

Navarra Quartet

In July 2007 the Navarra Quartet won 2nd Prize in the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition. Winners of the 2005 Florence International Chamber Music Competition and selected for representation by YCAT in 2006, the Navarra Quartet is fast emerging as one of the outstanding quartets of their generation. Formed in September 2002 at the Royal Northern College of Music, under the guidance of Dr Christopher Rowland, in 2005 the Quartet was awarded the RNCM's Professional Performance Diploma with distinction. They are currently Junior Fellows at the RNCM and also study with the Alban Berg Quartet in Cologne. As a Quartet they have participated in masterclasses with Mstislav Rostropovich, Thomas Riebl, Gabor Takacs-Nagy, the Chilingirian and Endellion Quartets.

The Navarra Quartet has won numerous prizes and awards, in 2007 receiving a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship Award and in 2006 a Tunnell Trust and Tillett Trust Young Artists' Platform awards. They have taken part in the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove and in 2008 return as resident quartet to the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh.

Over the last few years the Quartet has given debut recitals at Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, St. George's Bristol and Bridgewater Hall. They have also appeared at the SovietFest in Manchester, the Brighton and Lake District Festivals, participated in the Lincoln International Haydn Festival, playing alongside the Quatour Mosaiques and London Haydn Quartet, and given performances with the Elias Quartet and Raphael Wallfisch. Further afield they have given concerts in Italy and a live broadcast of Shostakovich's *Quartet No.3* for Italian Radio 3.

Future plans include return visits to Wigmore Hall, a BBC Radio 3 Beethoven Plus concert at LSO St. Lukes and concerts throughout the UK and in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.

www.navarra.co.uk

'Moments of intuitive chamber work and cellist Nathaniel Boyd's compelling melodic lines were signs of good things to come...Shostakovich's marathon third quartet came to life in subtle shades of humour and gravity. The young anglo-dutch ensemble played with an uncanny wisdom and a good sense of timing.'

The Strad, January 2007 (Wigmore Hall, September 2006)

The Navarra Quartet opened the programme exactly a hundred years after Shostakovich's birth with the composers eight quartet, a reading of much insight and dedication.

The Musical Opinion (Purcell Room, September 2006)

Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-seventh
season
2007-8

4.00 pm
Sunday
21 October
2007

St. Mary's Church
East Bergholt



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

Navarra Quartet

Xander van Vliet *violin*
Marije Ploemacher *violin*
Simone van der Giessen *viola*
Nathaniel Boyd *cello*

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

String Quartet in B flat major Op 76 No 4

Allegro con spirito
Adagio
Menuetto Allegro
Finale Allegro ma non troppo

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

String Quartet in G major K.387

Allegro vivace assai
Menuetto & Trio
Andante cantabile
Molto Allegro

INTERVAL

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Quartetto Dorico (1924)

The Annual General Meeting of the Stour Valley Arts & Music Society will be held after the concert. All members are welcome.

Programme Notes

In 1797, **Haydn** was sixty-five years old. Two extended visits to England had made him a wealthy man, and he was now the most famous musician in Europe. His position as Esterházy Kapellmeister was far less onerous than before, because Prince Nicolaus II had largely abandoned the country palace at Eszterháza: Haydn's primary duty was to supply a mass each year for the name-day (8 September) of Maria Hermenegild, Nicolaus's consort. The fame and fortune acquired during his London years gave Haydn the status of a culture-hero in Vienna. Many of his remaining works originated in collaboration with the cultural-political establishment and were staged as 'events' of social and ideological as well as musical import. The key figure was Baron van Swieten, the imperial librarian and censor and the resolutely high-minded leader of the *Gesellschaft der Associirten*, an organisation of noble patrons who subsidised large-scale performances of oratorios and the like. Haydn's compositional orientation changed fundamentally. He composed little instrumental or orchestral music, but was persuaded by Swieten to begin work on *The Creation*. In support of the Imperial cause, he wrote his 'Emperor's Hymn' – one of the world's great melodies from the moment it left his pen. The only instrumental genre he actively cultivated was the string quartet: Op.76, dedicated to Count Joseph Erdödy, was completed in 1797 and published in 1799. Having contributed nearly eighty works, across almost forty years, to the genre he had himself pioneered, it is no surprise that these pieces show complete mastery of every aspect of quartet writing. No. 4 probably acquired its nickname 'Sunrise' from the gracefully rising contour of the opening theme, a dreamlike, descending 'mirror image' of which appears a little later on the cello as the second theme. It will appear again, subtly varied by the viola, in the recapitulation. Not the least pleasing feature of this movement is the often ethereal lightness of the textures. The slow movement is a miracle of compression, and of continuously unfolding musical logic: the apparently simple opening motive being eventually presented in *stretto* (versions of it in all parts overlapping each other). The last two movements are necessarily less intense, but each display in full measure Haydn's inimitable *joie de vivre*. The finale is an amalgam of Rondo and Variation forms – the opening theme recurs twice after episodes of other material, but with its details varied each time.

In the mid-eighteenth century, chamber music for strings without a keyboard instrument had been a fairly new idea, though string quartets were rapidly gaining in popularity. Many such works had a dominant first violin part with subservient roles for the lower instruments. It was Haydn's Op 33 quartets of 1782 ('written in an entirely new and original manner') which pioneered a fully-integrated texture, each instrument being of equal importance to the musical discourse. They evidently caught the imagination of the twenty-six year-old **Mozart**, who set himself the task of emulating Haydn's achievement. He had written no quartets for nine years, and on eventually completing his six-quartet tribute to the older master, described it as 'the fruits of a long and laborious endeavour'. His claim is borne out by the relatively large number of quartet fragments from this time, as well by numerous corrections and changes in the autograph manuscripts. The G major quartet is the first of the six, and was completed on the last day of 1782. Whilst the four voices are indeed integrated in the manner of Haydn, the first movement is in one respect significantly different, in that it presents a plethora of thematic material where Haydn usually cultivated the utmost economy. Mozart's development section is perhaps a little repetitive, nonetheless the movement as a whole is both impressive and engaging. The minuet movement

experiments with rhythmic displacement (two beats against the underlying three) in a rising chromatic motif – the passionate minor mode of the trio section comes almost as a relief. Mozart clearly feels at home in the aria-like expansiveness of the slow movement. The finale emulates another of Haydn's traits – the combination of fragments of fugue with other themes which are more in the spirit of comic opera.

Respighi is chiefly known for his vivid symphonic poems *Fontane di Roma* (The Fountains of Rome), *Pini di Roma* (The Pines of Rome), and *Feste Romane* (Roman Festivals), the last a celebration of the revived spirit of nationalism in the Italy of his time. *La boutique fantasque*, based on piano pieces by Rossini, is well known to ballet audiences, whilst other orchestral arrangements include three sets of orchestrated *Antiche arie e danze per liuto* (Ancient Airs and Dance for Lute) and *Gli uccelli* (The Birds), based on compositions by Rameau, Pasquini and others. Respighi's outstanding skill at exploiting orchestral colours was stimulated in his early twenties, when he was engaged for a number of months as a viola player in St. Petersburg. This made possible a few ('for me very important') lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov, the leading orchestration teacher of his day. Back in Bologna, Respighi continued for several years to earn his living mainly as an orchestral player, while winning increasing (though still only local) recognition as a composer. From 1906 he also became active as a transcriber of music from the 17th and 18th centuries. An early Quartet in D Minor is a considerable thirty-six minute creation in four movements, in which the influence of Brahms is very apparent: it also has the heart-on-sleeve immediacy of his better-known orchestral music. Reputedly uncomfortable with the quartet as a medium, Respighi's achievements in the genre are by no means negligible. *Il Tramonto* (1918) and the Quartetto Dorico (1924) are decidedly experimental, and reflect his fascination with early music. *Il Tramonto* (The Sunset) adds a mezzo-soprano soloist to the quartet for a declamatory setting of Shelley that takes Monteverdi as its model. The austere Quartetto Dorico derives its harmonic palette from the modes of medieval church music - this may at first sound unpromising, but in fact the result is an imaginative and assured work. Respighi's sense of instrumental colour is very evident. One critic wrote that "one frequently forgets that it is just a quartet playing, as the sound world is so much bigger - practically orchestral". As the name implies, the main theme of the work is based on the old church mode, and this theme is put to richly varied uses within a seemingly rhapsodic, yet thematically unified single-movement structure. Some passages will remind British listeners of the more calmly modal music of Vaughan Williams, whilst others have an unmistakably Italian intensity. Overall, this is undoubtedly a work which deserves to be heard more often.

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Next Concert is
Sunday 18 November 4pm at St. Mary's Church, East Bergholt
London Harpsichord Ensemble
Telemann, Vivaldi, Gordon Jacob, Bach

It is not too late to buy a season ticket and get a refund for today's ticket.
See us at the interval for details