



Saturday 20th January, 2024, 7.30pm
Clare Hall Dining Hall
Fitzwilliam String Quartet
Daniel Yeadon, cello

For their 2023/24 Clare Hall series the Fitzwilliam is featuring a guest in each concert: continuing the quartet's journey through the riches of the piano quintet repertoire, in the company of resident pianist Patrick Hemmerlé, this compelling partnership is being extended for the current season to feature quintets with viola and cello as well, plus a speaker to introduce each of the seven "sonatas" which constitute Joseph Haydn's extraordinary meditations on Christ's final utterances from the cross. The quartet has felt honoured to be welcomed so warmly into the family atmosphere of the College, and these new collaborations are intended to further that inclusive spirit by involving FSQ friends and colleagues. For this evening's repertoire (as also for their Schubert Quartet CDs) the players have set up their instruments with gut strings, and will be playing at the slightly lower pitch of A=433 (as recommended by Sir George Smart in 1826) – this in an attempt to get nearer to the sounds and performing conventions that Schubert might have been familiar with during the final years of his life. The programme is dominated by Franz Schubert's immortal masterpiece, one of his very last and greatest works – for which they are joined by a former member of the FSQ. Such a monumental work necessarily requires a first half of appropriate balance, in terms of weight and length; and so we offer what would appear to be lighter, Italianate fare..... By complete coincidence, the last time the quartet played any of those pieces was when Danny himself was in the quartet! Furthermore, the 2nd violin at that time was Jonathan Sparey, who played in the Fitzwilliam from 1974 to 2011: he and Elizabeth are honoured guests here this evening. Both Danny and Jonathan have promised to "sing along" (quietly!).

Antonio Rosetti (1750c – 92): Quartet in C minor, Op.6 No.4
Adagio - Menuetto:- Allegretto - Allegro molto

Antonio Rosetti was born František Antonín Rösler in Leitmeritz (now Litomerice), northern Bohemia - about half-way between Dresden and Prague. Like so many Bohemian composers of the eighteenth century, he changed his name and moved away from his home country in order to make his way as a musician - having initially trained in theology as well. His first appointment was as a double bass player at the court of Prince Oettingen-Wallerstein, where he eventually succeeded Josef Reicha as Kapellmeister in 1785. Four years later he settled in North Germany, but returned briefly to Prague in 1791 to conduct a Requiem which had been commissioned from him for a memorial service to Mozart. But it was the music of Haydn to which he was particularly attracted, and this C minor quartet certainly demonstrates the influence of the older composer - notably so in its Sturm und Drang finale, where for once he abandons his favourite French Rondeau form. Elsewhere there is an affecting lyricism, allied to an effortless skill in writing for the medium, which suggests familiarity with Haydn's own earlier quartets. Altogether twelve quartets by Rosetti have survived (unlike the aforementioned Requiem), Opp.2 and 4 each consisting of three only, but the more ambitious Op.6 accounting for the other six; these were published in Vienna in 1787, making them roughly contemporary with Haydn's Op.50.

Luigi Boccherini (1743 – 1805): Quartettino in B flat, Op.33 No.4

Andante lentarello - Menuetto

Boccherini was born at Lucca, in Tuscany; his father was a professional double bass player, and it was from him that the young boy received his first lessons on the cello. Soon he was being hailed as a virtuoso cellist and, following a series of tours around Europe, decided to settle in Spain. There he composed industriously under the patronage of the Infante, until the latter's death in 1785, after which he became chamber composer to the cello playing King of Prussia. When he too died Boccherini returned to Spain with his Spanish wife, where he reportedly spent his last few years in poverty. Boccherini was an amazingly prolific composer, much the largest part of his output consisting of chamber music: altogether he produced over fifty string trios and about a hundred each of quartets and quintets, plus many duos and works for various other combinations. It must be said that the quality of his music is at times uneven, yet it rarely fails to charm. His style has a directness and melodiousness, with a general avoidance of the most rigorous thematic development, tending instead towards an imaginative and appealing exploitation of texture – which might explain why his music has enjoyed a certain renaissance with the advent of the historical instrument movement. This set of “little quartets” dates from 1781 and, surprisingly, features the composer's own instrument rather less than usual; however, it will quickly be observed that the Andante of No.4 provides a happy exception.....

“La Morte del Marchese Giuseppe Terzi” (1819) Gaetano Donizetti (1797 – 1848)

It is well known the extent to which Donizetti's fame rests on his prowess as a composer of operas – over sixty of them, crammed into a surprisingly brief career lasting barely a quarter of a century. But what is less familiar is quite how active he was in other areas of composition, particularly chamber music. Indeed, at the age of 24 he could already claim to be a highly prolific composer of string quartets, with a total of sixteen to his credit – far outnumbering his operatic output at that stage (only two more quartets followed, once he had become established in the theatre). This unusual phenomenon in nineteenth century Italy is explained by the fact that the current maestro di capella at Santa Maria Maggiore, in Donizetti's home town of Bergamo, was a Bavarian composer and eclectic, Johann Simon Mayr. His profound knowledge of the quartets of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, as well as his ability as a viola player, made him a valuable contributor to the *accademie* – chamber music evenings – which were held at the homes of such local enthusiasts as Alessandro Bertoli. The young Donizetti was encouraged by Mayr to involve himself in these events, where he occasionally played the viola himself. And it was to Bertoli that the present work was dedicated. It is in fact the second of a set of four programmatic movements completed on 5 th May 1819, following the death – the previous day! – of the Marchese Terzi. The other pieces depict his illness and his family's prayers, his wife's desperation following his death, and finally a funeral march (published together as Quartet No.7). Donizetti's intuitive feeling for the more dramatic aspects of his subject, not to mention his wonderful gift for melody, reveal more than a hint of where his success would ultimately be found. He was evidently pleased enough with these pieces to make an arrangement for two pianos. AG © 2024

INTERVAL

Quintet in C major, D.956 (Op.163, 1828) Franz Schubert
(1797 – 1828)

Allegro ma non troppo - Adagio - Scherzo: Presto Trio: Andante sostenuto - Allegretto

Schubert's Dream of Eden

It is the prerogative of genius to know the right time and place to be born; and the quintessential character of Schubert's music comes from the fact that he was nurtured in one of the most musically creative societies in history, but was 'late' enough to equivocate between the real and the ideal. Sonata music in Vienna, that 18th century melting pot of Europe, was in itself revolutionary, for it depended on a tension between the private and the public life. Between the two Mozart

achieved a classical equilibrium, a passionate poise incarnate technically in his balance between lyrically vocal operatic melody and the instrumental drama of sonata style. Beethoven, comparatively, emphasised the subversive and re-creative aspects of the then new music, while still believing – at least until the last years of his life – that his private rebirth was an agent working for public (that is, social, even political) good. By Schubert's time, however, corruption within Viennese society could be disguised neither by the tawdry triviality of a degenerating aristocracy, nor by the industry, piety and cosy sentimentality of the rising middle class, to which Schubert's parents belonged. As a man Schubert was, like Beethoven, conscious of oppression in Austria; unlike Beethoven he did not think it was possible or perhaps even desirable to do anything about it. As a musician, he revered Beethoven with self-obliterating fanaticism; yet he deplored what he called Beethoven's 'eccentricity, which drives a man to distraction instead of resolving him in love'. So his own music seems to be created simultaneously out of conflict with the world as it was (the Beethovenian dynamic aspect of his work) and out of a yearning for Viennese civilization as he imagined it had once been (the early Mozartian, lyrically vocal aspect of his work). From one point of view, like Beethoven, he heroically protests; from another point of view he seeks in his music to resolve frustration in love, creating an art – not on behalf of Church or State, but for a communion of friends and lovers – wherein ideas are not corrupted by human malice or rapacity. Beethoven's music, in his third period, becomes a discovery of paradise within the psyche; Schubert's music, in his doom-haunted last years, becomes a search for a vanished Eden. One can, of course, also express this in technical terms. Schubert's 'problem', the history books used to tell us, was how to reconcile the romantic, self-contained lyricism of his song-like themes with the dramatic exigencies of the Becoming which is sonata: his dreams cannot be easily accommodated to the pressures of psychological reality. There's some truth in this with reference to the earlier creations of his brief life: but his stature among the supreme masters is attested by the fact that his problem was solved, even though he had to live through a number of 'unfinished' works – notably the C major piano sonata, the B minor symphony and the C minor Quartettsatz – to do so. In the Quartettsatz the melodies are characteristically Schubertian, yet no longer Italianate; their yearning lyricism marks the emergence of the solitary Schubert of the last years. The fluttering ostinato accompaniment suggests a demonic night-ride such as he depicts in the piano parts of some of his songs: and the contrast between this nightmarish C minor and the sweetly Edenic, passively flat submediant in which the second subject appears is impetus to the music's structure. At that time (1820) Schubert had solved his fundamental problem of technique and imagination, intensifying song into drama, resolving drama into song; yet he apparently did not see how the experience could be consummated in a complete four movement work. That he was to learn in the eight years left him, his supreme achievements being the three posthumous piano sonatas, the A minor, D minor and G major quartets, and the C major string quintet which, composed in 1828, the last year of his life, is the single work that most comprehensively embraces every facet of his genius.

The first movement is cast on a large scale, perhaps influenced by Schubert's experience in working on the 'Great' C major symphony [1825 – but until recently thought to be 1828, Ed]. The second 'cello he calls for helps him to achieve an almost orchestral resonance; and the initial theme sublimely fuses a lyrically song-like gesture (incorporating a quasi-vocal turn) into a euphoniously spaced, richly harmonised texture that generates energy (bounding arpeggiated figures) and mystery (repeated note figures and instable modulations occurring even within the exposition). The second subject is related to the first, to which it forms a nostalgic complement, drooping instead of aspiring upwards; characteristically, it begins not in an assertive dominant, but in the mediant. Both subjects are 'developed' within the exposition in that their figurations, interacting, change their emotional implications; as indeed had been anticipated in the dissonant cadential harmony of the opening phrase. A further twist is given in the exposition's codetta theme, which alchemizes the stepwise movement of the second subject into a martial dotted rhythm, minatory, potentially sinister, prophetic of the military motives that, in the music of Schubert's successor Mahler, were to become synonymous with Europe's twilight. Such multifarious material necessitates spacious development: which does not seek Beethovenian trenchancy, but rather Schubertian ambiguity,

whereby in continuously fluctuating modulation themes that had been songful become savage, or those that had been heroic become a sigh of regret. The recapitulation likewise has to be expansive, for after all that has happened we hear the themes with new ears: in particular the second subject, now in Schubert's sensuously passive flat sub-mediante, sings of ineffable mutability – *Schoene Welt, wo bist du?* The coda introduces a dark chromatic descent beneath the original yearning phrase. Though the music then stabilises over a tonic pedal, the end is inconclusive; one might almost say that the final tonic triads – the first fiercely dynamic in multiple stopping, the second warmly enveloping in middle register – epitomize the music's conflict between reality and dream. The slow movement transports us abruptly to the upward mediant, E major, a heavenly key according to the baroque tradition and one associated by Schubert with Eden – as we know from the texts of many of his songs. The lyrical tune, warmly harmonized in diatonic triads, moves very slowly over a broken pizzicato bass, with a counterpoint on first violin that sounds like a remote echo of the military motive of the first movement. This emphasises the dream-like quality of the sustained song: so it is a surprise, yet not entirely unexpected, when the dream-song is sundered by a middle section that jumps from the blissful E major to the 'Neapolitan' flat supertonic, F minor, traditional key of 'Chants lugubres'. In panting, frenetic rhythms, accompanied by a grinding of triplet figures, a more operatic theme ranges through enharmonic modulations that disintegrate tonality hardly less radically than the mature work of Wagner. When the song then returns *da capo* these triplets are transformed into delicate demisemiquavers, no longer ferocious, yet mysterious in that they tend to submerge the song's serene homophony. At the end the threat of F minor again intrudes, but this time leads not to the fever of Experiences, but to a simple cadence to the tonic. The effect is psychologically odd; the childlike coda suggests the security of Home, whilst at the same time hinting that terror lurks just beneath the surface. The Scherzo seems brusquely to return us to the Earth and to our corporeal being for it is all upward thrusting energy over a tonic pedal, with Beethovenian cross-accents. The startling modulations, however, modify this self-confidence; though the tune lurches upwards it seems uncertain of its direction. On the whole we feel, in this movement, almost happy in our liberation; the rapidly shifting mediants are a relief, so we can return to the stability of that tonic pedal. But just as the middle section of the slow movement opposes frenzied Experience to Edenic Innocence, so the trio of this Scherzo opposes to apparent physical wellbeing a 'recognition of other modes of experience that are possible'. It has the same key relationship of flat supertonic (D flat) to tonic (C) and begins in a tentative unison, distantly echoing the stepwise movement and dotted rhythm of the first movement's codetta theme. The enharmonic modulations – involving flat supertonic to flat supertonic! – are weird; again there's a hint of Mahlerian phantasmagoria, which is not finally banished by the *da capo* of the Scherzo. Certainly this nightmarish quality survives into the rondo finale, which seems to forget the tempests of Schubert's joys and sorrows in evoking the hedonistic present of Viennese café music. The movement begins oddly in C minor, and goes through several keys before establishing the major; the more jaunty the figurations grow, the more enigmatic are the adventures of harmony and tonality. Languorous beer-garden lyricism becomes inextricably entwined with the trumpety and trumpeting of militarism, as the dotted rhythms and triplet figurations of the previous movements gather an obsessional intensity: until the strangest things happen when Schubert adopts the device – familiar in Rossini's operatic finales which, addressing an audience, play their own applause – of concluding a movement by whipping up the tempo. As the music becomes ostensibly more frivolous, so it grows more hectic; the final section of the coda takes us back to the first movement and scherzo. The last sound we hear is the cryptic Neapolitan relationship of D flat to C, emphasised by a growling trill on the two 'cellos. Whilst Schubert is closer to Mozart than to any other composer, the lyrical and dramatic bases of his art are more widely separated; from the struggle to reconcile them sprang the mingling of passion and nostalgia which is his music. With Mozart, the dancing interplay of melodic parts seem the essence of mutability itself; Schubert's singing melodies and ambiguous harmonies are his own consciousness of mutability, romantic in spirit, so that, despite his respect for the past, his late

music is inexhaustibly prophetic – especially of the individualism of Wagner, whose Tristan Schubert would have lived to hear, had he been allotted his three score years and ten! Yet if we therefore feel with Schubert, as with Mozart we do not, a tragic sense of potentialities unfulfilled, it's also true that the spine-chilling beauty of his last works is inseparable from the sense of doom that hung over the composer and his world. The essential Schubertian experience is sensuous; and this may be why it appeals so strongly to us who are also mostly without inherited faith or clear social conviction. Knowing from his music (not from the books or programme notes we have read) that Schubert had so little time in which to experience the beauty incarnate in his melodic and harmonic senses, we become aware that for us, too, beauty is as transient as a dream. The music is still almost before we have heard it; the dream is past that was more real than the waking life.

Wilfrid Mellers (1973)

b. Leamington Spa, 26/4/1914

d. York 17/5/08

Prof Mellers was the quartet's "boss" at the University of York, personally recruiting us fellow Cambridge graduates in Autumn 1971. He was one of the finest and most prolific writers on music of his time, backed by a formidably wide ranging and catholic knowledge (although he would much rather have been recognised principally as a composer!). The present essay was written for a visit to the campus in 1973 by the FSQ's predecessors at York – the Amadeus – and must surely be one of the most visionary and poetic "programme notes" ever written.

The present performance of the quintet is from the Neue Schubert Ausgabe, published by Bärenreiter. The score is based on the first edition of 1851-3 (C.A. Spina/A. Diabelli's & Co., parts only), but with inconsistencies of articulation, dynamics, phrasing, and appoggiaturas corrected – made possible by comparing the first edition of the G major Quartet, D.887, with an extant manuscript. No such manuscript exists for the Quintet. The most notable departure from traditional practice lies in the considerably increased number of accents, these occurring where Schubert's exaggeratedly intense writing of the appropriate sign has long been mistaken for a "hairpin" diminuendo – for example, on the very last note of the work: the once familiar dying away – undeniably effective though it is – was never intended by the composer; instead there should be a stress on that cryptic D flat appoggiatura.

The original members of the FSQ first sat down together, at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge, in October 1968 – as undergraduates during their inaugural term. Their first concert appearance took place in Churchill College the following March, ahead of their public debut at the Sheffield Arts Festival in June – making the Fitzwilliam now one of the longest established string quartets in the world, and almost unique in having passed a half-century with an original player still on board (but latterly joined by both the Chilingirian and Brodsky Quartets – with our congratulations!). The present line-up combines founding member Alan George with a younger generation of performers: violinists Lucy Russell (herself celebrating 35 years in the group) and Andrew Roberts (son of the great pianist Bernard), along with former Zehetmair Quartet cellist Ursula Smith – who has also led a highly distinguished career as principal cello in various groups, including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. International recognition came early for the FSQ, as the first group to record and perform all fifteen Shostakovich string quartets, drawing on the players' personal connection with the composer: he travelled to York to hear their performance of his thirteenth quartet, and this musical friendship (the composer's own word!) prospered through correspondence, and the presentation of his final two quartets – written in the years immediately following that visit. Sadly, a carefully planned trip to spend a week with him in Moscow was necessarily abandoned, following his death in August 1975. Benjamin Britten afterwards reported that his friend had told him the Fitzwilliam were his "preferred performers of my quartets"! Complete cycles were given in a number of major centres, including London, New York, and Montréal. A new recording of the last three quartets was specially released by Linn in October 2019, to celebrate "FSQ@50" year. Whilst their pre-eminence in the interpretation of Shostakovich has persisted, the authority gained has

been put at the service of diverse other composers spanning six centuries, from the mid-16th to the present day. The quartet has appeared regularly across the UK, Europe, North America, the Middle and Far East, and Southern Africa, as well as making many award winning recordings for Decca, Linn, and Divine Art. A long-term ambition to record Beethoven and Schubert on gut strings – following the success of previous discs on historical instruments – was finally initiated during their 50th anniversary season, with recordings of Schubert's last four quartets (the A minor and D minor already available, the C minor and G major their first release post-lockdowns). Beethoven's Opp. 131 and 135 are scheduled to follow next March. Thus does the Fitzwilliam remain one of the few prominent quartets to play on older set-ups, yet simultaneously bringing about the addition of over 60 new works to the repertoire – as can be heard on perhaps their most novel disc so far: a jazz-fusion collaboration with German saxophonist/composer Uwe Steinmetz and former Turtle Island Quartet violinist Mads Tolling. After graduating from Cambridge in 1971 they immediately embarked on their first professional appointment, succeeding the celebrated Amadeus Quartet at the University of York. From there, the group built a niche for itself in concert venues around Yorkshire and the rest of the UK, at the same time joining a select company of aspiring quartets to have emerged under the guidance of Sidney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music. Having been Quartet-in-Residence at York for twelve years, at Warwick for three, at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge from 1998 to 2020, and at Bucknell (Pennsylvania, USA) since 1978, their university work now continues here at Clare Hall and at St Andrews – the latter incorporating their annual quartet course ("Strings in Spring"), which sits comfortably alongside their regular coaching weekend at Benslow Music (Hitchin). The quartet is very proud to have been granted its own annual chamber music festival in the famous "book town" of Hay-on-Wye. The FSQ golden anniversary season itself included a concert back in Cambridge on 2nd March 2019, 50 years to the day after that debut performance.

www.fitzwilliamquartet.com

Dr Daniel Yeadon is a Lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, where he teaches cello and viola da gamba, coaches chamber music, and engages in research into learning, teaching and historical performance practices. Daniel has a love of a wide range of musical genres and is an exceptionally versatile cellist and viola da gamba player, performing repertoire from the Renaissance through to Contemporary. Daniel is a passionate chamber musician, playing regularly with Australian Haydn Ensemble, Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO), Ironwood, Australian Romantic and Classical Orchestra, and Bach Akademie Australia. Originally from the UK, Daniel read physics at Oxford University and then completed his postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music, London. Earlier in his career he was a member of the renowned Fitzwilliam String Quartet and the period instrument ensemble Florilegium. He has made many award-winning recordings – including the FSQ's Haydn Seven Last Words.

Forthcoming concerts:

SATURDAY 10 February at 7.30pm (until 9.30pm)

Morgan Pearse, baritone, Amit Yahav, piano

Schubert *Die Schöne Müllerin*, Barber *Hermit Songs*

SATURDAY 24 February at 7.30pm (until 9.30pm)

Gabriel Cano, flute, Guillaume Moix, piano

Poulenc *Flute Sonata*, Martin *Ballade*, Sancan *Sonatine*, Schumann *3 Romances*, Reinecke *Sonata Undine*

