

The Lenthall Concerts

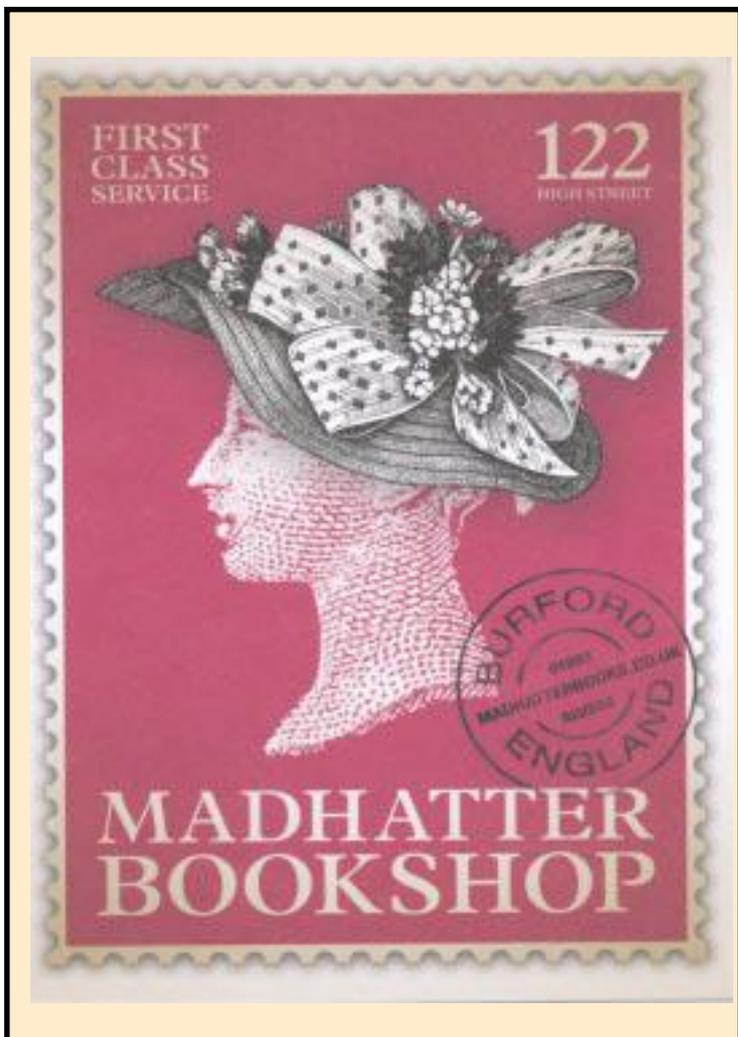
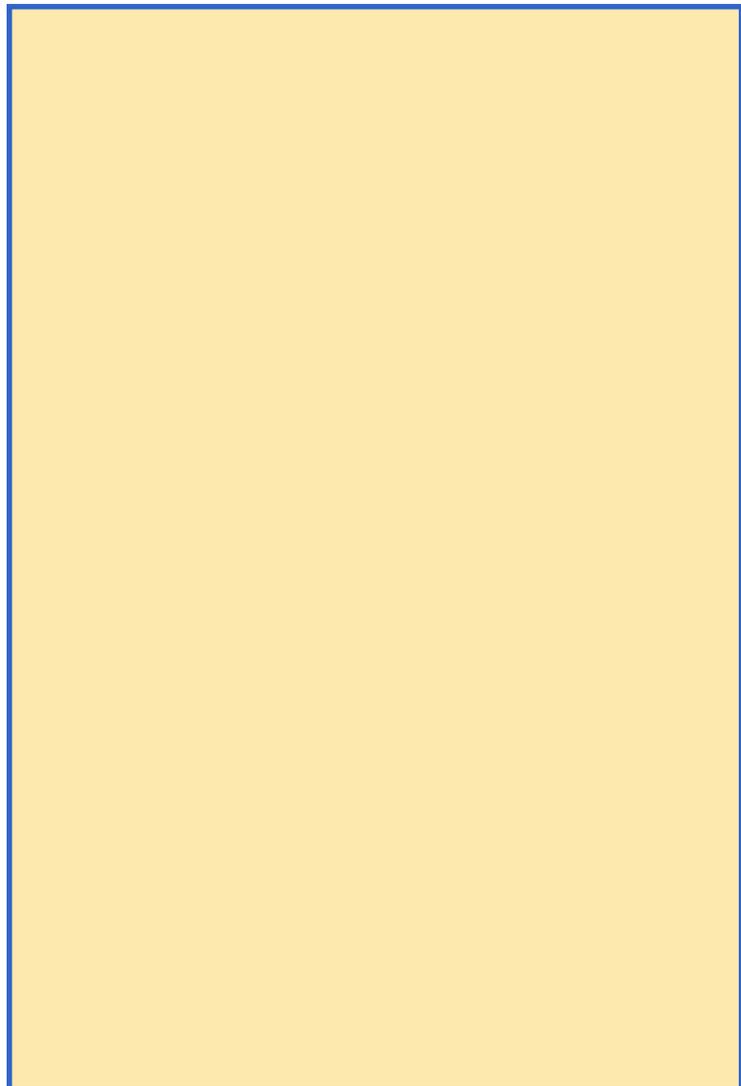
Season 2018-2019

The Roal College of Music Strings

directed by Mark Messenger

Wednesday, November 6th 2019

Burford School



The Lenthall Concert Society

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Programme

Symphony no.57 in D major Hob.1:57

Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Adagio - (Allegro)
Adagio
Menuet & tro: Allegretto
Finale: Prestissimo



Count Niklaus Esterhazy

This is only the second Haydn symphony to have graced a Lenthall Concert, the only other instance being in 2014, when the RCM strings played Haydn's last symphony, no.104, written when the composer's international reputation was secure, and he could travel beyond the restrictive regime of his boss, Prince Esterhazy. Symphony no.57 was written while Haydn was still Kapellmeister at the Esterhazy palace, and it is written for more modest resources: strings and a few woodwind, perhaps reflecting the Prince's noted parsimony towards the musicians of his court.

We are far from the splendour of the opening of Symphony no.104 as this one starts - there are chirrupings from the strings, punctuated by admonitory chords, all very formal. But the movement soon breaks loose and we are scurrying along in one of Haydn's hallmark *allegros*. The *adagio* is very measured, with plenty of daylight between the recurrent themes. It is followed by a cheerful minuet in the style of its more rustic cousin, the Ländler, although with nothing in it to upset the sensibilities of the Esterhazy court. The finale is a go-for-broke cascade of triplets, with a pre-emptory, almost surprising, ending.

Violin Concerto in D K218

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1781)

Allegro

Andante cantabile

Rondeau: andante grazioso — allegro

As a child, Mozart's reputation as a prodigy was primarily due to his prowess at the keyboard, but he was obviously no mean fiddler, since at the age of 18 he was *Konzertmeister* in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg. It's probable that he himself played the five violin concertos which he wrote at that time, although there is some evidence that he wrote them for his Salzburg friend Joachim Kolb, or for Antonio Brunetti, another violinist of the Archbishop's court orchestra. He never wrote another, as far as can be authenticated, although piano concertos continued to pour from him throughout his life.

Mozart himself was by his father's account, a player with potential to become "the finest violinist in Europe." Leopold Mozart was, as always, speaking with promotion and encouragement of his son in mind, but he was also a good judge: he had published an influential text on violin-playing several years earlier. While young Mozart was certainly capable, he seems to have viewed playing violin as a somewhat unpleasant chore, and he abandoned the violin in favor of the keyboard almost as soon as he moved out from under his father's wing.

Not that one can detect any detachment in the way Mozart writes for the instrument. These are youthful works, which still bear some traces of the old Baroque concerto in their formal outlines. However, they are also amazingly cosmopolitan in style. Mozart had spent most of his young life travelling across Europe as a child prodigy, performing on both violin and harpsichord. Though Leopold never realized his goal of finding a lucrative court post for Wolfgang, his son picked up something equally valuable along the way: musical styles from across the Continent. The violin concertos bear traces of all of the Austrian, German, Italian, and French courts he visited as a child.

Interval

Metamorphosen for 23 solo strings

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

"The flower of German culture, which has bloomed for two hundred years, has been withering away. Its spirit has been caught up in the machine, and its crowning glory, German opera, has been cut off for ever. My life's work is in ruins - in short, my life is at an end." So wrote the 80-year-old Richard Strauss, distraught at the



Dresden 1945

havoc wreaked by the Allied bombing of Germany and Austria, and in particular the destruction of the opera houses in Munich, Dresden and Vienna, which had all seen premières of his operas. It was in this mood that he wrote *Metamorphosen* in March and April 1945, the title referring to Goethe's *Metamorphose der Pflanze* (Metamorphosis of Plants), a treatise on the death and renewal (seed-plant-flower-seed) of the natural world. One can see it as an

escape from the harsh realities of the desolated land around him, for although sorrowful, it is a work of immense beauty, and one which was so full of personal significance for Strauss that he could not bring himself to conduct its first performance, although he rehearsed the orchestra in it beforehand.

If there is a musical seed for the work it is the main theme of the slow movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony (the "*Marche funèbre*"), which first appears in a (much metamorphosed) form at the work's opening. Strauss claimed that at first this slipped unconsciously into the music, but once he recognised it he exploited it. The harmonic richness of the individually separated strings is confined at first to the lower instruments, but soon the violins emerge to urge the music upwards to the climax of this initial *adagio* section. There follows a change of key and a faster interlude, marked *etwas fliessender* (gradually more flowing), which builds in intensity to a point where it can do nothing but stop dead in its tracks. When the music resumes it is *adagio* again, and the mood is if anything more grieving. As it moves to its end the *Marche funèbre* appears undisguised with Strauss's own counter-melody above it; in the score the composer wrote "In Memoriam" over the passage.

Programme notes by Christopher Yapp

Mark Messenger is recognised globally as a violinist, conductor, teacher, and educationalist.

As a soloist, conductor and chamber musician (member of the Bochmann and Bingham Quartets since 1984), has worked internationally with - amongst others - Lord Yehudi Menuhin, Ivy Gitlis, Maxim Vengerov, Bernard Greenhouse, Natalie Clein, Raphael Wallfisch, Thomas Carroll, Yonty Solomon, Howard Shelley, John Lill, Dame Thea King, Michael Collins, David Campbell, Chris Garrick and Sir John Dankworth.

Since 2002, he has been much in demand as a teacher, international judge, external examiner, to give masterclasses and as a lecturer. In 2004 he was appointed artistic director of the London String Quartet Week, was invited back for 2005, 2006 and 2009 and was on the board of the London String Quartet Foundation. He has also undertaken work for Oxford University Press, New Holland Publishing and the Associated Board, for whom he has just finished editing the complete works for violin and piano by Elgar.

Students travel from across the world to study with Mark Messenger, and currently his class includes musicians from the UK, Japan, the USA, Russia, China, Argentina, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Australia and Azerbaijan. His students have an enviable track record of competition success and international acclaim. This year sees concert and masterclass appearances in the Middle East, China, Australia, Russia and throughout Europe. He is currently Head of Strings at the Royal College of Music in London, consultant for the Norwegian Academy in Oslo. Artistic Director for the Essex Young People's Orchestra and guest conductor for the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra.

