

RIPON
CONCERTS

Chamber music with passion

Piatti String Quartet with Michael Collins - Clarinet



Monday 13 February 2023, 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

www.riponconcerts.co.uk

Patron: Julius Drake

Welcome

Welcome to the penultimate concert of the current season. In contrast to last month, our musicians this evening are well known and have performed on some of the world's most famous concert stages on many occasions. However, like all great artists, they realise the importance of giving grass roots audiences, who cannot get to places such as the Wigmore Hall, the opportunity to hear live performances of wonderful music.

Why do we need to listen to music? The simplest answer is that it enables us to explore and appreciate what it is to be human. Music is fundamental to our being and is deeply rooted in the most primitive part of the brain. It is often the last thing to go in the relentless progress of cognitive decline in dementia, hence the value of work undertaken by musicians working with Live Music Now in care homes.

The composers of all three works performed this evening all experienced difficulties in their lives and all managed to express their troubles in their music, which speaks more powerfully to us than any words can.

Next month Rachel Podger, described as 'queen of baroque violin', will be giving a concert which features works from her new CD 'Tutta Sola' (which means 'I am alone'). This very special concert will include a newly-discovered Fantasia by Matteis and a special arrangement of Bach's famous Toccata and Fugue in A minor. A concert not to be missed. I hope you will spread the word round so that it has the audience it deserves!

Roger Higson, Chairman



we get on with



Ripon Concerts is affiliated to Making Music, which represents and supports amateur performing and promoting societies throughout the UK.

Ripon Concerts is the trading name of the Cathedral Concert Society, registered charity No. 1163277.

Piatti String Quartet with Michael Collins – clarinet

REBECCA CHAN – violin
MICHAEL TRAINOR – violin
TETSUUMI NAGATA – viola
JESSIE ANN RICHARDSON – cello

Programme

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906–1975)

String Quartet No. 10 in A flat, op. 118

Andante
Allegretto furioso
Adagio, attacca
Allegretto – Andante

Bedřich Smetana
(1824–1884)

String Quartet No. 1 in E minor,
'From my life'

Allegro vivo appassionato
Allegro moderato à la Polka
Largo sostenuto
Vivace

- interval (refreshments) -

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791)

Clarinet Quintet in A, K. 581

Allegro
Larghetto
Menuetto with Trio
Allegretto con variazioni

About the music

Shostakovich - String Quartet No. 10 in A flat, op. 118

Dmitri Shostakovich composed fifteen symphonies and fifteen string quartets but although the former are frequently performed and enjoyed few would dispute the assertion that his music reaches greater heights in the chamber music format. This results largely from the fact that since major orchestral works are more “public” and have greater exposure, they were, in the Soviet Union, more vulnerable to political influence and particularly Stalinist criticism.

His 10th string quartet was written in 1964 and dedicated to his fellow composer Mieczysław Weinberg, at that time relatively unknown outside Russia, though increasingly recognised in more recent times. In a letter, Shostakovich wryly commented that the dedicatee “wrote nine quartets and with the last of them overtook me, since at the time I only had eight. I therefore set myself the challenge of catching up and overtaking Weinberg, which I have now done.”

This trivial background, and the fact that it was composed in only ten days, belie the gravity of the work and the fact that it looks forward to the austerity and inner anguish present in Shostakovich’s later works. The first movement opens with a four-note motif for violin and then develops into a dialogue between two themes which emerge first separately and then simultaneously. The time signature label *allegretto furioso* given to the second movement is unique in the composer’s string quartets but is most apt, given the emotional turmoil which it contains. There could hardly be a greater contrast than the grace and calm of the

following *Adagio* movement: a nine-bar passacaglia theme introduced by solo cello and then developed in eight variations. This leads without a break into the fourth movement, written in sonata rondo form. Adopting some folk song rhythms, a perky theme is taken over by a lugubrious motif but later returns as the two ideas are mixed. There is an unexpected recall of the passacaglia and, before the subdued ending, a recall of themes from the first movement.

The juxtaposition of, and contrast between, the divergent moods of the piece have led some commentators to interpret it as a struggle between good and evil. My advice: let this striking work speak for itself.

Smetana - String Quartet No. 1 in E minor, ‘From my life’

Music is not a frequently used medium for autobiography and, while there are some orchestra pieces which are clearly influenced by aspects of the composer’s life (for example, the *Domestic* and *Alpine* Symphonies of Richard Strauss), not many can be found in chamber music. Smetana’s First String Quartet is, however, a major exception. It is not only the title which reveals the composer’s intentions; in a letter to a music critic and friend he also gave a detailed description of the autobiographical content of each of the movements. As you will appreciate, this much facilitates the task of writing the programme notes for a concert in which the work is to be performed!

The first movement represents Smetana’s youth and, in the composer’s own words “a kind of warning of my future misfortune”. This is a reference to deafness which marred

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the latter part of his life. Perhaps it is reflected in the falling motif with which the main theme, played by the viola, begins. The second, wistful, theme suggests a romantic nature and an inherent yearning for something beyond his youthful self. The lively second movement, incorporates a polka and is a testimony to the composer's happy, younger days when he enjoyed dancing. The third slow movement, manifestly blissful, recalls his wooing of Katerina who was to become his wife.

As featuring in his operas and such orchestra pieces as *Má Vlast*, the fervent Bohemian patriotism of Smetana was at the heart of his reputation as a composer; and the fourth movement is an affirmation of his satisfaction at expressing nationalist sentiments in music. However, towards the end a high sustained note, followed by a return of the falling motif from the first movement, brings us back to his hearing problems. Although, as the Finale comes to a close, there is some indication of hope, the pain of disappointment and delusion cannot be entirely suppressed.

– interval –

Mozart - Clarinet Quintet in A, K. 581

The development of the clarinet was, as compared with other wind instruments, relatively late and Mozart was one of the first composers to write important solo works for it, either as a concerto with orchestra or in chamber music ensembles. He was aided in these endeavours by the famous clarinetist Anton Stadler who was a close friend and also a fellow member of the Masonic Lodge of Vienna. The composer was certainly fascinated by the sound and expressive

range of the instrument in his later years and arguably the Clarinet Quintet captures its spirit and creative characteristics more imaginatively than the equally well-known Concerto.

The first movement is in sonata form and contains three main themes, each played initially by the strings. The clarinet responds to these statements by changing the key, the rhythm, or introducing some decoration to the theme. The development section is rich in sonority and the movement ends with an exciting climax. The second, slow movement centres on a beautiful melody played first as a solo and then in a duet between clarinet and violin. John Warrack considered that “as an example of sensibility towards texture the *Larghetto* of this quintet is a miracle.” And, in the movement which follows, Mozart displays considerable ingenuity: there are two Trios rather than one; and the music has a weightier content than usually found in conventional Minuets. The work concludes with an extended set of variations, playful in character but mixing slow with fast tempi, and also allowing the clarinet some virtuosic excursions.

Notes by Anthony Ogus

About the performers



The distinguished **Piatti Quartet** are widely renowned for their ‘acute sensitivity’ and their ‘lyrical warmth’. Since their prize-winning performances at the 2015 Wigmore Hall String Quartet Competition, they have performed all over the world and made international broadcasts from many countries.

The Piattis are famed for their diverse programming and for passionate interpretations across the spectrum of quartet writing, tailoring their performances with the violinists regularly swapping parts to bring out extra nuances and colours in every work.

Since their inception they have always had projects in the recording studio with critically-acclaimed releases through Linn, Somm, Champs Hill, Hyperion, Delphian and NMC record labels. Their wide-ranging discography and repertoire is thanks to their enthusiasm and curiosity in collaborating with a broad range of artists including some of the most recognisable names in classical music such as Nicky Spence, Julius Drake, Michael Collins, Barry Douglas, Janina Fialkowska, Melvyn Tan, Ian Bostridge, Katherine Broderick, Adam Walker, Simon Callaghan and the Belcea Quartet.

Contemporary music has been ever present in their repertoire and leaving a legacy to

the quartet genre through commissions is one of the quartet's central tenets. Major commissions and dedications have stemmed from Mark-Anthony Turnage, Emily Howard, Charlotte Harding and Joseph Phibbs, whilst they have premiered a huge number of new works over the years. The Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Flagey Radio Hall Brussels, Wigmore Hall London and the Aldeburgh Festival are some of the memorable occasions where new music has been presented, and recordings of Turnage's quartets 1–4 and Gavin Higgins' chamber music has also been extensively lauded by critics.

Historical research into quartet music that has been undiscovered or deserves to be better known has led to the premiere recording of Ina Boyle's (Ireland) SQ in E minor, and performances of lesser known quartet gems by Ralph Vaughan Williams, E.J. Moeran, Rachmaninov, Ireland, Haas, Ulmann and Durosoir.

The quartet's name is dedicated to Alfredo Piatti, a 19th-century virtuoso cellist who was a professor at the Royal Academy of Music (the alma mater of the founders of the quartet) and also a major exponent of chamber music and contemporary music of his time.

Michael Collins is one of the most complete musicians of his generation. With a continuing, distinguished career as a soloist, he has in recent years also become highly regarded as a conductor.

Michael celebrated his 60th birthday in 2022 and gave commemorative concerts at Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall with the London Mozart Players. He was

also interviewed for a double page spread in *Gramophone* Magazine. In January 2021 Michael gave the debut performance of Wigmore Soloists, a new ensemble taking the name of one of the world's most iconic concert halls (the first time an ensemble has been given this honour). The group gives regular concerts at Wigmore Hall and in other major venues around the world.

Michael Collins has been committed to expanding the repertoire of the clarinet for many years. He received the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year Award in 2007 in recognition of his pivotal role in premiering repertoire by some of today's most highly-regarded composers.

In great demand as a chamber musician, Collins performs regularly with the Borodin, Heath and Belcea quartets, András Schiff, Martha Argerich, Stephen Hough, Mikhail Pletnev, Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis. His ensemble, London Winds, celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2018 and the group maintains a busy diary with high-calibre engagements such as the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival, Edinburgh Festival, City of London Festival and Cheltenham International Festival.

In his prolific recording career he has covered an extraordinarily wide range of solo repertoire, which includes releases on Chandos, BIS, Deutsche Grammophon, Decca, EMI and Sony. He is one of the world's most recorded clarinetists, having made no fewer than twenty discs for Chandos alone.

In the Queen's Birthday Honours of 2015, Michael Collins was awarded an MBE for his services to music. He plays on Yamaha clarinets.



With grateful thanks to the following members for their generous support:

Miranda Armitage
Tom Cree
James Dalton
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Roger & Ros Higson
Michael Hunter
Scilla Kealy
Charles and Charlotte Monck
Mike & Gina Porter
Elizabeth Price
Roderick Rhodes
William & Roslyn Swaney

and others who wish to remain anonymous or who have donated since this programme went to press.



North Yorkshire Music & Arts Events Diary

Visit www.st-cecilia.org.uk for full details of Music & Arts events in the Ripon area.



Paulinus Singers
Spring Concert
St John's Church, Sharow
25 Feb 2023, 7.30pm

Jervaulx Singers
Banalités
St John's Church, Sharow
4 Mar 2023, 7.30pm

Harrogate Choral Society
Puccini and Gounod
Royal Hall, Harrogate
11 Mar 2023, 7pm

Ripon Concerts
Rachel Podger – The Virtuoso Violin
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon
13 Mar 2023, 7.30pm

Richmondshire Concerts
Coco Tomita – Violin
Influence Church, Richmond
15 Mar 2023, 7.30pm

Chapter House Choir, York
Spring Concert
Chapter House of York Minster
18 Mar 2023, 7.30pm

Vocalis Chamber Choir
Spring Concert - Gloria!
St John's Church, Knaresborough
18 Mar 2023, 7.30pm

Ripon Choral Society
Elgar: The Dream of Gerontius
Ripon Cathedral
25 Mar 2023, 7.30pm

York Symphony Orchestra
Spring Concert:
Wagner, Rachmaninov, Sibelius
Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York
1 Apr 2023, 7.30pm

North Yorkshire Music & Arts Events Diary is sponsored by Harrogate Borough Council.



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Spring 2023 Concert Season



Jennifer Johnston (mezzo-soprano) and Joseph Middleton (piano)
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Wednesday 15th February



Mary Bevan (soprano), Nicky Spence (tenor) and Joseph Middleton (piano)
Saturday 4th March



Roderick Williams (baritone) and Joseph Middleton (piano)
Thursday 20th April

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Ripon
Choral Society

2022-23 Season
at Ripon Cathedral



Elgar
**The Dream
of Gerontius**



Saturday 25 March 2023, 7.30pm

John Dunford - conductor
Alice Coote - mezzo-soprano
Robert Murray - tenor
James Platt - bass
St Peter's Singers
Orchestra D'Amici

Haydn Mozart
Nelson Mass **Solemn Vespers**
Exultate Jubilate



Saturday 17 June 2023, 7.30pm

John Dunford - conductor
Jane Burnell - soprano
Heather Jill Burns - mezzo-soprano
Austin Gunn - tenor
Phil Wilcox - bass-baritone
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Tickets: £23 reserved; £20 unreserved (student concessions available)

Book online at riponchoralsociety.org.uk

Tel: Ticket Hotline on 07986 861 332; in person: Ripon Cathedral Shop

Monday evenings, 7.30pm • Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Rachel Podger – The Virtuoso Violin

13 March 2023

Vilsmayr, Bach, Matteis, Tartini, Celtic tunes and more



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Programme: Helen Tabor, helentaborcreative.com

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