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

Released on Sunday January 10, 2021 at 11:15

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This virtual concert will be available for a limited time after release.

The Adderbury Ensemble

David Le Page (violin), Chris Windass (violin), Rose Redgrave (viola)

Jane Fenton (cello), Kath Sharman (cello)

- **Schubert: String Quintet in C major, op 163, D 956**
- **Purcell: Fantasia Upon One Note in F major, Z 745**

Formed in 1986 by a group of the UK's finest young freelance musicians, the Adderbury Ensemble have always had a flexible line-up, mixing and matching different players to deliver performances primarily as quartets, quintets or small chamber groups and occasionally adding further instruments to play symphonies and concertos by the likes of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn or Brahms – with or without a conductor. Everyone who performs as part of the Adderbury Ensemble is an eminent instrumentalist, usually a principal player with one or more of the leading orchestras of Europe.

From their early years playing Sunday evening concerts in the beautiful village of

Adderbury in north Oxfordshire, the group have gone on to develop a global reputation. They perform regularly throughout Britain and other European nations and played their first concerts in the United States in Spring 2016. They also helped found the world-famous Oxford Coffee Concerts at the Holywell Music Room, the oldest purpose-built music venue in Europe. The Adderbury Ensemble have released ten recordings in their own right since their first CD was released in 1997, and individual members have recorded many more, either as soloists or as members of other groups.

More information:
www.adderburyensemble.com

String Quintet in C Major, op 163, D 956 by Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

**1. Allegro ma non troppo; 2. Adagio;
3. Scherzo. Presto - Trio. Andante Sostenuto; 4. Allegretto.**

No sketches for Schubert's String Quintet have survived, but it is believed that he began it in late September 1828. There was a performance in October, but Schubert, already in the grip of his final illness, never heard the work. It was not played again until 1850.

Unlike Mozart, whose string quintets add a second viola to the standard quartet, Schubert preferred a second cello, apparently attracted by the tone of the instrument in its tenor register, as well as the opportunities for exploiting the resulting rich bass sonority, and the possibilities for contrasting the pairs of violins and cellos, which this provided.

His fondness for moving between keys a semitone apart is an important feature of the work's long-term key-scheme, reflected in the middle section of the adagio and the scherzo's trio section, and in the shadow that falls over the very end of the finale.

The first movement is an expansive structure with a typically Schubertian ambivalence between major and minor keys. The vigorous first group of themes is followed by a yearningly tender duet for the cellos, repeated by the two violins. This opening section is rounded off by a curious little march theme whose apparent inconsequentiality is deceptive. With its crisp staccato character smoothed out it becomes the main preoccupation of the next section, leading eventually to the opening music returning in a moment that, far from being the usual climactic event, slips by almost unnoticed.

The second movement begins with a virtually motionless adagio in E major. Scored for the three inner instruments, with first violin and second cello providing an accompanying texture, it breathes an air of utter tranquillity. But as it draws to an end an ominous trill on all five instruments wrenches the music into F minor (a semitone higher) for the turbulent middle section. Although the basic tempo does not increase, its restless, agitated character gives the impression of the music quickening its pace. When the opening music returns, the more elaborate textures on the first violin and second cello almost mask the main theme, which now feels deeply poignant in the wake of the stormy central section.

The scherzo is a complete contrast, propelled by the driving energy of its dance rhythms. From C the music moves up to D flat (the semitone relationship again) for the central trio section, a strange, remote, solemn passage whose meditative profundity contrasts with the main part of the movement in every possible way.

The finale begins in an apparently easy-going frame of mind, with a particularly warm-hearted second main theme introduced by the first violin and first cello. But the mood is ambiguous, and as the music gathers pace in the final pages the atmosphere starts to feel edgy. The final cadence, with its unison falling semitone (D flat to C) undermines any sense of triumph.

Fantasia Upon One Note in F Major, Z 745 **by Henry Purcell (1659-1695)**

Purcell's Fantasias for strings mostly date from around 1680. They appear to represent a conscious summing-up of the viol consort tradition, one of the most popular forms of amateur domestic music-making in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is not known for certain why Purcell produced this set of fantasias over such a relatively short period, or indeed, which instruments he had in mind. By the 1680s the violin family had begun replacing viols as the preferred medium for instrumental music, and the taste for the meditative style typical of viol music declined as new French and Italian music became more popular. But the style of Purcell's Fantasias is closer to that of viols than violins with, in particular, no hint of the dance-like idioms characteristic of violin music. Purcell had been appointed Composer in Ordinary to Charles 2nd's violin band in 1677, but the king's tastes were limited to music that was straightforward, with a clear rhythm he could beat time to, and Purcell's fantasias would not have interested him in the slightest.

The generally accepted explanation is that Purcell wrote them, in part at least, as a way of teaching himself the contrapuntal composition techniques characteristic of English viol consort music. He appears to have studied thoroughly not only the work of his immediate predecessors such as Matthew Locke and John Jenkins, but also that of much earlier figures like Byrd and Gibbons.

But they are not merely exercises in musical antiquarianism, and it has been argued that their expressive intensity suggests that Purcell really did intend them to be played, most likely in the homes of musical connoisseurs rather than more public gatherings.

The manuscript in which the Fantasias have come down to us contains three works in three parts, nine four-part pieces (all of which are precisely dated, covering a period from June to August 1680), and the Fantasia upon One Note, in five parts, together with one in six parts and one in seven parts which both belong to the uniquely English genre of instrumental pieces known as '*In Nomine*', based on a fragment of plainsong melody.

In the Fantasia upon One Note Purcell added to the technical challenge he set himself in his other fantasias, by sounding a single note repeatedly throughout in an inner part, while the other four parts unfold above and below it. These take their starting-point from a five-note scale figure, both rising and falling. The pace (though not the underlying pulse) quickens as the notes become shorter, until a quiet, minor-key section marked 'Slow'. The music then moves quickly again, with the shortest notes of all, before the earlier speeding-up process goes into reverse, and the piece ends as gently as it began.

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