

**The  
Bochmann Quartet**

**Wednesday, March 23rd 2005**

# Programme

## Quartet in B flat op.18 no.6

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)

*Allegro con brio*

*Adagio ma non troppo*

*Scherzo e Trio: Allegro*

*La Malinconia: Adagio - Allegretto quasi Allegro*

Beethoven was approached in 1795 by Count Apponyi to write quartets, a form which he had hitherto shrunk from essaying, and obviously was still not ready for - the good Count never received them, in spite of waiving the customary exclusive possession of the works before publication. The undoubtedly supremacy of Haydn at that time may have contributed to Beethoven's reluctance, and it is worth noting that the older composer's commission from Prince Lobkowitz for six quartets in 1799 was only partially fulfilled, Haydn claiming that his strength was gone, and Beethoven's dedication of the op.18 quartets was to the same patron. Is there a sense that Haydn's ungrateful pupil was trying on the crown?

The six quartets are not accurately dated, for their manuscripts are lost. Thus the listing of individual works may be completely misleading, as Beethoven almost certainly 'arranged' the order prior to publication; but the evidence such as it is points to no.6 being indeed the last of the set. It certainly points the way to Beethoven's subsequent development of the genre in the new century.

Which is not to say that one might not be spoofed into thinking one was listening to Haydn at the bouncy start of the first movement, but Beethoven's voice asserts itself in the development. The slow movement has a straightforward tune, over which the shadow of the minor mode falls in the middle section. The *scherzo* is a wonderful mass of flitting cross-rhythms, not entirely simplified by the trio, and the last movement is a two-for-the-price-of-one: an *adagio* infinitely more tragic than the second movement, followed precipitately by a cheerful, scurrying section. But this is not the end of the story, and the *adagio* makes two more brief appearances before it is swept away by a rousing *prestissimo*.



*La Melanconia -  
Melchiorre Lanza il Barthel*

## Variations

Margaret Hubicki  
(b 1915)

It is hard enough for any British composer to fight their way on to a recital programme, and doubly hard for a British woman composer. Margaret Hubicki's is hardly a household name, yet in a long career she wrote a number of mainly short, small-scale pieces that are instantly attractive. Her MBE, however, came from her work in the field of music education, in particular of teaching dyslexic pupils. She also taught harmony at the Royal Academy of Music, numbering among her pupils Annie Lennox in her pre-Eurythmics days.

Composed in 1939, the variations were first performed at the Royal Academy of Music by a quartet in which her future husband Bohdan Hubicki was the first violinist. A folk-like theme is followed by six variations: the first, marked *Con intimo sentimento* has a heightened feeling from the theme and continues through the more upbeat second to a vigorous third variation, which is much more light-hearted and finishes in a *Presto*. The fourth, marked *Adagio*, has a deep sense of longing and has a notable opening where the second violin plays a version of the theme double the speed of the first violin. The fifth follows without a break and is a slow fugue starting with the cello. An extraordinary climax occurs in this variation after which the mood disperses into the final sixth variation. This has a reassuring tone until the re-emergence of the opening theme together with a portentous slow syncopated rhythm.

## Quartet in D minor D810

### "Death and the Maiden"

Allegro  
Adante con moto  
Scherzo (Allegro molto) - Trio  
Presto

Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

At the end of March 1824 Schubert was writing to his friend Kupelwieser "...feel myself to be the most unhappy and wretched creature in the world. Imagine a man whose health will never be right again and who, in sheer despair over this, ever makes things worse and worse; imagine a man, I say, whose most brilliant hopes have perished, to whom the felicity of love and friendship have nothing to offer but pain...". The previous year, with the failure of Schubert's stage works, his ill health and the breaking up of his circle of friends, had brought the composer to a very low ebb; yet during February and March 1824 he turned back to composing chamber music after a break of three years and produced the two great last quartets and the octet for wind and strings. There is, though, more than a tinge of nostalgia about them: all three use themes from works written in happier times—in the case of the D minor quartet the setting of the Matthias Claudius poem *Der Tod und das Mädchen*.

It is in the second movement, one of the most sublime that Schubert ever wrote, that the

tune appears, with its set of five variations. Before that there has been a substantial first movement, with a veritable compendium of dramatic effects stemming from the insistent triplet figures with which it starts (and restarts, more than once). The melody on which the slow movement starts is taken from the piano introduction to the song, which represents the approach of Death—no sinister presence, but one promising relief: "You shall sleep softly in my arms". The scherzo has a foot-stamping tune borrowed from another of Schubert's earlier works, the Ländler in G-sharp Minor, composed the previous May, with a gentler trio. The finale is a hell-bent *tarantella*, with Schubert in full Beethovenian flow and intimating what more might have come from his pen had Death not cradled him in his arms at such a cruelly young age.



Schubert in 1825

## THE LENTHALL CONCERTS

The Lenthall Concert Society runs a season of concerts each year at Burford School and Community College. The current season is supported by The Burford Garden Company, the Oxfordshire Youth Music Trust and the Burford & District Society.

## Burford Arts Festival Wednesday June 22nd 2005 The Bochmann Quartet with Richard Derrington

Dvorak  
Dvorak  
Debussy

Waltzes  
American Quartet in F Opus 96,  
Quartet in G minor

The Bochmann's play, and actor Richard Derrington contributes some composers'-eye portraits of other composers.

Tickets £9.50 (advance £8.50; students £3.00, under 18s 50p) from The Pharmacy, Burford High Street; Music Stand, High Street, Witney; The Community College (01993-822314) Green Branch Press (01367 860588); Further information: 01367 860588

# 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. A

Brought up in Turkey and England, **Michael Bochmann** comes from a family of professional musicians. 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. 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 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. At the age of nineteen made his Wigmore 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. 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. 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 Zimbler. 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 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 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.

