theme: some are reminiscent of CPE Bach, whose works Haydn, when younger, had studied closely: others recall the gypsy idioms often heard in the Hungarian borderland of his childhood. The quartet's Minuet was well enough liked at Esterháza to be used for a musical clock made by the librarian, Pater Primitivus Niemecz. The finale is an original movement that opens and closes with slow music, but includes one rapid section, interrupted by sudden pauses, typical of Haydn's penchant for doing the unexpected.

Edmund **Rubbra's** parents were working-class and thus poor, but had a love of music. He began piano lessons at eight, transferring later to a teacher who added instruction in harmony and counterpoint. In his uncle's music shop he discovered the music of Cyril Scott and Debussy. Leaving school at fourteen to help his family financially, he worked as an office boy, then a railway clerk. At seventeen he organised an all-Scott concert in Northampton, prompting the composer to accept him as a private pupil. He won scholarships to Reading University and later to the Royal College of Music, where his main teacher was Holst. Afterwards, he supported himself by teaching privately, playing for ballet dancers, and both composing and playing for a travelling theatrical company. In the 1930s he entered into journalism with contributions to the *Monthly Musical Record* and *The Listener*. In the same period he left London permanently, and moved to a remote cottage in the Chilterns where the majority of his music was composed. Later he was senior lecturer at Worcester College, Oxford, and professor of composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Three universities conferred honorary doctorates on him, and in 1960 he was made a CBE. The list of Rubbra's compositions is long, running to 164 opus numbers. His style does not draw on his early enthusiasms such as Scott, Debussy and Holst, but is remarkably original. Ralph Scott Grover (Grove online) observes that in his major works two fundamental processes are present: the

expansion of materials generated from small cells, and the sounding of a complete theme of a defined length. Large-scale structures are governed not by harmony but by counterpoint, and the emphasis is on textural growth. 'I never know where a piece is going to go next ... When I begin, my only concern is with fixing a starting point that I can be sure of ... My imagination discovers the architecture for me'. The closely reasoned nature of his musical thinking is demonstrated in the third quartet by the integration of the movements, which follow each other without a break, and which all derive their material from elements heard in the very first few bars.

1829 was a busy year for **Mendelssohn**. In March, he organised and directed a performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, the first since its composer's death some eighty years earlier. He then set out on an extended tour of Britain, reaching London during April. He was introduced to many leading musicians, playing the piano at private gatherings, and later appearing as both pianist and conductor in public concerts. In July, the end of the London concert season left him free to travel, and he set out with a companion on a walking tour of Scotland. Holyrood Palace is believed to have provided the inspiration for his Scottish Symphony. After a short stay with Sir Walter Scott, he travelled on to the Highlands and the Inner Hebrides, where he formed his first thoughts of the overture *Fingal's Cave*. Later he travelled south to Liverpool, and spent some days in North Wales. His time in Britain was by all accounts a happy one: a September letter from London tells his sisters that he has completed an organ piece for Fanny's forthcoming wedding and is nearing the end of a string quartet - the manuscript of this evening's work bears the completion date of September 14th. The great classical quartet composers - Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert - were all proficient players of either violin or viola, and thus had an 'insider's' understanding of the potential of stringed instruments. Mendelssohn continued this trend because, in addition to being a superb pianist and organist, he played the violin sufficiently well to have lessons in Paris with the French virtuoso Baillot. The Octet, his first masterpiece and a *tour de force* of string writing, was completed around the same time - Mendelssohn was sixteen. The E flat quartet of four years later reveals a thorough knowledge of Beethoven's contribution to the genre, its very opening calling to mind the latter's 'Harp' Quartet. Unlike Beethoven, however, Mendelssohn makes references to this slow introduction later in the quartet, and in a similar way the theme of the following *allegro non tardante* returns near the very end of the quartet. The *canzonetta* is one of Mendelssohn's most popular quartet movements, owing to its simplicity and its attractive scoring, with telling use of pizzicato and sustained notes. The finale at first surprises us by its opening minor key and abundant energy. By the end, however, we are back in the home key of E flat major: Mendelssohn's closing section invariably leaves the listener with a wonderful sense of contentment.

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SVAM's next concert: James Turnbull *oboe* and Victoria Davies *harp*
at the Constable Hall East Bergholt on Friday 4 December 2009 at 8 pm
Music by Bach, Tomasi, Telemann, Pasculi, Berkeley, Tournier and Piazzolla.
We still have a few Supper Concert spaces for Saturday 9th January 2010