

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 5th May 2019 at 3.00 pm

Consone Quartet

Agata Daraskaite *Violin*
Magdalena Loth-Hill *Violin*
Elitsa Bogdanova *Viola*
George Ross *Cello*

Formed at the Royal College of Music in London, the Consone Quartet is dedicated to exploring Classical and Early Romantic repertoire on period instruments. Winner of the 2016 Royal Over-Seas League Ensemble Prize in London, Consone was also awarded two prizes at the 2015 York Early Music International Young Artists Competition, including a place on the 'EEEmerging' Emerging European Ensembles Scheme associated with the Ambronay Festival in France and six other early music festivals across Europe.

Recent highlights include an acclaimed debut at London's Wigmore Hall, performances at Cadogan Hall, St James's Piccadilly, the Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace, and at the Cheltenham, Brighton Early Music, Lake District Summer Music, Buxton and King's Lynn Festivals, as well as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The Consone Quartet is rapidly gaining international recognition, performing in France, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Belgium (AMUZ in Antwerp), Italy and Switzerland, and in spring 2018 they toured in South America, performing across Bolivia and Peru.

The Consone Quartet's debut CD, featuring music by Haydn and Mendelssohn, was released on the Ambronay Label in October 2018, followed by a successful London launch kindly hosted by the Royal Over-Seas League. The album has gathered a number of glowing reviews, the most recent one being from the Strad Magazine.

The group regularly collaborates with other musicians, such as the Fitzwilliam String Quartet, members of the Hanover Band, Mahan Esfahani, Gillian Keith, Jane Booth, Ashley Solomon and Colin Lawson. Consone participated in the "Brighton Early Music Festival Live!" mentoring scheme, and in a number of Chamber Studio masterclasses at King's Place, London. In 2018 the quartet was selected to become a Concordia Foundation Artist.

"The textures were always clear and voice-leading immaculate" – The Strad



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Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743-1805)

String Quartet in E minor, Op.33, No.5, G211

- I *Allegro brillante*
- II *Allegro vivo – Menuetto – Allegro vivo*

The conventional view of Boccherini as one of the "other" classical composers, not to be mentioned in the same breath as Haydn, Mozart or J C Bach, could not be more wrong. As Ludwig Finscher remarked, "Among the major composers of the 18th Century, Boccherini is probably the one whom history has treated most unjustly. Musical research and musical practice are only slowly beginning to discover the other Boccherini."

Although Haydn receives much of the credit and praise for the invention and modernization of the string quartet, half a continent away in Madrid Luigi Boccherini was hard at work doing the same thing, totally independent of Haydn. He contributed nearly 100 quartets to the repertoire, and, like Haydn, strove to achieve an independence between the four parts, and to incorporate some soloistic features to the parts of every player. Whilst, in terms of pushing formal and harmonic restraints to their limits, Boccherini may not have been the innovator that Haydn was, he did not bind himself to the traditional four-movement format, often completing quartets with only two or three movements.

The six works of Opus 33 constituted Boccherini's ninth set of quartets, and belong to the type he called *quartettino*, or *opera piccolo*, as opposed to the *quartetto* or *opera grande*. The E minor, only about seven minutes in length, and composed in 1781 (the same year as Haydn's Opus 33 quartets), is most certainly *piccolo* but not *insignificante*, and bears the dark stamp of *Sturm und Drang*, the phenomenon of stressed minor key emotion which can be found particularly in the music of Haydn and CPE Bach. In the first movement this is contrasted with a second theme, with its churning cello arpeggios; and, in the second movement, with a two-part minuet in the tonic major.

With thanks to David Mulraney

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Quartet No. 10 in E flat major, Op.74, "The Harp"

- I *Poco adagio - Allegro*
- II *Adagio ma non troppo*
- III *Presto -*
- IV *Allegretto con variazioni*

Beethoven's String Quartet in E flat major, Opus 74, marks an important milestone in his compositional evolution; in it he acknowledges the stylistic and structural traditions established by the likes of Mozart and Haydn, whilst simultaneously experimenting with innovative compositional techniques. The quartet was dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz, to whom Beethoven's very first quartets, his Opus 18, had been dedicated a decade earlier. It was the first of Beethoven's string quartets to be published by itself without others in a set, establishing a pattern for all the later quartets, each of which was published separately.

Written in 1809, during Beethoven's so-called 'middle period', this was a time of severe political and

social turmoil in Europe. Beethoven's native Austria was under nearly constant siege from 1800 until 1814. In 1809, for the second time in four years, French troops invaded Vienna. This was a turbulent time for Beethoven personally, too. He had started to suspect he was going deaf and disclosed this secret to his friend, Wegeler, in a letter of June 1801. It was also around this time that Beethoven fell madly in love with Therese Malfatti, an Austrian musician and close friend, to whom he is thought to have proposed and been turned down. In spite of all of this, Beethoven produced some of his most beautiful and heroic works in this brief period, including six symphonies, two piano concertos, seven piano sonatas, his opera 'Fidelio', the Violin Concerto, the Triple Concerto and the string quartets of Opus 59, Opus 74 and Opus 95.

The first movement of 'The Harp', *Poco Adagio – Allegro*, opens with a slow and questioning introduction in which the contours of the first violin part provide the melodic seed for the rest of the movement. Segueing into an allegro section, pizzicato arpeggios passed between the players are what give the piece its nickname – 'The Harp'. The heroism of Beethoven's middle period is heard extensively in this movement, particularly in the dazzling coda.

The second movement is serene and hymn-like, described by an anonymous critic writing in 1811 as a 'sombre nocturne'. A beautiful *cantabile* melody in the major mode alternates with minor-key episodes and the expansive opening melody returns twice throughout the movement, each time more lavishly ornamented than before, ending with some sublime *espressivo morendo* chords. This is followed by an intense and fiery *Presto*, which moves into the final movement through a surprisingly gentle transition section. The finale is built on a cordial theme in E flat major, which forms the basis of a set of six charming variations. Much more in the classical style than the preceding movements, the outline of the theme in fact appears in one of Beethoven's earlier sketches for a love song.

INTERVAL 25 MINUTES

Tea and coffee at £1 per cup can be purchased from the Church Lane Tea Room, two doors down the road at 18 Church Street, just past the Old Plough Inn.

Specialist teas and coffees are also available at standard prices.

Please bring your drinks back to the church, to make space in the Tea Room for others.

Public toilets are in Place Lane, on the north side of the churchyard. The Church Lane Tea Room also has one toilet (for patrons only).

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

String Quartet No. 5 in E flat major, Op.44, No.3

- I *Allegro vivace*
- II *Scherzo: Assai leggiero vivace*
- III *Adagio non troppo*
- IV *Molto allegro con fuoco*

The three quartets of Opus 44 date from the years 1837-38, a particularly happy time for Mendelssohn, when he had attained international recognition and when the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, which he had been conducting since 1835, was considered to be the best in Germany.

His marriage and the birth of a son added to his pleasure. The numbering of these quartets does not conform to their order of composition and this one in E flat major was actually the second to be completed, in February 1838.

In many ways this is the most interesting of the three Opus 44 quartets. The first movement is one of Mendelssohn's longest, with a bold, dramatic opening with four fast notes leading to a long-held note. The main theme is well suited to development, and several well contrasted secondary ideas follow, which are then developed with a feeling of spontaneity. The recapitulation is brought in by the second violin followed by the final coda which is really another short development section.

If for nothing else, Mendelssohn will always be remembered for his scherzos, and here we have an excellent example, deeply characteristic of the composer. It has a blend of vivacity and imagination as a number of ideas, including a little fugato and a double fugue, are woven into an exquisitely light and delicate texture, opening with a sequence of rapid, fleeting notes which have been likened to hunters riding off into a magical forest.

The *Adagio* returns with a more serious approach, and harmonies which give it a decided feeling of poignancy and a solemn, expressive quality.

There is a brilliant, fiery *Allegro* for the last movement, incorporating a touch of humour in passages where one instrument or another simulates a mistake by overshooting the mark with a figure of three repeated notes and an octave leap. A quiet, cantabile passage brings a moment of contrast, but the feeling of vivacious exuberance prevails to the end.

Programme note courtesy of Making Music

Forthcoming events:

This is the last of our regular Chamber Concerts for the 2018-19 season. However, our additional Gala Concert on Saturday 29th June (see below) is not to be missed. Tickets are still available, and can be purchased at today's concert.

Saturday 29th June 2019, 7.30 pm, at St Leonard's Church, Seaford (note the day and start time)
Gala Concert: Melvyn Tan and Friends, playing Beethoven, Schubert, Debussy and Ravel. This is not part of our membership subscription series, but members of the Society receive a substantial discount on the ticket price, which includes a complimentary glass of wine or juice. Tickets are on sale now at the back of the church, and can also be purchased from our Treasurer, Paul Moore. Full-price tickets for non-members can also be purchased at Newberry Tully Estate Agents. All ticket sales will be subject to stocks remaining.

Sunday 23rd June 2019, 4.00 pm, at Bishopstone Parish Hall

The **Annual General Meeting** of Seaford Music Society will be held at Bishopstone Parish Hall, adjacent to St Andrew's Church, Bishopstone. Cream teas will be served from 3.45 pm. If you have not already done so, please pick up your invitation and agenda from the table at the back of the church. **Attendance at the AGM is restricted to members only, so please remember to bring your membership card with you.**

The programme for our 2019-20 concerts will be given to members of the Society at the AGM. It will be sent to members who are unable to attend, as soon as possible after the AGM. If you are not a member but would like to receive a copy of the brochure, please leave your name and address at the table at the back of the church, before you leave today.