

PENRITH MUSIC CLUB
THURSDAY APRIL 21ST, 2022
in Penrith Methodist Church

BARBICAN STRING QUARTET

AMARINS WIERDSMA (violin)

KATE MALONEY (violin)

CHRISTOPH SLENCZKA (viola)

YOANNA PRODONOVA (cello)

MARTINU – Quartet no.3

SCHUBERT – Quartettsatz in C minor, D.703

BARTOK – Quartet no.2, op.17

BRAHMS – Quartet no,2 in A minor

**We warmly welcome the Barbican String Quartet as guest artists
for our final concert of the 2021-22 season.**

**Our pamphlets for next season are now available and there is one
included with each programme. There are extra copies of the
pamphlet available at the door if you would like to take any for
friends and subscription forms are also available there and on the
Penrith Music Club website.**

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only do you get a whole season of seven concerts for the price of
five, with a total saving of £25 on single ticket prices, but also you
can obtain half-price admission to Carlisle Music Society concerts,
as well as helping the Music Club plan confidently for the future.**

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

Quartet no.3

MARTINU
(1890–1959)

Allegro
Andante
Vivo

Bohuslav Martinu was born in Polička, Moravia, learned to play the violin and later played in the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, though he had no thorough musical education. In 1923 he moved to Paris, where he absorbed many influences from English madrigals to jazz, Bartok and Stravinsky. He escaped to America in 1940 and, although he returned to Europe in 1953, he never lived in Czechoslovakia again. His output of orchestral, choral and chamber music exceeded that of most of his contemporaries; his seven string quartets have retained a firm place in the repertoire.

Martinu wrote this quartet in 1929 when he was experimenting with modernist techniques. Exploring the timbres of the string quartet from the opening of the first movement with pizzicato and col legno (tapping the bow on the strings) and his motor rhythms produce a driving energy. Snatches of lyrical moments, often given to the viola, provide welcome relief. The viola introduces the rising theme of the slow movement. Gradually an impressive climax is reached, which subsides and gives the final comment to the cello. The last movement is in three parts – a *moto perpetuo* of great energy is followed by a slower section with a curious snatch of melody played in harmonics (reminiscent of Bartok). High octane energy returns in the final part – a dynamic dash to its abrupt finish.

Quartettsatz in C minor, D.703

SCHUBERT
(1797-1828)

Schubert wrote several quartets as a teenager, mainly for domestic consumption by himself and his father and brothers. Their model was Haydn and Mozart, but in 1820 all that changed. This quartet movement was probably intended as the first of a four-movement work, but Schubert may well have been dissatisfied with the andante, which he started but abandoned. The opening entry of each instrument in turn states the first theme, immediately repeated by the first violin. The long-drawn second

melody is interrupted by an outburst from the lower three players, while the first violin launches scales like fireworks. The development leads back to the second theme, while the opening theme is saved for the very end.

Quartet no.2

BARTOK
(1881-1945)

Moderato
Allegro molto capriccioso
Lento

After Beethoven, it was difficult for composers to follow his supreme example in quartet writing. The nineteenth century produced some fine chamber music, but less than the periods before or since, and inevitably depended on the models of the Classical masters.

In the twentieth century Bartok helped to regenerate string quartet composition with his highly ingenious new structural techniques and highly personal harmonic language. His six quartets, written between 1908 and 1939, produced startling new sounds from the string quartet and influenced countless other composers. The second quartet was completed in 1917; its three movements are lyrical, capriciously energetic, and deeply sorrowful.

The first movement has three themes, all arch-shaped and reminiscent of Hungarian folk-melodies. The development section starts solo viola, extracts the utmost from two elements of the first theme, and rises to a fine climax, which subsides gradually into the recapitulation. Bartok now presents a gentler version of the opening, then reworks and varies his three themes, bringing them all together in the coda.

The second movement owes much to Bartok's trip to Algeria in 1913. He presents two energetic themes in quick succession: the repeated minor thirds and drum-like accompaniment of the second theme clearly indicate its Arabian origin. Both ideas are then juxtaposed in a rondo structure, though varied on each reappearance, often capriciously with sudden changes of speed, pitch, and even rhythm. An extraordinary effect is produced on muted strings at the end of the movement when both themes are mingled in a very soft and fast metamorphosis of their essential elements.

The unusual procedure of ending a string quartet with a slow movement was characteristic of some of Bartok's other works at this time of war. The

melodic material is related to that of the first two movements, but it is the desolate mood of the piece that makes such a deep impression. A series of episodes represents an ebb and flow – profound with renewal of hope and energy, Finally, we are left lamenting as the music dies away in despair – two bare pizzicato chords on the viola and cello. resignation alternates

(INTERVAL)

Quartet in A minor, op.51 no.2

BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo

Andante moderato

Quasi Minuetto, moderato; Allegretto vivace

Allegro non assai

For twenty years Brahms was encouraged by his friends Robert and Clara Schumann and the violinist Joseph Joachim to write string quartets, but it was not until ; Joachim's artistic motto was 1873 that the two Op.51 quartets were finished, performed and published. The Joachim Quartet performed this quartet in Berlin on October 18th. 1873. Brahms paid tribute to Joachim in the first two bars of the first movement – the opening theme included three notes F,A and E. Joachim's artistic motto was *Frei aber einsam* (Free but lonely). A motif that is significant throughout the movement.

The *Andante* starts without the second violin – a sonorous trio in A major in the lower register, that establishes a mood of tranquillity. A later episode provides contrast with dramatic gestures and tremolo accompaniment. Changes of key vary the opening theme until the cello reintroduces it in A major.

The third movement starts as an easy-going, laid-back minuet, but introduces a livelier trio section, changing both key and metre. Brahms often varied his third movements to re-work the classical model of minuet (or scherzo) and trio.

The energetic finale opens with a spiky theme and continues with a lyrical second subject that merges into a third, robust section full of sweeping arpeggios. These three ideas all reappear until the Coda begins hesitantly before the final *Piu vivace* scamper to the finishing line.

John Upson