

RIPON
CONCERTS

Chamber music with passion

2019-20
Jubilee Season



Epic Beethoven, melodic Dvořák

Albion Quartet

Monday 14 October 2019
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

www.riponconcerts.co.uk

Patron: Julius Drake

Welcome

A very warm welcome to the start of the 2019–20 Jubilee Season, which follows a wonderful summer of music-making in Ripon and beyond. Large audiences have filled concert halls and other venues and demonstrate a huge appetite for classical music in this area.

We mark this Jubilee Season with a programme which, as usual, is varied in terms of the groups of musicians and the music played, and features some exceptional performers. This evening we host the Albion Quartet who come with a growing international reputation for exciting concerts. I am sure we will be entertained and inspired.

At the AGM in September we were pleased to report to that membership grew last season but there is still room for more. The satisfactory financial position is due to the continued generous donations from members. This support is very much appreciated.

We were delighted to welcome two new trustees: John Appleyard, who becomes our treasurer on the retirement of Anthony

Ogus, and Dr Judith Hooper who has provided much valued guidance on our engagement with social media and our approach to the rebranding exercise which took place during the summer. It was a great joy to have two very talented young pianists, Alexander Abrahams and James Kitchingman, playing for us after the meeting. Clearly two to watch for the future!

We hope you like the Society's new promotional material and will soon become used to our new trading name: Ripon Concerts.

We have to make unavoidable venue changes this season because of work on the famous misericords in the Cathedral Quire. Paul Lewis's piano recital on November 4th will, however, take place in the Cathedral. The concert on December 9th will be here in Holy Trinity. Please check venues for concerts in the New Year nearer the time.

Finally I would like to express sadness at the passing of two members of the society, Brian Carroll and Andrew Moore, who supported us with such enthusiasm and generosity

Roger Higson

we get on with



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Albion Quartet

**Tamsin Waley-Cohen, Emma Parker - Violins
Ann Beilby - Viola
Nathaniel Boyd - 'Cello**

Programme

Josef Suk (1874–1935)

Meditation on the old Czech hymn 'St Wenceslas' Op. 35a

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

String Quartet No. 10 in E♭ major Op. 51 (Slavonic)

Allegro ma non troppo

Dumka (Elegia). Andante romanza

Andante con moto

Finale. Allegro assai con moto – Vivace

– interval –

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

String Quartet No. 13 in B♭ major, Op. 130/133

Adagio, ma non troppo – Allegro

Presto

Andante con moto, ma non troppo – Poco scherzoso

Alla danza tedesca. Allegro assai

Cavatina. Adagio molto espressivo

Große Fuge: Ouverture. Allegro – Meno mosso e moderato –

Allegretto – Fuga. [Allegro] – Meno mosso e moderato –

Allegro molto e con brio – Allegro

About the music

It is worth recalling that until well into the twentieth century Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, parts of Poland and Rumania and much of the Balkans were under the crown of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire: they were a heterogeneous collection of races and histories but inevitably there was much cross-fertilisation. So Beethoven's Viennese chamber music should not be heard as distinct from what later becomes Czech: they are born of the same genetic pool. Having said that, both Dvořák and his son-in-law Josef Suk saw themselves as spearheading the move towards nationalism begun, in the case of the Bohemians and Moravians, by composers such as Smetana.

Josef Suk studied under Dvořák and married his daughter Otilie. His Op.35a *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale "St. Wenceslas"* dates from 1914 and is for string orchestra or string quartet. Suk was second violin in the Bohemian String Quartet. Since 1914 the ensemble was obliged to perform the Austrian national anthem at the opening of every concert. Suk decided to supplement this obligatory piece with a work inspired by the ancient sacred Bohemian "St. Wenceslas" hymn. The hymn's message – a plea for the well-being of the Czech people, directed at their patron saint – was immediately understood by the audience. It was written shortly after the beginning of World War I, when Czech citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were concerned about the spread of hostilities. In those anxious times, Suk expressed in this *Meditation* the hopes of the nation as expressed in this medieval song. It is a slight work with a harmonic style, simple and clean, and with polyphonic writing, flexibility of construction and

modulation typical of the composer. The main elements of the chorale are developed freely at the beginning in a subdued melodic line. Later, uncertainty changes to hope and passionate yearning overcomes sorrow. The conclusion sounds a note of unshakable faith in the future of the nation, in the radiant key of A major.

Dvořák's 10th string quartet was specifically commissioned as a "Slavonic" quartet, with folksong elements and thematic material. It was first performed by the Joachim Quartet at a private chamber music evening in Berlin in 1879. The quartet follows the popular *Slavonic Dances* and marks the composer's arrival in his years of musical maturity.

The first movement is a warmly lyrical sonata movement at a generally moderate tempo. The flowing quality of the music is punctuated by a rhythmic lilt suggesting the quick two-step beats of the Polka, originally a Bohemian dance. The dance qualities become more pronounced with the transitional material and the second theme. The development section features Dvořák's characteristic toggling between the major and minor modes, something to be found in Schubert as well as in eastern European folk music (and vividly continued in the second movement of this quartet). The development also shifts briefly into something more reverent in the manner of a church hymn that Dvořák achieves by slowing the main theme to half its speed.

The quartet becomes more obviously Slavic with the second-movement *Dumka*, subtitled *Elegie*. Dvořák would compose many more *Dumky* throughout his composing life. (A *Dumka* is a heroic folk

ballad beginning as a slow lament (*lassu*) with contrasting sections of celebratory exuberance in a faster tempo (*friss*). A mournful tale begins in G minor with a soulful duet between violin and viola to the guitar-like strumming of pizzicato in the cello (featuring a plangent shift between major and minor within a phrase). As soon as the sorrow is fully developed, the music abruptly shifts to G major, from a slow duple-metre *andante* to a swift triple-metre *vivace* and a lively Czech peasant dance known as the *furiant*. Dvořák will take the movement through these contrasts twice with thrilling tempo modulations for a truly folk, improvisational feel as well as a constantly fresh treatment of the musical materials. Originally seeming like the slow movement, the second movement leaves one with the impression of a rhythmic scherzo.

The third movement is the proper slow movement, a beautiful *Romanze* that any lover of Dvořák's music will quickly recognise for its atmospheric, lyrical poignancy. While not representing a specific Slavic trait, the music exhibits a heartfelt directness, warmth and finely wrought "simplicity" for which Bohemian musicians and composers have long been famous.

The languid interlude is a perfect foil for the rollicking *finale*, a swift rondo based on what musicologists have identified as the *skaňna*, a Bohemian fiddle tune akin to an Irish reel with a jolly perpetual motion. An unmistakably vivacious dance energy animates the momentum. Dvořák exploits the rondo form for its contrast in rhythm, tempo, key and overall mood, including a wonderful bluster of classical counterpoint and constantly shifting textures amidst

otherwise directly accessible music with an infectiously rustic folk character, a superb blend of high art and music from and for "the people".

And so to **Beethoven**. In 1826, just over 50 years before the Dvořák quartet we have just heard, Beethoven completed his longest and many would say his greatest string quartet, the quartet in B flat Op. 130. This is unique among Beethoven's quartets in having six movements: in its original form which we shall be hearing tonight it can last over 45 minutes. It is the last of a set of three quartets commissioned by the Russian diplomat Prince Nikolas Galitzin to whom it is dedicated.

The first movement is unusual in having a slow introduction that repeatedly reappears in some guise during the main *Allegro*, being heard twice early on, three times at the end of the exposition and three more times after the recapitulation (he does something similar in the *Pathétique* piano sonata and elsewhere). The second movement is a very short *Presto and Trio* in B flat minor and major with contrasting metres.

Beethoven originally planned to have a highly expressive, aria-like third movement in D flat major at this point. His sketches reveal, however, that he became bogged down in this movement for about a month, and eventually replaced it with the present third movement, marked *poco scherzoso* and also in D flat major. He then worked out the aria-like movement as a *Cavatina in E flat*, using it for the fifth movement. Before it he placed a waltz-like movement entitled *Alla danza tedesca* (like a German dance), which had originally been written for his previous quartet (Op. 132) but had been discarded.

The *Cavatina* is perhaps the most beautiful movement Beethoven ever wrote, is highly charged with intense emotion, and even the composer himself was reportedly moved to tears by its sheer loveliness and profundity. Time seems to stand still.

Beethoven sketched at least a dozen possible finale themes before deciding on a gigantic fugue (*Grosse Fuga* - fugues featured strongly in his last works). It became much bigger than originally intended, for after reporting in late August that the quartet would be finished in ten to twelve days, he did not complete it until about December.

The completed quartet was tried out on 21 March 1826, but the audience was bewildered by the fugue, and in September he decided to write a new finale. It is usually said that he was persuaded to do so by his friends and the publisher, Mathias Artaria. By September, however, Artaria had said he found the fugue 'thoroughly comprehensible', and had even had it engraved as the finale. Thus the decision to write a new finale was Beethoven's. He was justly proud of the fugue as a work of art, and had even produced a four-hand arrangement for piano. It was this that evidently induced him to turn the string version into a self-standing work too – a 'Great Fugue', Op. 133 – which could be appreciated better on its own than after five other movements.

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J.S. Bach Mass in B minor

Saturday 30 November 2019, 7.30pm
Ripon Cathedral

John Dunford - conductor • Orchestra D'Amici
Samantha Hay - soprano • Chloe Latchmore - alto
Nick Watts - tenor • Adam Green - baritone

Tickets: £23 reserved; £20 unreserved
riponchoralsociety.org.uk

Albion Quartet

Formed in 2016, the Albion Quartet brings together four of the UK's exceptional young string players who are establishing themselves rapidly on the international stage.

Having previously made its debuts at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Auditorium du Louvre in Paris, the Quartet made debuts at the Wigmore Hall and at Town Hall/Symphony Hall Birmingham in the 2018/19 season, as well as releasing the first disc of its Dvořák cycle for Signum Records. It also continued its residency at London's Kings Place and performed at the Oxford Lieder Festival.

Over the past seasons it has held a number of residencies, including at the Sainte-Mère Festival in France, and in the UK at Snape Maltings as well as Ryedale and Honeycombe Festivals. It also appeared at BBC Radio 3's Hay Festival, Roland Pöntinen's Båstad Chamber Music Festival in Sweden and at the Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth in Brussels.

The coming season sees performances at several festivals, including BBC Belfast International Arts Festival, Presteigne, Stratford, as well as return visits to Oxford Lieder Festival, Kings Place London and Kettle's Yard Cambridge. The Albion Quartet also returns to Wigmore Hall in November to perform the world premiere of a new string trio by Freya Waley-Cohen, commissioned by the Wigmore Hall. In January 2020 it will appear during the Beethoven String Quartet Weekend at St. George's Bristol.

The ensemble's creative curiosity has already led to collaborations with several composers: In spring 2019, it premiered a new work for soprano and string quartet by Kate



Steve Gullick

Whitley at THSH Birmingham, and June 2019 saw the world premiere of a new full-length quartet by Freya Waley-Cohen at the Aldeburgh Festival. The Albion Quartet has also collaborated with renowned artists such as bass Matthew Rose at the Aldeburgh Festival 2016, violist Douglas Paterson of the Schubert Ensemble, Miguel da Silva, formerly the violist of the Ysaÿe Quartet, and pianist Roland Pöntinen. In September 2018 it performed Whitacre's *Five Hebrew Melodies* with the Martinů Voices at Kloster Corvey in Germany.

Passionate about education, the Quartet holds a residency at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, where it regularly gives masterclasses and performances in the Dora Stoutzker Hall. It was Quartet-in-Residence at Gresham's School in the 2017/18 season, where it opened the new Britten Concert Hall in 2017. As a Cavatina Chamber Music Trust ensemble, it also gives workshops at primary schools.

The Quartet will be recording a series of discs for Signum Records over the next few years, including the string quartets of Dvořák as well as a disc of quartets by Walton and Shostakovich. It has also recorded Richard Blackford's *Kalon* for string quartet and orchestra with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, which was released in May 2019.

The members of the quartet play on a fine collection of instruments, including a Stradivarius and Guarnerius.

With grateful thanks to the following for their generous support:

Member donors

Mr & Mrs John Appleyard, Mrs Miranda Armitage, Dr Christopher Bennett, Dr & Mrs John Brindley, Mrs Mary Carter, Dr Francis Cole, Mr & Mrs Tom Cree, Mr & Mrs Simon Deller, Mr & Mrs Hugh Dunn, Mr Michael Dunne, Mr John Dykes, Mr & Mrs Michael Fieldhouse, Mr Michael Furse, Mrs Elizabeth Gibbs, Mrs Sophie Gore, Mrs Annie Hewitt, Dr & Mrs Roger Higson, Dr Judith Hooper, Mr & Mrs Michael Hunter, Mr & Mrs Brian Kealy, Mr & Mrs John Lee, Dr & Dr Angus Livingstone, Mr & Mrs Donald Mack, Mr & Mrs Jeremy McCowen, Prof & Mrs John Mellor, Ms Val Michie, Mr & Mrs Charles Monck, Prof Anthony Oguis, Mrs Helen Owens, Prof John Plane, Mr Eric Record, Rev Geoffrey Rider, Dr & Mrs Richard Russell, Mr & Mrs Nigel Stourton, Mr & Mrs Nick Stringer, Mr & Mrs Peter Whelan, Mrs Loretta Williams, Mr & Mrs Peter Wrigley and others who wish to remain anonymous.

And any others who have donated to the Society since this programme went to press.



2019-20 Jubilee Season

Paul Lewis
Piano Masterworks
from Vienna
Monday
4 November
2019, 7.30pm
Ripon Cathedral



Paul Lewis © Kaupo Kikkas

O Duo Percussion
...faster than the speed of sound...
Monday 9 December 2019, 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

The 10/6 Chamber Ensemble
From the Brandenburgs
to the 20th Century

Monday 13 January 2020, 7.30pm

Emmanuel Bach and Jenny Stern
The Virtuoso Violin

Monday 10 February 2020, 7.30pm

Ashley Riches & Sholto Kynoch
Schumann Songs of Life,
Love and Longing

Monday 9 March 2020, 7.30pm

Venues in 2020 to be announced.

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Ripon Concerts is the trading name of the Cathedral Concert Society.

Programme: Helen Tabor, helentaborcreative.com