

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 9th October 2022 at 3.00 pm

The Coull Quartet

Roger Coull	<i>Violin</i>
Philip Gallaway	<i>Violin</i>
Jonathan Barritt	<i>Viola</i>
Nicholas Roberts	<i>Cello</i>

Formed in 1974 by students at the Royal Academy of Music under the guidance of renowned quartet leader Sidney Griller, the quartet rapidly achieved national recognition, and were appointed Quartet-in-Residence by the University of Warwick in 1977, a post which they held for over forty years. The quartet, which still includes two of its founder members, has performed and broadcast extensively throughout the UK, and has made tours of Western Europe, the Americas, Australia, China, India and the Far East.

Since the mid-1980s the Coull Quartet has made well over 30 recordings featuring a wide selection of the repertoire closest to their hearts, from the complete Mendelssohn and Schubert quartets, to 20th century and contemporary British chamber music. Their CD of quartets by Maw and Britten on the Somm label received universal acclaim: in addition to being featured in 'Editor's Choice' in *The Gramophone*, it was also described as the 'Benchmark Recording' by *BBC Music Magazine*.

Their recordings of music by Sibelius, Ian Venables and Alan Ridout have received many excellent reviews in the major musical publications, as have their two most recent Somm recordings, 'Treasures from the New World' with pianist Clelia Iruzun, and 'On this Shining Night', a collection of works for voice and string quartet, performed by Roderick Williams, James Gilchrist and Sophie Bevan.

Their impressive and wide-ranging list of commissions from Sally Beamish, Edward Cowie, Joe Cutler, David Matthews, Nicholas Maw, Robert Simpson and Howard Skempton includes string quartets, quintets with piano or wind instruments, works with solo voice or choir, and even a composition for quartet and table tennis players.

For more information visit: www.coullquartet.com



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Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

String Quartet No.16 in E-flat, K.428

- I *Allegro non troppo*
- II *Andante con moto*
- III *Menuetto: Allegro*
- IV *Allegro vivace*

Mozart's E flat major Quartet, K.428, is one of the set of six dedicated to Haydn. Completed by the end of July 1783, its genesis dates from two years earlier when Mozart first met Haydn and was able to hear some of his quartets. The meeting had a profound effect on the young composer, and he wrote the six quartets to pay homage to the older man. The first performance of this quartet is thought to have been given on 15 January 1785, at Mozart's Vienna apartment, with the composer playing the viola. Haydn was present at the performance, and it brought forth his famous remark to Mozart's father, Leopold: "Before God, and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me, either in person, or by name".

Although concise and compact, this quartet is reflective and pensive in mood. To open the first movement, all instruments play a unison melody in octaves, to be followed by a warmer, harmonised passage, before the first theme returns, loud and with romantic-sounding chords. First violin and viola announce the second theme, and its canonic entries in the development section should be noted. The movement ends without a coda.

The *Andante* is striking for its outpouring of feeling, its chromaticism, its leaps of a major seventh – the result of semitone steps being shifted an octave – and the frequent use of suspensions which give the music a sense of urgency.

A forceful rhythmic impulse is provided by the energetic opening of the *Menuetto*, which proceeds with an obvious swing until superseded by the smoother, rather melancholy strains of the central trio.

Cheerful good humour marks the final *Allegro*. In an unusual *Rondo* form, the three appearances of the main theme are varied, with more lyrical, contrasting episodes occurring between them. Attractive tunes, unexpected silences, varied dynamics and a witty treatment suggest Haydn's influence.

Programme note by John Dalton, courtesy of Making Music

Heitor VILLA-LOBOS (1887-1959)

String Quartet No.1

- I *Cantilena: Andante*
- II *Brincadeira: Allegretto scherzando*
- III *Canto Lírico: Moderato*
- IV *Cançoneta: Andantino quasi allegretto*
- V *Melancolia: Lento*
- VI *Saltando como un Saci: Allegro*

Heitor Villa-Lobos, Brazil's best-known composer, is regarded as one of the most important of the 20th century. Whilst many of his works for orchestra or voice and instruments are widely performed, his chamber music is virtually unknown outside of Brazil. This is a great pity, as many masterworks are to be found among his seventeen string quartets, three piano trios and several other chamber compositions. Villa-Lobos once stated, "I love to write string quartets. One could say it is a mania." He claimed to have learned quartet technique from having studied the quartets of Haydn.

Villa-Lobos was born in Rio de Janeiro. His father was an amateur musician, and much of what he learned was from hearing and taking part in the chamber music evenings held at his home. He learned to play the cello, clarinet and guitar, and attended the Conservatorio de Musica, where he studied with Alberto Nepomuceno, then Brazil's leading composer. Afterwards, for a decade, beginning in 1905, Villa-Lobos explored the native and folk melodies of interior Brazil, paying special attention to the melding of African with Portuguese melody. Between 1916 and 1920 he was greatly influenced by developments in modern French music, thanks to a visit to Brazil by Darius Milhaud and Sergei Diaghilev among others.

String Quartet No.1 dates from 1915 and is unlike any of his others. It is a folkloric suite of six pieces, alternately lyrical and dancelike, nostalgic and happy. Its language is romantic, and its structure is deliberately simple. Four of the movements are virtually monothematic; the third and fifth are in ternary song form. A Cantilena, with the character of a serenade, establishes a songlike mood at the outset. This is followed by Brincadeira, a lively Brazilian polka. Canto lírico is expressive and contemplative, or perhaps tinged with irony and meant as a caricature of the romantic aria. A more animated Cançoneta follows. Nostalgia pervades Melancolia, the quartet's most fully developed and true slow movement. Finally, Saltando como um Saci, roughly translatable as Jumping Like an Imp, is a fugal dance with a catchy tune. The imp refers to Saci Perere, a mythical, one-legged black dwarf, who wears a red cap, frequents jungle areas, and delights in frightening people.

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INTERVAL 15 MINUTES

There are toilets in the lobby at the back of the church, and downstairs via the stairs beside the stage. We shall not be serving refreshments during the interval, but we warmly invite you to join us downstairs **after** the concert for tea or coffee.

Samuel COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875-1912)

Serenade, from Five Fantasiestücke, Op.5

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in London, the product of a mixed-race marriage, his father, a doctor, being an African from Sierra Leone, and his mother a white Englishwoman. His father returned to Africa when Samuel was a small boy, and he was brought up by his mother in Croydon.

His musical talent showed itself early, and he was admitted to study the violin at the Royal College of Music, where he eventually concentrated on composition. His teacher was the renowned composer Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. Coleridge-Taylor and his compositions gained considerable fame during his lifetime. His oratorio *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* for a time became as popular as Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. He made several visits to the United States because of his interest in American Negro cultural life. His fame was such that on one visit he was invited to the White House by Theodore Roosevelt.

The five Fantasy Pieces (or Fantasiestücke, to use the German name first coined by Schumann) were composed in 1898, several years before the famous Cobbett Fantasy Competitions. The tradition of fantasy pieces was well-established by the time Coleridge-Taylor came to compose his. They were to consist of a set of character pieces, each of a different mood and type. The Serenade – the second of the five pieces – is quite lyrical, with each phrase elided seamlessly in to the following one.

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Antonin Leopold DVOŘÁK (1833-1897)

String Quartet in F, Op.96 "The American"

- I *Allegro ma non troppo*
- II *Lento*
- III *Molto vivace*
- IV *Vivace ma non troppo*

In September 1892 Dvořák took up his duties as Director of the American National Conservatory of Music in New York. The following year he went to spend the summer in the small farming community of Spillville, Iowa, the home of Czech immigrants who preserved the language, customs and culture of their homeland. In a mood of quiet relaxation he sketched this quartet between 5 and 11 June 1893, and it was first played by Dvořák and three students on 23 June. It instantly became one of his most popular works. There is some debate over whether Dvořák actually used Indian or native American tunes, but the general feeling is that he absorbed the feel of folk music, both European and American, into his own unique gift of melody.

The *Allegro* begins with a jaunty viola tune against a shimmering background, with the second subject a more tentative and restrained theme from the first violin. Both are based on the five-tone pentatonic scale (the black keys of the piano) which is a common basis for many of the world's folk tunes. The development is devoted to the first theme until a *fugato* based on the second subject leads to the restatement of both.

The slow movement is one of Dvořák's most heartfelt melodies, mainly on first violin and cello, with second violin and viola keeping up a busy flowing accompaniment. The movement is like an arch, building gradually to an impassioned climax before fading to a subdued close on the cello.

The *Scherzo* is a vigorous piece which features a theme adapted by Dvořák from actual birdsong he heard in the woods of Iowa, said to be that of the Scarlet Tanager. The rhythmic pattern of the *Finale* has been likened to Indian drumming, around which the first violin dances a joyful tune. This is followed by a string of high-spirited melodies and then a chorale-like tune. A shortened restatement of what came before leads to a resolute, cheerful ending.

Programme note courtesy of Making Music

Do come and join us downstairs after the concert for tea or coffee.

Our next concert

Sunday 6th November 2022, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church

Philippa Davies and friends perform trios for flute, cello and piano, including works by Haydn, Weber, Villa-Lobos and Paul Reade.

Membership of Seaford Music Society, which grants you free entry to this season's concert series, can be purchased from our Treasurer, Paul Moore, 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 £3 discount on your ticket when attending Uckfield Music Club, Haywards Heath Music Society and Nicholas Yonge 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): tickets £12 instead of £15 *subject to review*

Haywards Heath Music Society (www.haywardsheathmusicociety.org.uk): tickets £12 instead of £15

Nicholas Yonge Society (www.nyslewes.org.uk): tickets £17 instead of £20