

# Seaford Music Society

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 3.00 pm**

## **The Marmen Quartet**

Johannes Marmen	<i>Violin</i>
Laia Valentin Braun	<i>Violin</i>
Bryony Gibson-Cornish	<i>Viola</i>
Sinéad O'Halloran	<i>Cello</i>

Formed in 2013 at the Royal College of Music, the Marmen Quartet were holders of the Guildhall School of Music String Quartet Fellowship (2018-2020), and studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Hannover with Oliver Wille, as well as in London with Simon Rowland-Jones and John Myerscough (Doric Quartet). They were mentored by the late Peter Cropper and have received support from the Musicians Company / Concordia Foundation, the Hattori Foundation, Help Musicians and the Royal Philharmonic Society (Albert and Eugenie Frost Prize).

With a growing reputation for the courage, vitality and commitment of their performances, the Marmen Quartet are fast establishing themselves as one of the most impressive and engaging new talents in the chamber music arena. 2019 marked a year of significant achievement for the Quartet, with First Prizes at both the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition and Banff International String Quartet Competition, where they were also awarded the Haydn and Canadian Commission prizes. Other accolades include first prize at the Royal Overseas League Competition (2018) and awards at the International Joseph Joachim Chamber Music Competition.

The Marmen Quartet have performed at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Milton Court (Barbican), Palladium Malmö and Muziekgebouw Eindhoven. Other recent highlights have included performances across the UK as part of Music in the Round's 'Bridge Scheme' (2015-17), as well as regular appearances at the Wiltshire Music Centre where they are Young Quartet in Association. The Quartet perform regularly across Sweden, and 2020 saw their first complete cycle of Beethoven String Quartets for Musik I Syd. Festival engagements have taken the Quartet to the Amsterdam String Quartet Biennale, Hitzacker, Lockenhaus, Edinburgh Fringe, and the Barcelona String Quartet Biennale.

Highlights of the current season include debuts at the Berlin Philharmonie, Boulez Saal and Stockholm Konserthuset, as well as extensive European tours including performances in Frankfurt, Hannover, Heidelberg and Leipzig. Festival engagements once again take the Quartet to the Amsterdam String Quartet Biennale, as well as the Gulbenkian Quartet Biennale and the Mecklenburg Vorpommern Festival. In the US the Quartet undertake the first visit of their two-year residency at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, a relationship that will see the Quartet work closely with the University's students as well as giving performances and developing new projects across its residencies. Other future plans include tours to Japan, New Zealand and Canada.



Seaford Music Society gratefully acknowledges the support of Newberry Tully Estate Agents

*Seaford Music Society, registered charity no. 295569*

## Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

### String Quartet in B-flat major, Op.64, No.3

- I *Vivace assai*
- II *Adagio*
- III *Menuetto: Allegretto*
- IV *Finale: Allegro con spirito*

The few string quartets that were written before those of Haydn are of little musical importance. Previous chamber music was written for four stringed instruments, with the addition of a double bass and a harpsichord to fill out the necessary harmonies. Haydn gradually developed a style of true quartet writing throughout his whole life.

The set of six quartets Op.64, of which this is the third, were written in 1790. They were among the last works that Haydn wrote as musical director and composer to Prince Nicholas at the court of the Esterházy family before the Prince died in September 1790. His heir had little interest in music and retired Haydn, who then embarked on his first visit to England.

Haydn and Mozart met in about 1781 and their mutual influence became apparent soon after. In 1785 Mozart dedicated his six great quartets to Haydn, and from that date onwards the Mozartian influence is apparent in Haydn's work. The chromatic line is very evident from then until Mozart's death, when Haydn reverted to using the diatonic scale.

Haydn's wit and humour are always to be found in these relatively lighthearted works. The first movement of Op.64 No.3 begins with a statement of unexpected length and ends with a telescoped recapitulation. A common new feature of four of the Op.64 quartets was the appearance of lyric slow movements in the form of a broad melody, a minor middle section, and an ornamental *da capo*. The third movement, whose minuet is ternary in design, also surprises the listener with a passage of trills that seem to be in the wrong place. Then the boisterous *Finale* starts with a paradox – a cadence – and, after following the sonata form quite strictly, the work ends as it began.

*Programme note by Linda Williams, courtesy of Making Music*

## György LIGETI (1923-2006)

### String Quartet No.1 (Métamorphoses nocturnes)

*Allegro grazioso – Vivace, capriccioso – Adagio, mesto – Presto – Andante tranquillo – Tempo di Valse, moderato, con eleganza, un poco capriccioso – Allegretto, un poco gioiale – Prestissimo*

Ligeti was born in Romania to Hungarian Jewish parents, and received his musical education there and in Budapest until 1944, when he was sent into forced labour and the rest of his family to the death camps (only his mother survived). He subsequently graduated in 1949 and continued his studies, becoming a teacher at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music from 1950 to 1956. He left Hungary following the uprising of 1956 and settled in Vienna. From there he became one of the outstanding composers of the avant-garde, his development of micropolyphony creating a web of sound used to great effect and known to millions through Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001 – A Space Odyssey*.

But this *First Quartet* was composed in 1953-4, in the stifling atmosphere of communist rule in the Eastern Bloc, where artists were cut off from developments in the West and there arose a culture of 'internal emigration' to 'closed rooms', where composers put their work in a 'bottom drawer', unperformed. The work was first performed at the Vienna Musikverein on 8 May 1958 by the Ramor Quartet.

Ligeti acknowledged Bartók's *Third* and *Fourth Quartets* as his inspiration, although he knew them only from the scores, since they were not permitted public performance. He describes the quartet (a twenty-minute, one-movement work) as a set of variations based on a motivic cell, heard at the very beginning and passed around the instruments and which returns after many transformations to close the work. Its language may be chromatic (the motivic cell is heard over murmured chromatic scales) but folk music traditions as well as Viennese refinement also play their part.

At the same time, Ligeti is already exploring the range of sounds and techniques of string players – *glissandi*, snap *pizzicato*, harmonics and playing near the bridge (*sul ponticello*) to produce other-worldly sounds – while he uses the full range of dynamics, registers and combinations of instruments, answering, following each other or in unison.

Silences create dramatic effect and sudden contrasts are extreme. Sinuous lines turn into strong rhythms. Single melodic lines overlap, grow together, then take off like the wind. There is eerie, delicate whispering, while a tipsy Viennese waltz has its pseudo-gentility interrupted by a rustic dance. But as the piece turns full circle, first the viola, then the first violin and cello return to the opening, full of sadness and regret in a moving conclusion.

*Programme note by Janet Upward, courtesy of Making Music*

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### INTERVAL 15 MINUTES

There is a toilet in the lobby at the back of the church.

Please note that no refreshments will be available at this concert.

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## Salina FISHER (b.1993)

### Heal

Award-winning composer Salina Fisher draws inspiration from her interactions and surroundings, and the natural world of her native New Zealand. A fascination with the sensuality of sound, and the cultural traditions of her Japanese and New Zealand heritage, inform her music. With experiments in unusual timbres, harmonies and colour, Salina creates music that is "astonishingly evocative" (*Dominion Post*) with "an exceptional craft" (*NZ Herald*).

An accomplished violinist as well as a composer, Salina also brings to her works an intimate understanding of the physicality of instrumental performance, together with a deep knowledge of traditional chamber and orchestral repertoire.

"Heal" was written for the Marmen Quartet in 2020 and commissioned by Chamber Music New Zealand for a national tour. During a year of collective and personal challenges, Salina became interested in the process of healing and its relation to music making. Can composing be part of a healing process? What does it mean to share physical space and sound? This piece is a reflection on these kinds of questions and seeks to find space for breath and unity.

## Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)

### String Quartet no.1 in C minor, Op.51, No.1

- I *Allegro*
- II *Romanza: poco Adagio*
- III *Allegretto molto moderato e comodo*
- IV *Allegro*

Growing up under the shadow of Beethoven, Brahms hesitated to compose either a symphony or a string quartet because he feared adverse criticism and the inevitable comparisons that would follow. He destroyed some twenty earlier drafts of string-quartets before he finally completed his first pair, published as Op.51. He need not have worried: both are masterpieces and both are structurally perfect. The first versions of these quartets date from about 1865, but he continued to revise them both until their publication in 1873.

Brahms modelled this first Quartet on Beethoven's Op.59 (*Razumovsky*) Quartets. The themes in the first movement dominate the whole work; their recurrence in other movements integrates the whole quartet.

The opening *Allegro*, in sonata form, begins with a rising, dotted rhythm over a pulsating accompaniment. Each new theme evolves logically from its predecessor, and thick, quasi-orchestral textures dominate the whole movement. The simpler texture of the ensuing *Romanze*, in which all the themes are derived from the opening *Allegro*'s main theme, masks the movement's extremely complex structure. Brahms includes some ravishingly beautiful string writing.

The *Allegretto* comprises a scherzo and trio. The scherzo's main theme is derived from the central section of the *Allegro*'s first theme; the trio is a *Ländler* – an imitation of an Austrian peasant dance. The bustling *Allegro* finale brings together all the themes and structural components of the entire work. The energetic coda that concludes the movement includes a minimally changed recall of the Quartet's opening subject.

*Programme note by Ted Wilks, courtesy of Making Music*

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### Our next concert

#### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022, 3.00 pm, at The Grand Hotel, King Edward's Parade, Eastbourne**

A special extra concert (not part of our regular series), featuring the London Mozart Players with Howard Shelley (piano), playing chamber music by Mozart, Beethoven and Hummel. Members £15, non-members £20 (under 26 free). Optional Cream Tea £10. Tickets must be purchased in advance, from our Treasurer, Paul Moore, who will be in the foyer at the back of the church during the interval and at the end of this concert.

Membership of Seaford Music Society, which grants you free entry to the remainder of this season's regular concert series, can also be purchased from Paul, in the foyer at the back of the church. The cost of your ticket for today's concert will be credited towards your membership subscription if you join now.

### **Additional benefits for members of Seaford Music Society**

Receive a 20% discount (£15 reduced to £12) when attending **Uckfield Music Club** and **Haywards Heath Music Society** concerts. Simply produce your Seaford Music Society membership card when you pay at the door. Details of the concerts can be found on each organisation's website:

Uckfield Music Club ([www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk](http://www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk))  
Haywards Heath Music Society ([www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk](http://www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk))