

# **The Lenthall Concerts**

## **Season 2013-14**

# **The Carducci Quartet**

**Wednesday, November 6th 2013**

**Burford School**

**WITNEY WINTER CONCERTS**  
Friday, October 11th 7.30pm  
**High Street Methodist Church, Witney**

## Vesuvio Wind Quintet

*Programme to include:*

Edward Grieg	Norwegian Dances op.35
Jacques Ibert	Trois Pièces Brèves
Denes Agay	Five Easy Dances
Malcolm Arnold	Three Shannes op.4
Peter Warlock	Capriol Suite <i>arr. J McDonough</i>

**Tickets £11/£10 (under 18 £1)**  
**from Music Stand, High Street;**  
**Greenway Antiques, Corn Street; or at the door, 30**  
**minutes before the start of a performance**

## The Lenthal Concerts

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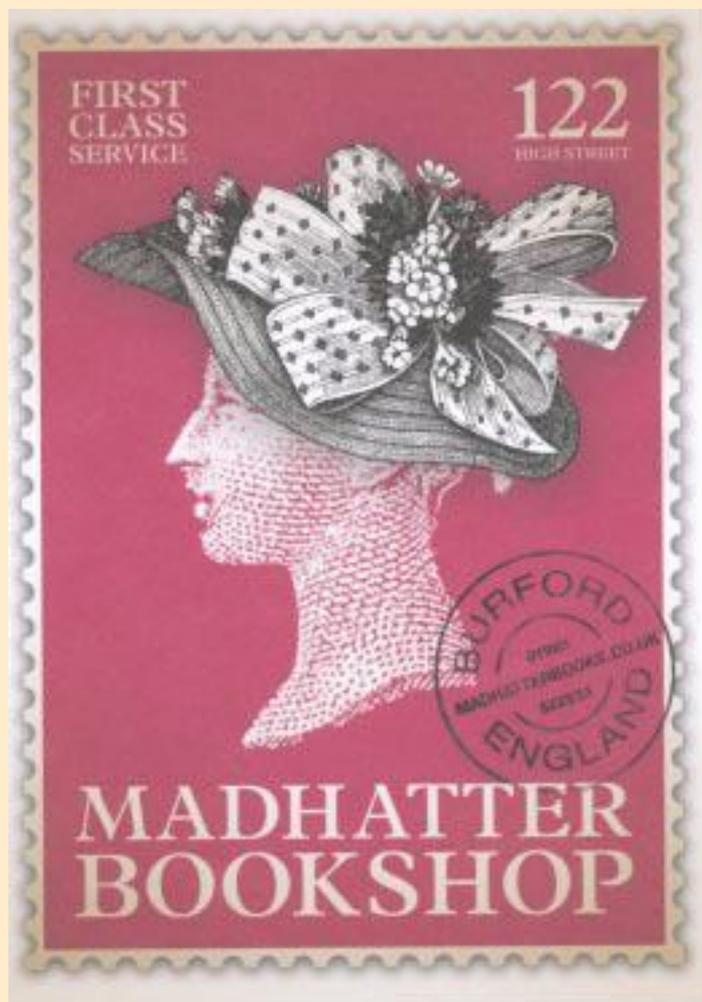
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# Programme

## String Quartet in F minor op.20 no.5 HobIII/35

Joseph Haydn  
(1732-1809)

*Allegro moderato*  
*Menuetto*  
*Adagio*  
*Finale. Fuga a due Soggetti*

The six quartets of op.20 were written in 1772: about the middle of Haydn's tenure, first as Vice-Kapellmeister and then as full-blown Kapellmeister at the Esterhazy Palace. As a paid servant of the Esterhazy princes—first Anton and, on his death, Nikolaus I—Haydn not only had to wear uniform but to cede all intellectual rights in his compositions to his masters. It was not until 1779 that he was able to negotiate a new contract that allowed him to write for extramural groups and publishers.



Esterhazy Castle

In this secure, but possibly claustrophobic situation Haydn developed the writing of the string quartet to the highest art. The famous musicologist Donald Tovey, wrote "*With op. 20 the historical development of Haydn's quartets reaches its goal; and further progress is not progress in any historical sense, but simply the difference between one masterpiece and the next.*" Of the six quartets in the set Haydn possibly thought most highly of the F minor, for he put it first in his own catalogue. When they came to be printed the cover bore an image of the sun, and henceforward the six were known as the "Sun" quartets.



Although our ears take it all in their stride these days, to start in a minor key was quite an innovation in Haydn's time, and the key gives the opening an element of mystery, without the least trace of menace: the sun is shining, if a little fitfully. The movement is full of the composer's little trademarks, like stretching tempi and punctuating passages with little breaks. There is a sizeable development section with a parade of key changes, and a substantial coda.

The *menuetto* comes next: a rather unusual placing, but one Haydn used in three of the op.20 quartets. It maintains the slightly sombre mood of the first movement, but relieves it by slipping into the major key in the trio. It paves the way for the slow movement, also in F major, which is a song-like *siciliano* in which the first violin overlays a melting melody with much decoration. At the end it virtually evaporates. The finale is in the form of a fugue, to which Haydn was rather partial at this time. It is marked *sempre sotto voce*, but it very properly raises the proceedings to *ff* for the last few bars.

## Three Divertimenti

**Benjamin Britten**  
(1913-1976)

*March*  
*Waltz*  
*Burlesque*

In 1933, when still a student at the Royal College of Music, Britten wrote three movements intended for a suite for quartet, to be called "Go play, boy, play!" (a quotation from *The Winter's Tale*, in one of Leontes' suspicious rants). They were to be a series of portraits of school friends, and the movements originally bore the titles *PT*, *At the Party*, and *Ragging*, but three years later Britten revised them, mercifully changed their titles and relaunched them as *Three Divertimenti*.

Britten's compositional style was not always appreciated by his tutors at the RCM, and he later said of his alma mater "I don't feel I learned very much". He was more influenced by Frank Bridge, who in turn leaned towards what was happening in Europe at the time, but Britten's own musical voice was already largely formed, as these three disarmingly quirky pieces demonstrate. The *March* looks forward to the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, written a year later, in its bracing harmonies and strong accents. The *Waltz* has a beguiling tune, piquantly undermined by cross-rhythms, and a charming resolution. It is back to the intensity of the first movement in the last: this *Burlesque* is not in the least comic, but a headlong, Moussorgsky-like rush before its last few bars bring it to an end which seems to set the scene for other movements to follow. That there aren't any is our loss.



*Britten with Frank and Ethel Bridge, ca 1930*

*Interval*

## String Quartet in A minor op.132

Ludwig von Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

*Assai sostenuto - Allegro*

*Allegro ma non tanto*

*Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart:  
Molto adagio - Neue Kraft Fühlend: Andante - Molto adagio - Andante - Molto  
adagio: Mit innigster Empfindung*

*Alla marcia, assai vivace - Più allegro - Presto*

*Allegro appassionato - Presto*

The "late" quartets of Beethoven are not only his last chamber pieces but constitute a range of Himalayan proportions. They were commissioned in 1822 by a Russian nobleman, Prince Nicolay Borisovich Galitsin, an amateur cellist, and written over three years. The five quartets, plus the alternative ending that Beethoven substituted for the Grosse Fugue of op.130, were finished a few months before his death. He was indeed in poor health throughout the period of this quartet's composition—this interrupted its progress and affected Beethoven to such an extent that on recovery he inserted a fifth movement in the middle, giving it the title that translates as "*A Convalescent's Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Deity, in the Lydian Mode*". This is an altogether extraordinary movement which, like much of the late quartets, bewildered many, if not most, of Beethoven's contemporaries. The far-sighted Prince Galitsin wrote to Beethoven "*posterity will pay homage to you and bless your memory more than your contemporaries are able to do*". Stravinsky called it "*the first piece of modern music, to remain eternally modern*". And so it is: there are moments in it when one might almost be listening to Bartok.

Surrounding this movement are four which, if less revolutionary, still push the model of the string quartet to its limits. The first has all the hallmarks of the composer: drama interspersed with light-hearted flourishes, sudden changes in tempi, "wrong" notes. The mood changes utterly in the second movement, which is in lilting three-quarter time, although a trio section stiffens it with some assertive staccato statements from the lower strings. Then comes Beethoven's excursion into the Lydian mode: not very familiar in Beethoven's time, nor the easiest of sound-worlds for us present lay listeners to bring to mind, although Wikipedia helpfully notes that Danny Elfman used it in the Simpsons' theme. After it comes a tiny, good-humoured march movement, with its rhythm continually broken by half-bar rests. This leads without pause into the finale, which in spite of its marking holds its passion in check until the last page or so.

# The Carducci Quartet

**Matthew Denton (violin)     Michelle Fleming (violin)**  
**Eion Schmidt-Martin (viola) Emma Denton (cello)**



Based in the UK, the Carducci Quartet is recognised as one of today's most successful string quartets, performing over 90 concerts worldwide each year whilst running their own annual festival in Highnam, Glos and recording label Carducci Classics, as well as holding residencies at Trinity Laban, Cardiff University and Dean Close School, Cheltenham.

Winners of international competitions including the Concert Artists Guild International Competition 2007 and First Prize at Finland's Kuhmo International Chamber Music Competition, the Anglo-Irish quartet have appeared at a host of prestigious venues worldwide; Carnegie Hall, Washington Library of Congress, The Wigmore Hall, National Concert Hall, Dublin, Tivoli Concert Hall. This season will see the quartet's debut performance at the John F Kennedy Center, Washington USA. Festival appearances include West Cork Chamber Music festival, Wratistavia Cantans Festival and Cheltenham Music Festival where they held a residency in Summer 2013.

Highly celebrated for their interpretations of contemporary repertoire, the Carducci Quartet is regularly invited to premiere new works and recent highlights include a new String Quartet by John McCabe and Oboe Quintets by Michael Berkeley and Sven-Ingo Koch with Nicholas Daniel. Working with the Palazzetto de Bru Zane, Venice, the quartet are raising awareness of works by lesser known French composers, such as Ermend Bonnal, over the coming seasons.

The quartet has received wide critical acclaim for recordings on their own record label 'Carducci Classics'. Their catalogue features two world premiere recordings presenting 20th works by G. Whettam ('recording of the month' MusicWeb International) and J. Horowitz ('beautifully crafted works...excellent performances', BBC Music Magazine) and their latest disc comprises quartets by Mendelssohn and Franck. They have recorded Vivaldi and Piazzolla with the Katona Twins Guitar Duo for Channel Classics as well as a recording of Philip Glass for Naxos.

The Carducci Quartet were nominated for a 2011 Royal Philharmonic Society Award for their family concert 'Getting the Quartet Bug! Educational work remains important to the quartet and they often work in conjunction with CAVATINA giving school workshops and family concerts. They also set up the Carducci Music Trust to further support their educational work and festival. The quartet also runs chamber music courses for young musicians in the UK, France and Ireland and regularly coach on the National Youth String Quartet Weekend.

The quartet studied with members of the Amadeus, Alban Berg, Chilingirian, Takacs and Vanbrugh quartets and, as part of the ProQuartet professional training programme in France, with Gyorgy Kurtag, Walter Levin and Paul Katz.

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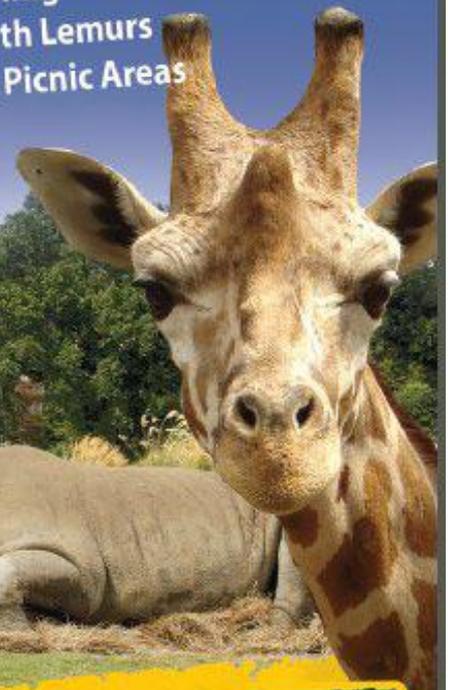
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