



THE MAXWELL QUARTET

TUESDAY October 11th

PROGRAMME

Quartet in F Major Op. 77 no.2
Allegro moderato
Menuetto
Andante
Finale - Vivace assai.

F.J.Haydn (1732-1809)

Punctum

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

INTERVAL

Quartet no. 3 in B flat, Op.67
Vivace
Andante
Agitato (Allegretto non troppo)
Poco Allegretto con Variazioni.

J.Brahms (1833-1897)

COLIN SCOBIE: Violin
GEORGE SMITH: Violin
ELLIOT PERKS: Viola
DUNCAN STRACHAN: Cello

Quartet in F Major Op. 77 no.2

F.J.Haydn (1732-1809)

Allegro moderato; Menuetto; Andante; Finale - Vivace assai.

The two Quartets op.77 are Haydn's last completed works in this genre. Why there are only two of the set of six commissioned by Prince Lobkowitz has never been satisfactorily explained. Griesinger, Haydn's first biographer, suggested that Haydn did complete four of the projected set, but what has happened to the other two is a matter of conjecture. Some have suggested that Haydn, who was busy on his second large oratorio *The Seasons*, having recently completed *The Creation*, was tired, was also very busy with performances. But the great Haydn scholar H.C.Robbins Landon has put forward the theory that now Beethoven - at this stage a pupil of Haydn - was hearing performances of his own set of Quartets Op.18, Haydn withdrew from any possible competition with his former pupil. Perhaps this is more likely than it first appears, when we remember that Haydn similarly ceased composing operas and piano concerts after hearing Mozart's mature works in those genres.

Whatever the reasons, this Quartet is the last completed quartet by Haydn. Written in 1799, when Haydn was 67 and in his full maturity. As a young man he had first developed the medium of the String Quartet, showing how it could stand as an equal to a symphonic composition, and his final works in the genre share a concern with long-range symphonic thought.

The first movement is written in sonata structure. A cheerful and robust opening theme is contrasted with a second, more graceful, rather Mozart-like tune. The exposition ends with a small codetta theme, as all the players join together with a virtuosic rising passage of quick-moving semiquavers. The movement follows its anticipated path through development and recall of the initial ideas. Haydn constantly challenges our ears with many repeats which are changed - sometimes only a little, sometimes a great deal, asking us to be mentally alert to his musical logic at all times.

The lively second movement is a quick Menuetto with an intriguing rhythmic duality of three versus two beats to the bar. The sonorous Trio is cast in a rich harmonic relationship of the flattened sixth - anticipating Schubert.

The slow movement is variations-based, with episodes between the varied statements of the theme. This is first heard in a rather bare texture of first violin and cello. All the players join for the final phrase of the theme - adding a tremendous textural richness. Texture is a watchword of this movement, and shows just how much the violin and its bows had developed during the composer's lifetime.

The finale is one of those movements that moves with quick-silver speed, and is led by a virtuoso first violin part. Cast in a slightly unusual triple tempo, this high-spirited movement is full of surprises of rhythm, harmony and thematic development - all of which we might expect from a composer in his full maturity. (RBW 10.22)

Punctum

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

Caroline Shaw is an American composer, violinist, and singer. In 2013 she was the youngest recipient of the prestigious Pulitzer Award for her *Partita for 8 voices*. *Punctum* for String Quartet was composed in 2009 when the composer was in her mid-twenties and was revised a few years later. Lasting around 9 minutes, the work explores the varied textures available with a quartet, initially related to one note. Different modes of attacks, harmonics, and other variations of sounds are explored. Odd thematic fragments are thrown between the players as a sense of momentum is gradually built up. These fragments are then brought together and coalesce into the Chorale often sung to the words - 'O Sacred Head sore wounded'. And we realise that this has been at the root of the whole of this expressive composition, which ends with a quiet but powerful coda.

(RBW 9.22)

Quartet no. 3 in B flat, Op.67

J.Brahms (1833-1897)

Vivace; Andante; Agitato (Allegretto non troppo); Poco Allegretto con Variazioni.

Written in 1876, this was the last of Brahms' three string quartets. Cast in the expected four movements. The sheer vigour of the classical 'hunting' motive is a more energetic opening than many of Brahms' works. Donald Frances Tovey writes of the teasing side of the composers' personality coming to the fore in this movement, which he likens to 'a Haydnesque comedy'. The composer himself, in his characteristic downbeat manner, referred to this Quartet as 'a useless trifle...to avoid facing the serious countenance of a symphony' - a remark given particular significance, as Brahms anticipated the first performance of his first symphony later that year.

In fact, this quartet, running at just over half an hour, is a well-formed and perfectly rounded composition. The return of the opening and the recall of earlier textures towards the end of the work, is unusual for Brahms, but makes absolute sense - drawing together the different themes and movements into one organic unity.

There is a rhythmic conceit in the first movement, with the use of two rhythmically defined units - the triple-based 'hunting' motive of the opening contrasting with the duple beat of the second subject, which some commentators have likened to the rhythm of a polka. The use of these two highly differentiated rhythmic figures, helps to signpost the structure. The central development section is particularly notable for its quiet, almost mysterious mood. One of the most telling aspects of this work is the attention Brahms gives to varying his textures. Though each of the four instruments is of vital importance, the first violin has a virtuoso part, especially in the first movement. It is a curiosity that though the Quartet was

dedicated to a cellist, the cello does not play a leading part anywhere in the composition.

After the bright and breezy opening, the following slow movement, with its extended lyricism, is in expressive contrast. If the first movement reminds us of a hunt this one reminds us that Brahms was a prolific and distinguished song writer. However, the serenity of the opening and closing sections does not prepare us for the decidedly stormy interlude, based on jagged dotted rhythms, in the middle of the movement.

The lilting third movement, neither a minuet nor a scherzo, is still indebted to dance form. The movement features the viola at its opening. The recall of the opening to end the first section, marks a particularly beautiful passage- above the viola theme, the first violin weaves a delicate arabesque of gentle but quick moving triplets The contrasting middle section of the movement - the Trio - is notable for its continued use of the viola as solo instrument. There is a beautiful short coda to this movement, in which Brahms resolves all tension with a move to the major.

The finale returns to the home key of B flat, and is a set of variations on an unusually asymmetric theme of ten bars length - with phrase lengths of four bars plus a repeated six bars. The nine following variations retain this highly original structure. Notable moments occur with the viola leading the first two variations, and at the beginning of the first minor variation (no.4), there is an extraordinary texture, with first violin and cello playing two octaves apart. The music moves to the distant key of the flattened third - D flat- for variation 5, and variation 6 moves even further from the home key beginning with a fragmented version of the theme on the cello. The tempo suddenly quickens for the next variation, as Brahms recalls the opening of the whole quartet. This marks one of the most extraordinary passages in the whole of Brahms' chamber music, with two more variations still to come, as the 'hunting' motive of the opening of the work is recalled, and the composer goes on to show how this theme is linked with the theme of the finale, and can even run in counterpoint with it. Though this may be a veritable compositional *tour de force*, the result seems effortless, as the work draws to its joyous conclusion.

Is Brahms at the height of his powers? Each movement is perfectly proportioned, according to classical formalities, but the expressive nature of the two middle movements, combined with the manner in which the first and last movements are drawn together, shows a master craftsman at work, and apparently enjoying it. Some 'trifle'!

(RBW Oct.22)

THE MAXWELL QUARTET



COLIN SCOBIE: VIOLIN

Born in Edinburgh in 1991, Colin Scobie is already established as one of the most creative and compelling violinists and chamber musicians of his generation. He has performed as concerto soloist to critical acclaim across Europe and further afield, with orchestras including Musica Alta Ripa, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, La Serenissima, Scottish Ensemble and the Covent Garden

Chamber Orchestra. He has broadcast for BBC Radio 3 and Radio Scotland numerous times and collaborated with many eminent musicians including Marcia Crayford, Stephen Orton, Martino Tirimo, Moray Welsh, Colin Carr, and Alexander Hohenthal.

In 2010 Colin was appointed 2nd violin of the Fitzwilliam Quartet with whom he performed extensively for 2 years, touring Europe, Africa and America. His desire to explore the possibilities of the quartet repertoire and to lead a young and dynamic quartet led to him joining the Maxwell Quartet as first violin in 2013. Colin began playing the violin at the age of eight, studying at St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh, before going on to the Royal College of Music in London, studying with Dona Lee Croft and Lucy Russell.



GEORGE SMITH: VIOLIN

George began learning to play the violin at the age of ten. He studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with William Chandler and Ruth Crouch. Whilst there he played in masterclasses with Midori, Christian Tetzlaff, Ilya Gringolts, Andrew Manze and Barnabas Keleman. He has performed across the UK and further afield as a chamber musician,

soloist and Scots fiddle player. Notable performances include winning prizes in the Glenfiddich Fiddle Championship, performing James MacMillan's 'From Ayrshire' for Solo Violin and Orchestra under the baton of the composer, and most recently performing in the Cuillin Mountains on the Isle of Skye.

George works with many other groups in Scotland including the Scottish Ensemble, BBCSSO and Grit Orchestra. He regularly works with non-classical musicians, collaborating with composers including Anna Meredith and Samoyed. Along with this he teaches at various institutions across Scotland and is regularly invited to give workshops and masterclasses on Scottish music. George performs on a Bernardus Calcanius violin which dates from c.1740 and is extremely grateful to the Harrison-Frank Family Foundation for this generous loan.



ELLIOT PERKS: VIOLA

Elliott studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School, where he studied with Suzie Meszaros, Rosemary Warren-Green and Lioutsia Ibragimova. Elliott was a foundation scholar at the Royal College of Music in London where he studied with Andriy Viytovych.

Elliott has taken part in numerous concerts as a soloist and chamber musician, performing in most London venues, including The Wigmore Hall, The Royal Festival Hall, The Royal Albert hall, The Queen Elizabeth Hall, The Purcell Room, Sadler's Wells, Bradford Cathedral, Snape Maltings, Dorking Halls, The Cadogan Hall and numerous concerts in The Menuhin Hall. Recent engagements include playing Viola Viola by George Benjamin in The Purcell room and Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante with Violinist, Oliver Cave and the Audeat Camerata in Hampstead. He has performed as guest principal with orchestras including Manchester Camerata, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.



DUNCAN STRACHAN: CELLO

Born in Dundee in 1987, Duncan grew up in Lochaber, in the west highlands of Scotland, where he began learning cello with Audrey Scott at the age of 4. Duncan then went to St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh, learning with Pat Hair. He subsequently read music at St Catherine's College, Oxford where he was a Leask Music Scholar and an Academic Scholar. He studied cello with Colin Carr, before continuing his studies at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with Robert Irvine.

As a chamber musician, Duncan has worked with a wide range of ensembles and prominent figures including Fidelio Trio, Red Note, Florin Trio, Lana Trovovsek, Ilya Gringolts, David Watkin and Benjamin Grosvenor. He has also worked with composers including Tom David Wilson, Simon Smith, Anna Meredith, Stuart MacRae, Rory Boyle, Michael Finnissy and many more to perform new works for cello.