

## Szymanowski Quartet

"This Warsaw foursome has superb technical control, innate musicality and an extraordinary sense of ensemble. Couple that with a deep understanding of their repertoire and an involvement that communicates itself electrifyingly to an audience, and the Szymanowski Quartet bears the hallmark of greatness. I guarantee you will be hearing a lot more from this gifted young group." Paul Cutts, The Strad, May 2003

Founded in Warsaw in 1995, the Szymanowski Quartet has developed into one of the most charismatic string quartets of the younger generation. In May 2001 they were selected by BBC Radio 3 to participate in the New Generation Artists Scheme, a project including frequent studio recordings for the BBC as well as concerts in various BBC series. In the UK they have played at the Chester Festival, the City of London Festival, the Wigmore Hall, the Huddersfield Festival, the BBC Proms, the Bath Festival and at many other venues.

Awards at well-known competitions, including the "Premio Vittorio Gui" in Florence and the 1997 "In Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich" in Hanover, soon confirmed the extraordinarily high standards of the Quartet. In 1999 they won both the second prize and the audience prize at the International Chamber Music Competitions in Osaka and Melbourne.

The last few seasons have included invitations to renowned festivals such as the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, Würzburg Mozart Festival, Bregenzer and Schwetzingen Festspiele, Niedersächsische Musiktage and the Festivals of Luxembourg and Lockenhaus. The Quartet has performed concerts in Paris, Lyon, Grenoble and Bremen, and made an Australian tour of ten concerts under the auspices of Musica Viva.

The Szymanowski Quartet has played at Carnegie Hall in New York, the Perth Festival, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Grünewald Hall in Stockholm, and also in Winterthur, Bonn, Hanover and Santiago di Compostela.

After its foundation in Warsaw, the Szymanowski Quartet studied in the chamber music class of the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hanover, which was founded especially for the Quartet by their teacher and mentor Hatto Beyerle. Although they have now finished their studies in Hanover, the Quartet continues to refine their musical skills by participating in master classes with such teachers as Walter Levin and the Amadeus, Emerson, Juilliard and Guarneri Quartets. Since the autumn of 2000, the Szymanowski Quartet has been "Quartet in Residence" and teaching chamber music at the Musikhochschule Hanover.

Composers they have worked with include Magnus Lindberg, Elena Kats-Chernin, Philip Cashian and Andrew Tooley, several of whom dedicated works to the Szymanowski Quartet.

### CHANGE OF VENUE

**Our next Concert: Naomi Sullivan, saxophone and Tim Sidford, piano** in a varied programme of solos and duos, including works by Liszt, Vaughan Williams, Debussy, Telemann, Ravel and Millhaud.

This concert will now be at St. Mary's Church East Bergholt. Date and time are unchanged: **Friday 9th December 2005 at 8pm.**

*Tickets for sale from 3 weeks before each event from Grier & Partners.  
To book tickets call 01206 298491.*

# Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-fifth  
season  
2005-6

4.00pm  
Sunday  
20 November  
2005

St. Mary's Church  
East Bergholt

## Szymanowski Quartet

Marek Dumicz violin  
Grzegorz Kotow violin  
Vladimir Mykitka viola  
Marcin Sieniawski cello

**Joseph Haydn** (1732 -1809)  
String Quartet in F major, Op 77 No 2

*Allegro moderato*  
*Menuetto Presto ma non troppo*  
*Andante*  
*Finale Vivace assai*

**Karol Szymanowski** (1882 – 1937)  
String Quartet No 2, Op 56

*Moderato dolce e tranquillo*  
*Vivace (Scherzando)*  
*Lento - Moderato*

INTERVAL

**Antonin Dvořák** (1841 – 1904)  
String Quartet in A flat major, Op 105

*Adagio ma non troppo - Allegro appassionato*  
*Molto vivace*  
*Lento e molto cantabile*  
*Allegro ma non tanto*



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## Programme Notes

**Haydn's** two extended visits to London (1791/2 and 1794/5) resulted in considerable fame and fortune. Back in Vienna, he embarked on a number of major 'public' works, amongst them *The Creation*, the Trumpet Concerto, the *Seven Last Words*, and several large-scale mass settings, as well as the Op 76 quartets. In 1799, he began to complain of physical and mental weakness - in June he wrote to Härtel:

Every day the world compliments me on the fire of my recent works, but no one will believe the strain and effort it costs me to produce them. Some days my enfeebled memory and the unstrung state of my nerves crush me to the earth to such an extent that I fall prey to the worst sort of depression, and am quite incapable of finding even a single idea for many days thereafter; until at last Providence revives me, and I can again sit down at the pianoforte and begin to scratch away.

Indeed his productivity did begin to decline about this time, although works he did complete continued to gain in 'fire' and cogency. There are only Op 77 quartets, though a set of six had originally been intended. The first movement of No 2 uses the same theme for both first and second subject, presented in remarkably different guises: there are subsidiary themes, one of which provides the rapid patterns on which much of the development section is based. The Menuetto (in reality a scherzo) has striking rhythmic wit, contrasted by a trio of glorious lyricism. The slow movement is one of Haydn's heart-warming variation sets, having also elements of rondo form, whilst the finale is 'grand' in every sense. Its theme has the cast of a polacca (literally 'in Polish style' – usually signifying polonaise-like rhythms) and is the basis of a fully-fledged sonata-form movement. Considerable use of imitative contrapuntal devices adds intellectual zest to physical and rhythmic vitality.

The descendant of an old aristocratic family from the Ukraine, Karol **Szymanowski** lived to see his homeland, for long the melting pot of Europe, achieve independence from Russia, though not before the Revolution had wreaked its vengeance, with the family home razed to the ground and the composer's two grand pianos thrown into the lake. Szymanowski believed fervently in the cause of Polish nationalism; however, he was nearly forty before the folk music of the Tatra mountains began to have a direct effect on his musical style. Up to that point his music had reflected his passion for Wagner, Scriabin and other Late Romantic composers, as well as for Debussy and Ravel. That he succeeded in forging from these disparate elements the highly individual, compelling and haunting language which we find in the second string quartet, his last chamber music work, dating from 1927, is testimony to his creative powers. All four instruments are muted in the first movement, which opens with an ethereal melody in first violin and cello, soaring lyrically together over a murmuring accompaniment. However, it is not long before the texture becomes increasingly chromatic and more complex, the mood and tempo changing every few bars, underlining the music's episodic character. For all its overtly expressionistic style the movement does in fact follow the customary three-part pattern, the middle section freely developing the main, song-like theme before a return is

made to the opening. Then the slackening pulse and the music's dying fall signal the end of the movement which, unexpectedly after all the intense chromaticism, now resolves peacefully on a major chord. The second movement is vigorously ethnic in character, inevitably bringing to mind equally folk-inspired and fiercely rhythmic movements in Bartok's string quartets, the strings - now unmuted - unleashing a savage staccato rhythm, and a feverish waltz over energetic *pizzicati*, played initially in canon by the two violins. Despite the music's harsh and ever more discordant character the waltz continues to plead, before making a final passionate appearance high in first violin over a rumbustious strummed *pizzicato* accompaniment. The music comes to an emphatic conclusion after an enormous *glissando* over two octaves in all four instruments.

Contemporaries regarded **Dvořák** as a composer who wrote prolifically and fast, and who, as his publisher Simrock once observed, could 'pull melodies out of his sleeve'. Yet surviving documents show that his compositional process usually went through four painstaking stages. He first jotted down fragments of melody in notebooks, often with no particular project in mind. Secondly, he made sketches of rough outlines of the whole or part of a planned work. Third came a continuity sketch, with firm melodic outlines, indications of harmony or instrumentation, often showing the rejection of a way previously taken, the search for new solutions, and the disentangling of problems (or 'knots', as Dvořák called them). Finally there was a fair copy of the score, with the definitive refinement of details outlined in the continuity sketch. Dvořák aimed to have 'no instrument demoted to a part that is merely filling in', but to ensure that every instrument 'speaks an eloquent language of its own'. Yet when we hear the music, we have no sense of the sustained effort that went into its making. Dvořák, like Schubert, had the ability to give the complexity and richness of his music the appearance of being entirely uncomplicated and spontaneous, and expressing the simple pleasure of music-making. In 1895, Dvořák returned to Czechoslovakia from the United States, and was able to spend Christmas with his entire family – he had six children aged from 6 to 16 - for the first time in over three years. On 30<sup>th</sup> December he completed his fourteenth and last string quartet, a work which suggests that he was overjoyed to be home. It begins with a slow introduction. The following *Allegro* has two first themes, one based on a motif that threads its way through the entire work, the other making prominent use of large downward leaps. The eventual second subject resembles a hunting call. The second movement is a *furiant* – a dance in fast triple time containing contradictory accents suggestive of duple time, which in this case are taken to extremes (the Czech word *furiant* means 'a proud, swaggering, conceited man'). The central section allows the viola to present a beguiling melody, whilst the ensuing *Lento* movement gives further demonstration of Dvořák's ability to spin long melodic lines. The finale is rich in ideas, and unusual in having two distinct second subjects. A sure sense of proportion is demonstrated by the decision to recapitulate only the first of these when the music finally returns to its home key.