

THE LENTHALL CONCERTS
SEASON 2003-2004

**The Rachmaninov
Quartet**

Wednesday, October 15th 2003

Programme

WITNEY WINTER CONCERTS

Friday, November 14th 7.30pm
Wood Green School

Gemma Rosefield (cello)

'Making Music' Young Concert Artist 2003
with piano accompaniment

Gemma is currently studying at the Royal Northern College of Music with Ralph Kirshbaum where she is supported by the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Gemma's programme will include works by Mendelssohn, Barber and Chopin

"The soloist for the Elgar Cello Concerto was Gemma Rosefield. . . her playing was astonishing: she brought out all the poignancy and passion of the work in a self-effacing performance that ranked with the best!"

- The Bucks Herald 2003

Tickets £8/£6.50

(Children/WOC students £1)

Lenthall Members receive a further concession of £1.00.



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Quartet in C op.59 no.3 (Rasumovsky)

Ludwig von Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Introduzione: *Andante con moto - Allegro vivace*
Andante con moto quasi Allegretto
Menuetto: *Grazioso*
Allegro molto

Andrey Kyrillovich, Count Razumovsky (1752-1836) was the Russian Ambassador to the Austrian Court from 1792 until 1807, and for his services he was created a prince by the Tsar. He had personally known both Haydn and Mozart, and as a keen amateur musician he surrounded himself with musicians in his palace. But his name resounds to this day for the patronage he gave to Beethoven, and his close association with the composer's development. He it was who gave a life-long contract to four musicians, forming the Rasumovsky Quartet, the first and only example of its kind in Austria. The quartet was placed at Beethoven's complete disposal, and became famous throughout Europe. In 1806 the Count commissioned the three string quartets that bear his name

The leader of the Rasumovsky Quartet, Schuppanzigh, had been a close friend of Beethoven's for many years, and had been involved in the preparation and performance of the op.18 quartets, Beethoven's first works in the genre, some six to eight years earlier. Beethoven's music had matured in the intervening years — with the Eroica symphony by now behind him — and the first of the set startled the quartet to the point that they thought Beethoven must be playing a joke on them.

The opening is a series of sustained chords, of ambiguous harmonic content, until we are off in the promised C major, where the mood is definitely Mozartean - Beethoven actually quotes Mozart's famous "Dissonance Quartet". But Mozart is left behind in the second movement, which has a wistful, almost folk-like quality. This mood persists into the slow third movement, with various degrees of dramatic emphasis, until we are tipped without a break into the joyous finale.

The Oxford Lieder Festival

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Schumann Piano Quartet op.47

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Christ Church Cathedral

Ruby Hughes *cello/soprano*

Sholto Kynoch *piano*

Brahms Cello sonata in E minor

Schumann Songs & Fantasiestücke

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New College Ante-Chapel

Thomas Guthrie *baritone*

Paul Plummer *piano*

Schumann Dichterliebe op.48

and other songs

Prices: (6th, 9th, 18th October) £15/£9 concessions; (all other concerts) £11/£7 concessions
Tickets from The Oxford Playhouse (01865 305305)

Quartet in B K458 "The Hunt"

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro vivace assai
Menu etto
Adagio
Allegro assai

The warmth of feeling between Haydn and Mozart is well known, and Haydn's famous compliment to Leopold Mozart: "*Before God and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste and, what is more, the greatest knowledge of composition*" shows the level of the older composer's admiration. In the same year Mozart published the six 'Haydn' quartets, with the dedication "*Your approval above all encourages me to offer them to you and leads me to hope that you will not consider them wholly unworthy of your favour.*"



Mozart

The six "Haydn" quartets were written in two groups of three, separated by a gap of sixteen months, during which time Mozart wrote much other instrumental music. By the time K458 appeared the revolutionary aspect of the first three had perhaps lessened somewhat, and the second group, no less demanding than the first, were thought of as

'easier'. That the six quartets, immensely varied, should have formed a named group is an accident of their chronological proximity and the fact that they were published as a set dedicated to the older composer.

K458 is in B flat, a key which always brought out Mozart's happy, ebullient side, and one which he maintains throughout, except in the *adagio*, where he shifts into the nearby one of E flat. The first movement, from whose robust 6/8 opening the title (not Mozart's) derives, sets the emotional agenda for the piece. The minuet is calm, apart from some *sforzandos* to prevent one from dropping off, and the *adagio*, the only movement so marked in all six quartets, has a quiet elegance. The jollity returns in the finale, which is sonata form with three well-marked subjects.

Interval

Wine, soft drinks and Fairtrade coffee will be served

Quartet no.1 in B minor op.50

Sergey Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Allegro
Andante molto - Vivace
Andante

Prokofiev spent most of the 1920's travelling extensively in both Europe and the USA, being in demand not only as a composer but as a concert artist interpreting his own music. At the end of the decade he received a commission from the Washington Library of Congress to compose a string quartet, as noted in his autobiography:

This huge library has a much poorer collection of original manuscripts than most European libraries. To remedy this deficiency, a special fund has been set up for purchasing the original manuscripts of modern composers. Of course in time hardly more than one out of ten compositions will be of any value, but by then it will be worth ten times what was originally paid for it. The new compositions are performed with a great deal of ceremony at music festivals in Washington to which musicians from New York and other cities are invited. Before starting work on the quartet I studied Beethoven's Quartets, chiefly in railway carriages on my way from one concert to another. In this way I came to understand and greatly admire his quartet technique. Perhaps this explains the somewhat 'classical' idiom of the first movement of my quartet. It has, however, two distinctive features: first, the finale is the slow movement and secondly, the key of B minor is one rarely chosen for quartets. I ended the quartet with a slow movement because the material happened to be the most significant in the whole piece.

As for the key, the tonic of B minor is just half a tone below the limits of the cello and viola range. This involves a number of difficulties in writing the music. I tried out the Andante from the quartet with a full string group, rewriting some of the cello part and adding a part for the double-basses. One would think that the Andante, being for the most part melodious, ought to sound richer in the orchestra, but in fact it is better as a quartet.

The quartet was written in Paris and first performed in Washington on April 23, 1931.



Prokofiev and his wife Lina

Quartet no.1 in D op.11

Moderato e semplice
Andante cantabile
Allegro non tanto econ fuoco
Allegro giusto

Tchaikovsky wrote his first string quartet (discounting a single movement, written six years before) in 1871, two years after his first masterpiece, *Romeo and Juliet*, but at a time when he was particularly short of money. His friend Nicholas Rubenstein suggested that Tchaikovsky should give a concert of his own works at the Moscow Conservatory and, lacking the means to engage an orchestra, the composer instead wrote a quartet. It was dedicated to his friend, the botanist Sergei Alexandrovich Rachinsky.

From a composer with so distinctive a voice as Tchaikovsky, the opening movement of the first quartet comes as a bit of a shock. One forgets that the composer was steeped, during his extended education at both the St. Petersburg and Moscow Conservatories, in the music of Western Europe, and perhaps one shouldn't wonder if the first movement sounds as much like Schubert as Tchaikovsky. It has a classical form: a tender first subject, followed by a more energetic second subject, marked *largamente e cantabile*. These are repeated, with increased tension, and extensively developed, before the first subject returns with much decoration from the first violin. Another appearance of the second subject is followed by a bustling coda.

When he was fifteen, Tchaikovsky and his younger twin brothers had spent a happy summer on an estate at Kamenka, near Kiev. Here he had heard a carpenter singing a Ukrainian folk song called *Sidel Vanya*, and this he used in the second movement, marked *Andante Cantabile*: a piece so immediately appealing that it brought Tolstoy to tears when he first heard it. It subsequently became a bit of an albatross for Tchaikovsky, who, faced with the host of transcriptions of it, thought it was the only piece of his that people wanted to hear.

With the *scherzo* and the *finale* we are back in more Schubertian territory, but the adherence to form does not obscure Tchaikovsky's immense melodic gift, as delicious snatches of melody are woven into the development.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)



Tchaikovsky ca 1864

The Rachmaninov String Quartet

Andrej Andrejev - violin
Natalja Volkova - violin

Fergej Zedrik - viola
Vladimir Shochov - cello

The Rachmaninov String Quartet is the official quartet of the Philharmonic Hall in Sochi in the South of Russia and proved its high quality by winning the All-Unions Competition. The members of the quartet are soloists of the State Philharmonic Society of Moscow and regularly play with some of the most outstanding Russian musicians. With their expressive style the artists see themselves as following the example of the great composer Rachmaninov, whose work, according to them, expresses the depth of the Russian soul particularly well. Therefore the name Rachmaninov, whose chamber music they love to play, becomes a sign of their commitment to the tradition of Russian music.

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