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A “virtual” Music in Adderbury Concert recorded at the Parish Church of Ss Peter and Paul, Deddington

Released on Sunday November 8, 2020 at 11:15

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We very much hope you enjoy this concert. If you would like to become a patron of Music in Adderbury or make a donation to help support our “virtual” concerts, please get in touch with us via the contact page at musicinadderbury.com.

This is the second of the concerts recorded in Deddington and normally streamed from our YouTube channel at 19:15 on Sunday evenings over the following months. (In this case, however, the video was streamed from 11:15 on Sunday morning for the benefit of the Oxford Coffee Concerts audience, who would otherwise not have had a concert to enjoy at that time. All these recordings will be available for a limited time after release as well and, of course, there are more to come.)

The Carducci Quartet

- **Haydn: String Quartet in E flat major, op 33, no 2 (“The Joke”)**
- **Glass: String Quartet no 2 (“Company”)**
- **Beethoven: String Quartet no 11 in F minor, op 95 (“Serioso”)**

Matthew Denton (violin)
Michelle Fleming (violin)
Eoin Schmidt-Martin (viola)
Emma Denton (cello)

An internationally renowned Anglo-Irish string quartet based in the UK, the versatile and award-winning Carducci String Quartet have performed everything from brand new quartets, classic works by Haydn, complete Shostakovich cycles, and even partnered with folk-rock icon Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull. Founded in 1997, the ensemble have won numerous international competitions, including Concert Artists Guild International Competition USA 2007 and First Prize at Finland’s Kuhmo International Chamber Music Competition 2004. In 2016, they took home a Royal Philharmonic Society

Award for their performances of cycles of the complete Shostakovich Quartets. This Shostakovich15 project was accompanied by a recording of quartets 4, 8 and 11 for Signum

Classics, to which the quartet added a further volume in spring 2019 (1,2 and 7) acclaimed by Gramophone Magazine for its “...athletic, upfront performances, clear in texture, forthright in tone and bold in articulation.” The quartet have released a bevy of acclaimed recordings on their own label, Carducci Classics, as well as Signum Classics, and their Naxos recordings of Philip Glass Quartets have had over six million plays on Spotify.

Described by The Strad as presenting “a masterclass in unanimity of musical purpose, in

Continued from Page 1

which severity could melt seamlessly into charm, and drama into geniality”, the Carducci Quartet are recognised as one of today’s most successful string quartets. Performing over 90 concerts worldwide each year, the quartet also run an annual Carducci festival in Highnam, Gloucester and are quartet in residence at Dean Close in Cheltenham, where they teach young string players and coach chamber music.

The Carducci Quartet appear at prestigious venues across the globe including the Wigmore Hall, London; National Concert Hall, Dublin; Tivoli Concert Hall, Copenhagen; The Frick Collection and Carnegie Hall, New York; Library of Congress and John F Kennedy Center, Washington DC; St Lawrence Center for the Arts, Toronto; and Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. Festival residencies include Cheltenham, Ryedale, Lichfield, Presteigne, Kilkenny, Snape Proms, and West Cork.

In a year blighted by the Covid-19 they planned in 2020 to celebrate Beethoven’s 250th anniversary with various immersive projects, including a weekend of concerts at London’s Barbican Centre. This season was also to include a return to LSO St Luke’s, tours to Spain and Germany, and chamber music

projects with clarinettists Julian Bliss and Emma Johnson, pianists Martin Roscoe and Kate Whitley, oud player Joseph Tawadros, and the Navarra Quartet.

Highly celebrated for their interpretation of contemporary repertoire, the Carducci Quartet have curated many diverse projects and are regularly invited to perform new works. Recent and upcoming premieres include works by Simon Rowland-Jones, Gavin Higgins, Karl Jenkins, Jonny Greenwood and Kate Whitley. In 2015 they curated projects around Philip Glass and Steve Reich as part of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award winning “Minimalism Unwrapped” at Kings Place in London.

Education is an important element of the Carducci Quartet’s work, earning them a place on the Royal Philharmonic Society Award shortlist for their family concert “Getting the Quartet Bug!”. The Carducci Music Trust was set up to support their work in schools and with young musicians. They are also Carne Trust Ensemble in Residence at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London and perform a number of school concerts each year supported by the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust.

String Quartet in E flat major, op 33 no 2 (“Joke”) by Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

1. Allegro moderato; 2. Scherzo. Allegro; 3. Largo e sostenuto; 4. Finale. Presto.

With the six quartets of Op 33, written in 1781, Haydn had his first opportunity to follow up the hard-won technical mastery of his Op 20 set of nearly ten years before. He wrote to a number of potential subscribers to advertise their impending publication, commenting that they

were “written in a new and special way”. There has been a lot of speculation as to what he meant by this. It may have been no more than shrewd salesmanship. But there is a sense that in the Op 33 quartets Haydn no longer has anything to prove, whether to himself, to his

Continued from Page 2

players or to his listeners. The emotional range is less extreme than in Op 20, and the strenuous counterpoint of the earlier set, particularly the fugal finales, is not such a prominent feature. In Op 33 his quartet writing reaches a new level of subtlety and sophistication, a fact which he seems to have acknowledged by two significant changes of title. He no longer uses the title 'divertimento' that he had given all his earlier pieces for the medium, but 'quartet'. Also, the quick inner movements are now headed 'scherzo' or 'scherzando' ('joke' or 'jokingly') instead of 'minuet'. While the movements themselves remain firmly in Haydn's earlier minuet style, the change of title alerts us to the way his characteristic wit marks the set as a whole, with jokes and surprises liable to pop up at any point.

One sign of Haydn's increasingly subtle handling of the medium is the way clear distinctions between melody and accompaniment often break down. The little two-note figure which kicks off the opening theme of Op 33 No 2 may seem no more than an insignificant upbeat gesture at first, but it is

soon insinuating itself into principal and accompanying parts at every turn, casting the apparently simple song-like opening theme in an increasingly sophisticated light.

The second movement is one for which the title 'minuet' would have been totally inappropriate. Its stamping peasant dance is rustic to its boots, with a central trio section in the style of the country dance known as the *ländler*. At one point the first violin part has some wide melodic leaps, for which Haydn instructs the player to stay on the same string; the resulting slides from one note to the next add to the air of cheerful lack of refinement.

The ruminative two-part writing for the viola and cello which introduces the slow movement sets in motion the music's purposefully meditative flow. Twice this comes up against a chordal figure, which introduces a more rhetorical note with its syncopations and sharply contrasted dynamics.

The finale is an innocent-sounding frolic full of simple high spirits. So far, so guileless, but Haydn has one of his most outrageous trick endings up his sleeve. However well you think you know the piece, it can still catch you out.

String Quartet no 2 ("Company") by Philip Glass (born 1937)

Besides three student works, which he withdrew, Glass has to date composed eight string quartets. The first was written in 1966, soon after he finished his studies with the great teacher Nadia Boulanger in Paris, though it received its first performance only in 1986. The next four were composed between 1983 and 1991; Nos 6, 7 and 8 followed in 2013, 2014 and 2018.

Dating from 1983, No 2 takes its title from a short novel by Samuel Beckett, which the actor Frederick Neuman adapted for performance as a stage monologue. With Beckett's agreement he commissioned a score from Glass, and Beckett indicated four points in the text where music would be particularly effective. Glass later commented: "Not surprisingly these four short movements have turned out to be a thematically cohesive work which now, as my

Continued from Page 3

String Quartet Number 2, has taken on a life of its own.”

The first and third movements are moderately paced; the second and fourth are more incisively rhythmic, though the fourth ends inconclusively.

String Quartet in F minor, op 95 by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1. Allegro con brio; 2. Allegretto ma non troppo; 3. Allegro assai vivace ma serio; 4. Larghetto – allegretto agitato – allegro.

1810 was one of Beethoven's least productive years. Beside the F minor Quartet, the only major works he completed were the music for Goethe's play Egmont, and the Piano Trio in B flat, Op 97 ('Archduke').

The quartet is often grouped with the three 'Rasumovsky' Quartets, Op 59, and the Quartet Op 74, as a set representing Beethoven's so-called 'middle period', but it is just as much a forerunner of the remarkable series of quartets he produced in his last years.

Its most immediately striking characteristic is its extraordinary density and compactness. Where the first 'Razumovsky' Quartet is laid out on an unprecedentedly expansive scale, Op 95 lasts just over half as long. That density is summed up by the barely-controlled vehemence of the furiously punchy unison opening figure. But this and the two gentler, more lyrical ideas that follow hardly have a chance to make their mark against the seething background activity, as Beethoven compresses the music's proportions almost out of recognition. It all flashes by with such bewildering speed that the conventional landmarks of development and recapitulation scarcely have time to register.

The slow movement offers serious thought as a counterbalance. A stealthy descending scale figure on the cello introduces a flowing, lyrical

theme, leading to a rather melancholy fugue, starting on the viola. The cello plays the scale idea three times, each time a tone lower than before, and the fugue starts again, now with an airy staccato countersubject beginning on the first violin, while the viola makes two attempts at turning the fugue theme upside-down. A return to the opening music is extended to form a substantial closing section.

Edgy rhythms characterise the scherzo, full of a fierce, driving energy scarcely less intense than that of the first movement. In the contrasting trio section, heard twice, the first violin weaves a fine tracery over a slower moving theme on the other three instruments

The finale begins with a slow introduction that appears to take us back to the melancholy chromaticism of the second movement fugue. But then the first violin settles on a two-note figure, accelerating it into the main part of the movement. This is music full of restless urgency. But just as it appears to have run its course, Beethoven springs one of his most astonishing surprises. The mood flips in an instant, and the quartet ends with a racing, light-hearted allegro, positively Mendelssohnian in its lightness and delicacy.

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