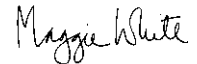


THE LENTHALL CONCERTS
SEASON 2002-2003

**The Bochmann
Quartet**

Tom Poster (piano)

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie White". The script is cursive and elegant.

Maggie White Knitwear

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Programme

Quartet in B flat K589 (Prussian)

Allegro
Larghetto
Menuetto (Moderato)
Allegro assai

The popular view of Mozart is that of a composer with miraculous facility, capable of dashing off masterpieces at all hours, and there are indeed instances of this—the overture to *Don Giovanni* written overnight, and the whole of *La Clemenza di Tito* in eighteen days. But there were also works which he had to labour at, as his letters often tell us, and possibly none more so than the string quartets, from the early 'Haydn' ones to the three 'Prussian' quartets written shortly before his death—the last he wrote.

In 1789 Mozart had gone to Berlin, via Prague, Potsdam and Leipzig, in all of which he must have hoped to pick up commissions, money (as usual) being very tight. He appeared at court, and received a commission to write six quartets for the cello-playing King Friedrich Wilhelm—or at least gave the impression of having done so to his friend and fellow-mason, Puchberg, the merchant from whom he borrowed repeatedly. "...and so my best friend, you risk nothing by me. The point is now, my only friend, whether you will or can lend me another 500 florins?"

Whether or not the quartets were commissioned, Mozart started to write them immediately; but *Così fan tutte*, his wife's illness and other distractions limited him to only three of the six, and they were published without any reference to Friedrich Wilhelm. However it seems certain that they were intended to be played by him, although they are not the concerto-like showpieces for the cello that one might have expected. Instead they are close-grained works with all four instruments well-balanced, rather in the style of a Boccherini *quatuor concertant*, all the rage in Paris at the time. Boccherini had been engaged by Friedrich as his chamber composer on his accession, and his op.24 quartets may have been the models for Mozart.

The first movement of the second quartet, K589, is notably light, gentle, and melodious, making subtle use of unusual phrase lengths in the opening theme. The cello is prominent in the second subject. In the *larghetto* the cello announces the main melody, which is repeated by the first violin, and these two instruments are more closely interwoven in the lovely second theme. The minuet and trio each make virtuosic demands on the players and the trio, in E flat, has a remarkable modulating passage in its second half. This tendency to challenge the listener late in the work is continued in the Finale, which has all the contrapuntal rigour

Wolfgang Mozart (1756-1791)



Mozart in 1789

and modulations to unusual keys that are more frequently encountered in first movements.

Quartet no.3 in F

Dmitry Shostakovich
(1905-1975)

Allegretto
Moderato con moto
Allegro non troppo
Adagio
Moderato

Shostakovich wrote fifteen string quartets, all of which were composed outside his troubled periods, when his style grated on the Soviet's cultural sensibilities. In 1946, when the third quartet was written, Shostakovich had recovered from the pasting which in 1936 Pravda had given his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and its "fidgety, screaming, neurotic" score, and was yet to undergo the condemnation of Andrey Zhdanov, the commissar in charge of the total reorganisation of the Union of Soviet Composers, who in 1948 accused Shostakovich (and Prokofiev too, while he was at it) of representing the "cult of atonality, dissonance and discord. . . infatuation with confused, neurotic combinations which transform music into cacophony". This



Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Khachaturian in 1945

frightened Shostakovich so much that he not only recanted abjectly, but withheld his fourth quartet, written in 1949 until after Stalin had died and, presumably, Zhdanov's flower had withered too.

In the same year that saw the premiere of the third quartet, the legendary Borodin Quartet was formed. Whenever they performed the work they appended descriptive subtitles to each of the five movements.

Although these do not appear in any published edition of the score, the Borodin Quartet apparently had the composer's approval, and one can therefore use them as a guide to the composer's emotional intentions.

The subtitles are:

- I 'Calm unawareness of the future cataclysm'
- II 'Rumbling of unrest and anticipation'
- III 'The forces of war unleashed'
- IV 'Homage to the dead'
- V 'The eternal question: Why/ And for what?'

One is driven to compare the quartet with the 9th Symphony, written a year earlier to celebrate the end of the war: a work so merry that Neville Cardus called it 'possibly the least symphonic music ever written'. Not for the last time did Shostakovich embody his deeper thoughts in his chamber music.

Interval

Piano Quintet in F minor

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro, non troppo
Andante, un poco Adagio
Scherzo - Allegro
Finale. Poco sostenuto - Allegro non troppo

Brahms wrote the first version of this piece in his twenties, at the time when he was leaving his native Hamburg to try his luck in Vienna, the musical capital of Europe. He hoped to enhance his reputation and thereby qualify for the post of conductor of the Hamburg Philharmonic Concerts, but it was not to be. Instead he became director of the Vienna Singakademie and never again lived in Hamburg.

In Vienna he found old friends and made new ones, largely through Clara Schumann's introductions. It was to one of his old friends, the violinist Joachim, that he showed the first version of the quintet, scored for quartet plus second cello. Always diffident about his own music, and receiving the thumbs down from Joachim, he destroyed it and rearranged it for two pianos, which version he submitted to Clara Schumann. She too was critical, and Brahms produced yet another version, for piano quintet.

One might not expect such a creative process to produce a towering masterpiece—we like to think of these flowing straight from the fountain of genius—but it certainly did. Like much of Brahms' chamber music it seems to be striving for a symphonic guise (although the first symphony was still a decade away) in its power and passion. The first movement looks back to Beethoven with its drama and unexpected changes of mood, with a coda in which the strings play serenely until the piano re-enters explosively with the original theme. The second movement is a lullaby, with echoes of Schubert: first the piano, with strings accompanying, and then with the roles reversed. The *Scherzo* starts with an ominous *pizzicato* on the cello, and the movement builds into a demonic climax. The last movement is a lyrical *rondo*, which finishes with a joyous coda.

The Bochmann String Quartet

Michael Bochmann - violin
Mark Messenger - violin

Helen Roberts - viola
Peter Adams - cello

Originally founded in 1977 and reformed in 1990, the Quartet is active throughout the country, both playing within the established music society circuit and starting new concert series, such as the Lenthall Concerts. Alongside the classic chamber repertoire they have introduced new pieces, amongst them *Dreams 42*, specially written for them by John Dankworth; *Divertimento* by Francis Routh; and Stephen Robert's *Pantomime Suite*, commissioned by The Theatre, Chipping Norton. In 1997 *Dreams 42* was specially written for them by John Dankworth and first performed at the opening of Kidderminster Library.

The Quartet has a committed involvement in music education, particularly for young people. This has led to a residency for several years at the Higher Education College in Worcester, the instigation of public masterclasses and workshops in various venues and intensive courses for postgraduate students and young professionals. The year 2001 included tours in Germany and Italy and 2002 will see the Quartet in Portugal, Scotland and Italy.

Brought up in Turkey and England, **Michael Bochmann** comes from a family of professional musicians. At 16, he entered the Royal Academy of Music on a scholarship to study the violin with Frederick Grinke. While still a student, he was the winner of the British Prize in the 1972 Carl Flesch International Violin Competition and a year later, prizewinner in the Jacques Thibaud Competition in Paris. He received lessons at this time also from Sandor Vegh and Henryk Szeryng. Shortly after he made his first solo broadcasts for the BBC. He was appointed concertmaster of the English String and Symphony Orchestras in 1988. Two years later he partnered Yehudi Menuhin in Bach's Double Violin Concerto in a tour of eighteen concerts in the USA and Britain. He frequently visits Germany to perform and teach and in other spare moments promotes 10 chamber music series through his new enterprise "Opus 2000". He holds courses for young professional ensembles and soloists at his home in Gloucestershire.

At the age of sixteen, **Mark Messenger** was awarded a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music under David Martin and Sidney Griller. Two years later he was appointed violin professor at Goldsmith's College in London, and at the age of nineteen made his Wignmore Hall debut. He has since played as soloist and chamber musician in all of London's major concert halls and throughout the world, appearing in many national and international festivals. 1990 saw the launch of his immediately popular jazz/rock group, Mercury Jazz. For four years he was director of Chamber Music at the Aberystwyth International Summer Music Festival and was influential in the development of educational policies for orchestras through his work with the English Symphony Orchestra. He is currently a consultant on music education policies for Colchester Borough Council and the Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra. For eight years he was a member of the Bingham String Quartet which championed the cause of contemporary music through its adventurous commissioning and performance programme. Currently in addition to his work with the Bochmann Quartet, he is Head of Strings at the Royal College of Music.

Helen Roberts was born in Newport, Gwent and studied the viola with Walter Gerhardt. At the age of seventeen she joined the BBC Training Orchestra and two years later the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. She was then appointed principal viola with the BBC Midland Radio Orchestra and in 1980 became principal of the English String Orchestra, with whom she has made many recordings and solo appearances. In 1990 she became violist with the Bochmann String Quartet and has performed and recorded a wide repertoire to critical acclaim. Helen is also a regular guest principal with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Welsh National Opera Orchestra and frequently appears with the CBSO.

Peter Adams was born in London in 1963 and began his musical studies whilst still at school,

learning piano and later 'cello with Dennis Nesbitt and Maurice Zimber. At the age of sixteen he joined the orchestra of London Festival Ballet and in 1984 he was made principal 'cellist with the London String Orchestra and London City Ballet. At an early stage Peter became interested in the viola da gamba and this led to the forming of the early music group Musicos da Camera and his appointment in 1984 as the youngest ever professor at the Royal Academy of Music, teaching viol and baroque 'cello. In 1991 Peter became director of the Elizabethan Consort of Viols, and for five years he was senior lecturer at the London Guildhall University, and is currently visiting lecturer at Leicester University. Peter is a founder member of the Rogeri Piano Trio with whom he performed widely throughout the world with a constant schedule of concerts for music clubs and festivals, broadcasts on the BBC and Classic FM and recording for Meridian Records. Peter joined the Bochmann Quartet in 1996, and a year later he was appointed to the Principal Chair of the English String and Symphony Orchestras. He plays a 'cello by G.B. Rogeri dated 1697.

Tom Poster

Tom Poster was born in 1981 and has just completed a degree in music at King's College, Cambridge, graduating with a double First. In 2000, he won the keyboard sections of both the Royal Over-Seas League Annual Music Competition and the BBC Young Musicians Competition, as a result of which he performed Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini in the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic under Yan Pascal Tortelier. Previously Tom was a member of the Junior Department of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama for nine years, where in 1998 he was awarded the coveted Lutine Prize. He returns to the Guildhall this year to pursue postgraduate studies with Joan Havill, with whom he has studied for the past 12 years.

Tom has given numerous recitals and concerto performances in venues which include the Barbican Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room in London, the Sheldonian Theatre and Holywell Room in Oxford, the National Concert Hall in Dublin and King's College Chapel, Cambridge, as well as at concert halls in continental Europe and the Middle East. His concerto experience to date has encompassed works by Bach, Faure, Finzi, Gershwin, Grieg, Mozart, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Schumann and Tchaikovsky. This season, Tom has given several concerto performances with the Orchestra of St John's, as the featured artist in their annual Dorchester Festival, as well as appearing at festivals in Aldeburgh (where he gave the world premiere of Alexander Goehr's Piano Quintet with the Brodsky Quartet), Devizes, Harrogate, King's Lynn and Newbury. Recent and forthcoming chamber music highlights include duo and trio recitals with Guy and Magnus Johnston throughout the UK and Ireland, and appearances with the Endellion and Bochmann Quartets and the Adderbury Ensemble. Over the past two years, a number of Tom's performances have been broadcast on BBC 2, BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM, including a guest appearance with Guy Johnston at the BBC Young Musicians Final 2002.

As composer, Tom has had two chamber operas performed at the ADC Theatre, Cambridge, to critical acclaim, and his works have also been broadcast on BBC television and radio stations. He has composed incidental music for several plays, including Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge, and Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* at the Oxford Playhouse.

Tom is grateful to the Martin Musical Scholarship Fund and the Musicians Benevolent Fund for supporting his postgraduate studies.

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