

PENRITH MUSIC CLUB

MONDAY NOVEMBER 21ST, 2022

in Penrith Methodist Church

Concert sponsored by John Upson

PAVEL HAAS
STRING QUARTET

Veronika Jarùsková (violin) Marek Zwiebel (violin)

Karel Untermüller (viola) Peter Jarùsek (cello)

HAYDN ***Quartet in G major, op.76, no.2***

PROKOFIEV ***Quartet no.2 in F major, op.92***

PAVEL HAAS ***Quartet no.2, op.7***
From the Monkey Mountains

We are pleased to welcome the internationally-acclaimed Pavel Haas String Quartet in a concert which was originally planned for 2020. The quartet is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its foundation by the violinist Veronika Jarùsková and the violist Pavel Niki, who played with the quartet until 2016. The concert has been generously sponsored by John Upson, our Vice-President and former Secretary, whose contribution to the furtherance of string playing in Cumbria over the last fifty years has been immeasurable. There will be an interval of 15 minutes.

Quartet in G major, op.76 no.2

HAYDN
(1732-1809)

Allegro con spirito
Adagio sostenuto
Menuetto (Presto)
Allegro ma non troppo

In August 1795 Haydn returned to Vienna from England from his second visit as an acclaimed celebrity, the most renowned composer in Europe. The following year the Hungarian aristocrat Count Joseph Erdödy commissioned from Haydn what turned out to be his final completed set of six quartets. When Haydn's friend Charles Burney heard them in London he enthused: "I never received more pleasure from instrumental music: they are full of invention, fire, good taste and new effects and seem the product, not of a sublime genius who has written so much and so well already, but one of highly-cultivated talents who had expended none of his fire before."

A three-chord call to attention introduces the first theme on the cello – a quasi-folk tune taken up in turn by all four instruments. A jaunty second theme adds to the genial mood until the development attaches a counter-subject to the first theme (viola and second violin) and Haydn works over his ideas with serious intent.

The Adagio proceeds in stately manner, starting in the Quartet's lower register. This spacious theme alternates with interludes of poignant dialogue between first violin and cello. By contrast the Menuetto returns to the village green – a rustic romp; the Trio relaxes into an enticing serenade for the first violin. The final Allegro is a weighty movement, opening unusually in G minor and driven by triplet quavers throughout. Haydn's exploration of extreme keys in the development creates mystery, but he eventually returns to G major and welcome sunlight. Haydn's final surprise is a flippant version of the main theme (first violin and pizzicato accompaniment) – a touch of irony after all the serious drama that has gone before?

Quartet no.2 in F major, op.92

Allegro sostenuto
Adagio

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
(1891-1953)

Allegro

Prokofiev wrote just two string quartets: the first in 1930, when living in the USA, commissioned by the Library of Congress in Washington, the second in 1941, when evacuated to Nalchik in the Caucasus following the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The local Arts Department recommended their collection of Kabardinian folk music to Prokofiev and his friend Sergei Myaskovsky. Both composers regarded the material as “very fresh and original” and Prokofiev soon took up the challenge with this quartet. He wrote: “I felt that the combination of new, untouched Oriental folklore with the most classical of classic forms, the string quartet, ought to produce interesting and unexpected results”. Myaskovsky did likewise with his Symphony-Suite on Kabardinian themes.

The first movement is based on three Kabardinian folk tunes. A rising four-note figure characterises the opening melody, played over a trudging accompaniment; the second is marked *marcato* – another stolid stamping dance; the third sings more freely until it pauses for breath. Prokofiev follows classical models by developing these ideas: the first violin proffers the four-note theme and all join in to discuss all three ideas. The first section returns to round off these refreshing, earthy images.

The *Adagio* gently ushers in a beguiling melody played in the cello’s upper register. It reappears throughout the Quartet with a flowing triplet accompaniment until the mood changes. A chirpy dance provides humorous contrast, but the languid theme renews the peace and tranquility of the opening.

The Finale is a rondo – various sections that come round and round. The viola and cello announce the first theme *pizzicato*. The first violin continues with a melody reminiscent of the first movement, outbreaks of energy break out at intervals with frantic activity and another oriental melody weaves its charm. Unusually, the cello is given a solo cadenza later in the movement – an opportunity to pause before the final review of this entertaining kaleidoscope of “untouched Oriental folklore”.

Quartet no.2 “From the Monkey Mountains”

PAVEL HAAS
(1899-1944)

Landscape

(*Andante*)

Cart, Driver and Horse	(<i>Andante; Piu mosso</i>)
The Moon and I	(<i>Largo e misterioso</i>)
A Wild Night	(<i>Vivace e con fuoco</i>)

Pavel Haas was born in Brno, Moravia and studied composition in the class of Leos Janáček at the Brno Conservatory. In the 1920s he became active in the Moravian Composers' Club, which organised performances of music by members and foreign contemporaries. His chamber music and many of his songs were performed, including this quartet from 1925. In 1941, following the German invasion, he was deported to Terezin, the show camp intended to persuade the outside world that the inmates were treated well. Along with his Jewish compatriots Hans Krasa, Gideon Klein and Victor Ullmann he and they continued composing until they all ended up in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

The Monkey Mountains refer to an area of the Moravian Highlands near Brno. Pavel Haas wrote that the quartet tried to “depict several powerful impressions brought about by a carefree summer holiday in the countryside”. Although each movement has a descriptive title, Haas disclaimed any explicit programme, pointing rather to impressions and effects within a clear formal design. Thus the first movement suggests serene countryside with a spacious melody and occasional bird calls, while recalling Janáček with its usage of folk music, piquant harmonies and repetitive rhythmic figurations.

The second movement initially upset some critics with its bucolic *glissandi* – rural transport problems it seems. An animated folksy episode alternates with the opening and has the final say in the *furioso* ending.

The third movement is a long-breathed nocturne, starting briefly with muted strings; the speed and dynamics increase as an *Appassionata* section is reached; the music gradually wanes until the solo viola fades into silence. Is the finale's wild night a problem with the weather or a spot of drunken revelry? For the first performance Haas wrote a percussion part to the finale – one player with drums, triangle, cymbals and wood block to add a touch of jazz. – but omitted the part when the quartet was published. Whatever the intention, the music is certainly

wild at times: the viola plays the first theme, a steady accented marching idea; a busier theme is more active but breaks off abruptly. A slow, calm folk tune creates an oasis of rest before the final fling.