

THE LENTHALL CONCERTS
SEASON 2005-2006

The
Bochmann Quartet
and
Sergio Marchegiani

Wednesday, March 8th 2006

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The Lenthall Concerts Annual General Meeting

The Lenthall Concert Society's AGM will take place at Burford Community College on Wednesday August 7th. All members who have subscribed for the 2005-6 season are eligible to attend, and any prospective members would be most welcome to attend as guests.

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Lenthall Members receive a further concession of £1.00.

Programme

Quartet in D, K 575

Allegretto
Andante
Menuetto: Allegretto
Allegretto

In 1789 Mozart was up to his ears in debt: unable to raise enough in commissions and by performance to support himself and his family through periods of sickness he had borrowed repeatedly from his friends. One of these, Michael Puchberg, a brother Mason, was generous to a fault but carefully kept all the correspondence relating to the loans; and these letters have come down to us to give a graphic picture of Mozart's plight. "Great God!" one letter starts, "I would not wish my worst enemy to be in my present position."

So he was prepared to look elsewhere than Vienna for work, and went with his friend and pupil Prince Karl Lichnowski to Berlin, where the Count had offered to introduce him to Frederick William II, King of Prussia. Mozart got on like a house on fire with the King, who tried to persuade him to take a permanent position at court. Failing in this he gave the composer a commission to write six string quartets, which Mozart started immediately on his return to Vienna. It seems he found them difficult to write, and when a more lucrative commission to write *Così fan tutte* came along the project was abandoned with only three quartets completed. They were published a few weeks after Mozart's death, without any dedication, and presumably no payment accrued.

The three works have become known as "The Prussian Quartets". That in D, K575, was the first to be written. Frederick William was an enthusiastic cellist, and Mozart wrote with his royal client in mind. Passages throughout the work give prominence to the cello, taking it up to the top of its range while the other strings accompany it. Unlike earlier quartets, where the opening movement carries much of the meat of musical development, this has a light and melodious opening movement. Mozart marked the opening *sotto voce*, and some passages *dolce*, and both these directions are repeated in the *andante*. After a bouncy *menuet*, and a trio in which the cello reverts to its traditional role of underpinning, it announces the principal theme of the finale and dominates proceedings for much of the movement, with many and varied decorations around it. Not for the first time did Mozart transcend a not-much-relished task, to say nothing of his dire personal circumstances, to produce music of sublime happiness.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)



Mozart in 1789

String Quartet no.1 in C op.49

Dimitry Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

Moderato
Theme and Variations - Moderato
Allegro molto
Allegro

Shostakovich wrote his first String Quartet in 1935, but it was not performed until three years later. In the meantime his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* had appeared, to international acclaim and subsequent, and perhaps consequent, condemnation in Pravda, apparently at Stalin's instigation. This resulted in the composer's first period of pariah-hood and the withdrawal from rehearsal of the Fourth Symphony; but in 1937 the Fifth Symphony, styled by a commentator 'the creative reply of a Soviet Artist to justified criticism', had re-established his reputation as the foremost Soviet composer.

Thus the String Quartet emerged into a less hostile landscape than it might have done, and indeed it is a charming piece, which may even have penetrated Stalin's prejudices. It is by way of being a four-movement divertimento, and originally bore the title *Springtime*. The first movement started life as a four-part harmony exercise, and has some effective shifts and clashes between the parts. The second subject has a serene yet comic slow waltz accompaniment to an expressive violin melody which is repeated by the cello. Both subjects are developed, and there is a quiet coda. The second movement's theme is stated with fine Russian soulfulness by the viola, and taken up by the other instruments, the texture becoming progressively richer. The viola also kicks off the *scherzo* with a busy *ostinato*, accompanying the second and then the first violin; there is a simple trio section before the *ostinato* returns. The final movement is hearty and good-humoured, with plenty to tap your foot to if you are that way inclined.

INTERVAL

Piano Quintet op.57

Dimitry Shostakovich
(1905-1975)

Prelude
Fugue
Scherzo
Intermezzo
Finale

Shostakovich's Piano Quintet was written in 1940, and received its first performance, by the composer with the Beethoven Quartet, in Moscow on November 23rd of that year. It was a time when Russian composers walked on eggs, conscious that if their music was deemed not to advance the cause of Soviet Realism they could expect official disdain, at the very least. Shostakovich was doubly suspect, as his music was adored by the cognoscenti and

he had received a standing ovation at the Composers' Union plenum the previous year - at a time when standing ovations were meant to be reserved for Stalin alone. At the Quintet's premiere another question loomed: could it reinstate chamber music, which had been sternly discouraged under both the Proletkult and the the reign of Socialist Realism as a bourgeois idiom?

As it was, the Quintet received a reception so rapturous that Shostakovich might well have followed some other composers into the outer darkness had Stalin not considered his film music vital for propaganda purposes. Instead the work won a Stalin Prize.

Perhaps the authorities turned a blind eye to, or maybe didn't even notice, the satire inherent in the piece. True, there is noble thematic material, but it is continually



Shostakovich

undermined by witty interjections. The grandiloquent piano opening, echoed by the strings, gives way to anxious exchanges, and similar alternations continue throughout the movement. In the second movement, the least ambivalent of the five, the sorrowing fugue makes way for some declamatory effusions before sinking back into a wistful fugue. In the central *Scherzo* there are sarcastic allusions to the cruder aspects of Soviet culture: the movement is brief and full of rustic energy subverted by 'wrong notes' and the boisterous setting of the piano against the strings. The *Intermezzo* is calm, with the first violin and viola entwining above a pizzicato cello, but then the piano starts a sardonic commentary, and the mood becomes nervous, menaced. The last movement begins as if to restore the composure, but steadily becomes more urgent, until it fades away to end with a series of consoling chords

MUSIC AT ST PETER'S 2006

The 2006 season of concerts at St Peter's, Wallingford starts on Saturday 20th May and runs until the end of September. A full and varied programme of concerts includes recitals by notable young artists familiar to Lenthall audiences. On 22nd July the Rautio Piano Trio play a programme which includes Beethoven's 'Archduke' Trio, and on Friday and Saturday 18th/19th August the Sacconi String Quartet play three programmes entirely composed of Mozart quartets and, with Simon Rowland-Jones (viola) string quintets.

To be put on the mailing list for the full programme, telephone 01491 825421

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.

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 Wigmore Hall debut. He has since played as soloist and chamber musician in all of London's major concert halls and throughout the world. 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. 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. He 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.

Sergio Marchegiani

Sergio Marchegiani was born in Alessandria, Italy. He began his piano studies at the age of six and performed his first solo recital when he was 10. In 1990 he graduated brilliantly from the "A. Vivaldi Conservatory" in Alessandria after studying with Giuseppe Binasco (who trained under Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Alfred Cortot). He subsequently improved his skills in Milan, studying with Ilonka Deckers, a great Hungarian piano teacher descending directly from the Franz Liszt pianistic school (she also trained such musicians as A. Lonquich, Enrica Cavallo and Annie Fischer). He also studied with the Polish pianist Marian Mika (of the Paderewski pianistic school).

He has toured all over the world (Austria, Germany, Croatia, Spain, Holland, Belgium, France, Sweden, Norway, Russia, United States, Singapore and Australia), performing in Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Heidelberg, Oslo, Moscow, Stockholm, Den Haag, Los Angeles, Singapore and Adelaide. In 2001 he made his debut in New York, playing at the United Nations. Recently he returned to Russia to perform at the prestigious "Moscow Autumn" Festival and Puskin Museum in the presence of the Italian ambassador.

Marchegiani has played as a soloist with the Teatro Lirico Sinfonietta in Cagliari, the Grosseto Symphonic Orchestra, the Guido Cantelli Symphonic Orchestra in Milan and the United Europe Chamber Orchestra. He has recorded for the Italian national radio station Rai3, the Russian cultural channel TVC and the Italian label Dynamic.

Also a keen chamber musician, Sergio Marchegiani has performed with such renowned musicians as the Moscow Soloists Quartet, violinist Mikhail Bereznskiy, violists Anton Jaroshenko and Adrian Pinzaru, and with The Casorati Quartet.

For several years he has worked with the Italian composer Alberto Colla, becoming his main piano performer and earning flattering reviews: "Sergio Marchegiani proved to be an extraordinary performer of Colla's music, impeccable in his technique, in his interpretive style and in his warm, chiselled sound." (Alberto Cima in La Provincia).

He performed several world premieres of Colla's solo pieces, chamber and orchestral music, including *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet in memoria di D. Shostakovich*. He is in frequent demand for masterclasses, lectures and piano competition adjudication in Italy and abroad.



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