

**The Capriccio Piano Quartet** was formed in March last year, and gave their first concert for Cambridge University Music Club. They have received coaching from Joyce Rathbone, David Takeno, Maureen Smith, Lucy Russell and David Waterman, and have performed for Clare College Music Society, Gonville and Caius College Music Society, the Linton Festival and West Malling concert series. Future plans include a second CUMC concert, and a recital for Cambridge Summer music in April.

NICHOLAS RIMMER is in his third year reading music at Clare College, Cambridge, where he also holds an organ scholarship. He first received piano lessons at the age of seven, and from 1990-2000 he attended the Junior School at the Royal Northern College of Music, where his teacher was John Wilson. He was a keyboard finalist in BBC Young Musician 2000. Since coming to Cambridge he has continued his studies in London with Joyce Rathbone and performs frequently as accompanist, recitalist and chamber musician. He has also been appointed one of four student conductors of Cambridge University Music Society for the 2002-3 season.

FLORENCE COOKE is in her second year reading music at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. She studied with Krzysztof Smietana at the Guildhall School of Music Junior department, and gained a sixth form scholarship to the Purcell School. She was a member of the NYO from 1998-99. In Cambridge she is joint leader of Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra, and recently led and directed the debut concert of Cambridge University Baroque Ensemble. She holds an Instrumental Award for chamber music, and last year won the H. L. Perry prize for the best performance given by a member of Caius. She was a joint winner of the 2002 CUMS concerto competition, and is currently studying the violin with David Takeno.

ELLEN BLYTHE is in her second year reading music at King's College, London. She attended the Guildhall School of Music Junior department, where she studied with Ruth Hahn. Ellen is a keen chamber musician, and took part in the Pro Corda chamber music program whilst at school. She studied for a year at the Royal Academy of Music with Jean Harvey before taking up her place at King's College, where she is now principal viola in the University of London Union Symphony Orchestra. She is currently studying the viola with Jim Sleigh at the Royal Academy, as part of her degree at Kings. She also plays in a string quartet at the Royal Academy, with whom she recently participated in a masterclass with the Skampa Quartet.

SOPHIE RIVLIN is in her third year reading philosophy at Clare College, Cambridge. She holds a university Instrumental Award for chamber music, and has participated in the Rathbone-Dickson chamber music course and the Cannons chamber music course. She studies the cello with Rebecca Gulliver, and previous teachers include Melissa Phelps and the late Joan Dickson. Her chamber music experience includes several outstanding performances in the Purcell Room and St. John's, Smith Square, as well as on BBC Radio Scotland. She was a finalist for several consecutive years in the National Schools Chamber Music competition, from which she also received awards for outstanding performance.

# STOUR VALLEY ARTS & MUSIC

52nd Season: 2002-2003

## Capriccio Piano Quartet

Nicholas Rimmer, *piano* – Florence Cooke, *violin*  
Ellen Blythe, *viola* - Sophie Rivlin *cello*

Saturday 11 January 2003

Constable Hall

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### PROGRAMME

**Piano Quartet in G minor, K478**      **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
(1756 - 1791)

*Allegro ; Andante ; Rondo – Allegro moderato*

**Phantasy Piano Quartet in F sharp minor**      **Frank Bridge**  
(1911)      (1879 – 1941)

*Andante con moto : Allegro : Andante con moto*

### INTERVAL

**Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Opus 15**      **Gabriel Fauré**  
(1845 – 1924)

*Allegro molto moderato : Scherzo - Allegro vivo : Adagio : Allegro molto*

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## PROGRAMME NOTES

Quartets for piano and three other instruments, usually violin, viola and cello, gained popularity in the second half of the eighteenth century. The form grew out of the accompanied keyboard divertimentos of the 1750s to 80s and is loosely related to the early keyboard concerto. Many concertos were published for keyboard with two violins and bass instrument (cello), and **Mozart** was well acquainted with examples of such works by J.C. Bach (whom he met in London and in Paris) and by the Silesian composer Johann Schobert, whom he also met in Paris (and who died in his early thirties from eating poisonous mushrooms!) The influence of these two older men seems clear, since there is notable similarity between the opening bars of Schobert's Quartet in E flat, Opus 7 No 1, and those of Mozart's second piano quartet in the same key, whilst the finale of his first quotes a theme from a J.C. Bach concerto. In 1785, Franz Anton Hoffmeister – himself a composer and publisher, as well as a fellow Freemason, commissioned Mozart to write three piano quartets. When the first of the three – this evening's work in G minor – was found too difficult by the Viennese public, Hoffmeister withdrew from the project, though he allowed Mozart to keep his advance payment. It is not hard to see why amateurs would have found the quartet too demanding. The piano part is challenging, but also, as Alfred Einstein writes “this is no longer in any sense the music of mere sociability, which can be listened to with superficiality and a smile. G minor is for Mozart the key of fate, as we know from two symphonies and a string quintet; and the wild command which opens the first movement, *unisono*, and stamps the whole movement with its character, remaining threateningly in the background, and bringing the movement to its inexorable close, might be called the ‘fate’ motive with exactly as much justice as the four-note motive of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony”. The major key of the second movement – a sonata form without development – brings a tender melody, though is not entirely without shadows. The third movement turns to G major for a rondo-finale of the kind found in several of the piano concertos: a seemingly endless parade of sparkling melodic ideas - the one borrowed from J.C. Bach was to be used again in Mozart's D major Rondo for piano.

Since the death of Purcell in 1695, England had not produced a single composer of international standing, until the appearance of the *Enigma Variations* by Elgar in 1899 heralded a glorious period of "English Renaissance", the other major figures of which were Delius, Vaughan Williams and Holst. These were followed by a whole group of younger composers, among whom the most prominent were Bax, Ireland, and Frank **Bridge**. The latter studied the violin and composition at the RCM, where a scholarship won in 1899 enabled him to work under Stanford for four years. He quickly made a professional reputation as an outstanding conductor and chamber music player. In 1906 he took the place of the indisposed violist Wirth in the Joachim Quartet, and later joined the English String Quartet, of which he was a member until 1915. During this period he also undertook many important conducting engagements: his musicianship made it possible for him to take on the most difficult programmes at

short notice, and Henry Wood called on him for Promenade Concerts when he himself was incapacitated. He was also a remarkable teacher, though Britten was his only composition pupil. The *Phantasy* Piano Quartet is one of three works which he wrote for businessman and amateur violinist, Walter Willson Cobbett (1847-1937), who wished to revive English composers' interest in chamber music. He championed the Elizabethan musical form of Phantasy, (or Fantasy, or Phantasie) as a single movement composition capable of embracing the variety of moods and the structural elements of a traditional three or four-movement work. Bridge won four Cobbett Prizes for the *Phantasie* String Quartet (1910), the *Phantasie* Piano Trio (1908), the *Phantasie* Piano Quartet (1910), as well as the Second String Quartet (1915). The Piano Quartet is concise and of symmetrical construction. The main *andante* sections flank a central *Allegro* whose relaxed middle section refers to the work's opening. These arch-shaped forms were to remain a preoccupation throughout the composer's career.

Gabriel-Urban **Fauré** was born in the small town of Pamiers not far from Carcassonne. His father was a village schoolmaster, and from early childhood Fauré spent hours playing the harmonium in the adjoining chapel. One day, a visitor (de Saubiac, archivist at the Paris Assembly) heard the eight-year old boy improvising and advised his father to send him to the Ecole de Musique Classique et Religieuse which Louis Niedermeyer had just established in the French capital. After a year's reflection, Fauré's father took his son to Paris in October 1854 - a three-day journey in those days. Fauré remained a boarder at the Ecole Niedermeyer for eleven years. Besides being obliged to wear a uniform which included blue underwear, he received intensive tuition in church music - organ, plainsong, Renaissance polyphony, harmony, counterpoint and fugue. He was taught the piano by Niedermeyer himself. After the latter's death in 1861, the lessons were taken over by Saint-Saëns, who introduced contemporary music not previously in the school syllabus, including that of Schumann, Wagner and Liszt. He also encouraged his pupils to compose, and Fauré's first works date from this period. Over the next few years, Fauré held various posts as an organist and fulfilled a period of military service. In his early thirties came the composition of his three most significant works to date, including first Violin Sonata and the first Piano Quartet. Both exhibit several of the hallmarks of Fauré's style, for example his fondness for subtle harmonic changes and transitions within phrases; and a kind of restless mobility, often taking the form of widespread arpeggios. His inspiration is essentially lyrical, with little of drama or conflict: sustained melodies are spun out with a love of delicate detail. He established in these early chamber works a particularly French kind of scherzo: in contrast to the nocturnal shadowiness of the German Romantics, we find a sunny, skipping movement with bursts of pizzicato. In the quartet, he maintains a lightness of texture by writing for the piano rather as if it were a harp. Fauré's frankly romantic feeling was always held in check by an essentially classical mind – he named among the qualities he considered most essential in French art “clarity of thought, sobriety and purity of form, sincerity and disdain of vulgar effect”.