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

**Released on Sunday June 6, 2021 at 11:15**

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

### **The Tippett Quartet**

- **Beethoven: String Quartet no 7 in F major, op 59 no 1**
- **Brahms: String Quartet no 1 in C minor, op.51 no 1**

John Mills (violin)  
Jeremy Isaac (violin)  
Lydia Northcot (viola)  
Bozidar Vukotic (cello)

For some two decades, the celebrated Tippett Quartet have delighted critics and audiences alike with their animated, virtuosic performances and inspired and attractive programming. They have performed at the BBC Proms, Cheltenham Festival, Snape Proms and numerous festivals throughout the UK and abroad, including tours of Europe, Canada and Mexico. The quartet regularly appear at Kings Place, Purcell Room, Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Bridgewater Hall and frequently perform on BBC Radio 3.

Alongside a busy touring schedule, the Tippett Quartet pursue a keen interest in educational work with both schools and universities and were Ensemble in Residence at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University for 2012-13. In September 2015 they began an exciting

residency at Royal Holloway University, London.

Their broad and diverse repertoire highlights the Tippett Quartet’s unique versatility. They are equally at home with great Hollywood composers as they are with the giants of the classical world. With over twenty releases of recordings in their impressive catalogue, they have not only topped the classical charts but have also entered the pop charts and received universal critical acclaim. They have recorded for Naxos, EMI Classics, Signum, Classic FM, Guild, Real World, Dutton Epoch and Tocatta Classics.

The quartet have given numerous world and UK premieres including works by John Adams, Howard Goodall and Stephen Dodgson. 2013 saw them rediscover Gustav Holst’s Fantasy on British Folk Songs which, with the help of the eminent musicologist Roderick Swanston, they were able to complete and give a world premiere to on BBC Radio 3. They also worked with Peter

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Maxwell-Davies for a performance of his 9th Quartet at the South Bank, with Anthony Payne on his Quartet no1 for a live BBC broadcast from Spitalfields Festival, and with Hugh Wood on his String Quartet no 3 at the Presteigne Festival.

The Tippett Quartet have had the great pleasure of collaborating with inspirational soloists such as Kathryn Stott, Craig Ogden, Stephanie Gonley, Lawrence Power, Melvin Tan, Nick van Bloss, Julian Bliss and Ashley Wass. In 2011 they celebrated the anniversary of the iconic film composer Bernard Herrmann by commissioning an arrangement of Psycho and performing it alongside his clarinet quintet, Souvenir de

Voyages, and Echoes in a series of concerts and radio broadcasts. They have also performed with the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden and have premiered a newly written film score for Alfred Hitchcock's 1927 silent film classic The Lodger.

In 2014 they started a collaboration with some of the UK's finest jazz musicians with the launch of their "Close To You" project – a tribute to the album that Frank Sinatra made with the Hollywood String Quartet. In 2015 they continued this collaboration with "Hollywood Romance" featuring singer and broadcaster Claire Martin, OBE.

More information:  
<http://www.tippettquartet.co.uk>.

### **String Quartet no 7 in F major, op 59 no 1 by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

**1. Allegro; 2. Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando;  
3. Adagio molto e mesto; 4. Thème Russe. Allegro.**

Beethoven's three 'Razumovsky' Quartets, op 59, take their collective title from Count Andreas Razumovsky, Russian Ambassador to Vienna, who commissioned them in 1806. An amateur violinist, he maintained at his palace a resident quartet, in which he occasionally played second violin. He had enthusiastically supported Beethoven since the publication of his op 1 Piano Trios in 1795, and in commissioning a new set of quartets he no doubt expected him to build on the achievement of his six quartets, op 18, of 1798-1800, in developing the Viennese quartet tradition. The new quartets, though, left many listeners and players bewildered. In the intervening years Beethoven's musical language had experienced the volcanic upheavals of works such as the 'Eroica' Symphony and the 'Appassionata' Sonata, and the stylistic transformation they left in

their wake affected the new quartets as much as any of his other works.

In terms of its expanded time scale, the first of the 'Rasumovsky' quartets stands in a similar relationship to the op 18 quartets as the 'Eroica' does to Beethoven's first two symphonies. The spacious opening, with its broad, unhurried melody passing from cello to first violin tells us straight away that this is to be an epic journey, unprecedented in the quartet repertoire. The second theme begins quietly, low on the first violin before beginning a steady climb. The opening section culminates in a short, strange passage of dialogue between high- and low-register chords. The music seems to return to its opening, a conventional 'exposition repeat'. The cello, however, has other ideas, landing on an unexpected G flat that sends the music

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skittering off through all kinds of twists and turns. But for all the ingenuity with which Beethoven leads us around his network of garden paths, the music retains its air of both poise and lightly worn gravitas, which will give way to dry, deadpan humour in the second movement.

Again, the cello takes the lead, unaccompanied this time, setting up a distinctive repeated-note rhythmic pattern which is as important as the main theme itself (when Beethoven eventually decides to let us hear it). Instead of a conventional scherzo-and-trio design, this is a full-scale sonata-form movement of quirky originality, full of sudden stops and starts and abrupt silences, with the texture often pared down to a single melodic line broken up between two or more instruments.

Beethoven's inscription on the sketches for the third movement – "a willow or acacia over my brother's grave" – has given rise to considerable speculation. Was he thinking of Franz Georg, who had died in childhood, or another Ludwig, who had died before the composer was born? Could it even be a reference to Caspar Carl's recent marriage to

Johanna Reiss, a match Beethoven thoroughly disapproved of (after Caspar died in 1815, Beethoven began a protracted legal battle with Johanna over custody of her son, Karl)? Whoever was in his mind, the music is profoundly introspective ('mesto' = 'sad') with wide expressive leaps in its main theme. But at the end the mood evaporates as the first violin suddenly takes flight in a cadenza-like passage which leads without break into the finale.

Count Rasumovsky had asked Beethoven to include a Russian tune in each of the quartets. According to Gustav Nottebohm (the first Beethoven scholar to publish a detailed study of the composer's sketchbooks) the last movement of this quartet is based on a melody from a celebrated collection of Russian folk tunes edited by Ivan Prach and first published in 1790. But having chosen his tune Beethoven then bends it to his own purposes by running it at double speed and starting it in F major, only allowing it to return to its original modal D minor after the first four bars. It is not until the end that we hear it at its original speed, but then Beethoven dismisses the whole affair with an eight-bar presto passage of unanswerable finality.

**String Quartet no 1 in C minor, op 51 no 1  
by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)  
1. Allegro; 2. Romanze. Poco adagio;  
3. Allegretto molto moderato e comodo; 4. Allegro.**

Just as Brahms was wary about approaching the composition of his first symphony, so he was equally hesitant in producing his first string quartets. His claim that he destroyed twenty quartets before releasing one which completely satisfied him may be an exaggeration, but it illustrates the ruthless self-criticism which led him to withhold from performance and publication anything he felt

did not measure up to the great Viennese classical tradition that he was devoted to maintaining. The first chamber works for strings alone which he allowed to appear in public date from 1862 and 1866. These were his two sextets, a medium for which there were no important and inhibiting precedents. He began work on his first published string quartets, the two works of op 51, by at least

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1869; No 1, in fact, may well go back earlier than that, since Clara Schumann noted in her diary an occasion when Brahms played her “a string quartet in C minor” in September 1866. After being played through and revised a number of times the two op 51 quartets were finally completed in 1873.

The C minor Quartet’s powerfully dark expressive world is expressed in writing which is almost orchestral in its richness and density, and it is underpinned by a relentless constructional logic. The first movement is set in motion by an upward-striving theme that is then stopped in its tracks by two abrupt, detached chords, followed by an expressive phrase for the first and second violins in turn. That opening theme is the source of so much material to come – the melodic ideas that claim our immediate attention and the rhythmic figures which lurk in the background. The second main theme plays the expected role of lowering the emotional temperature, as the first violin circles round a group of just four notes for a while before taking flight in a series of wide soaring and dipping arcs. But even this idea is not new – it has evolved from that expressive phrase that followed the two abrupt chords. The music’s strenuous energy eventually exhausts itself in a written-out slowing down on the second violin and viola in the final bars.

The two middle movements relieve the emotional pressure without particularly lightening the mood. They are both lyrical, but it is a lyricism which leaves a good deal unspoken. The heading ‘Romanze’ for the second movement usually indicates, in an instrumental composition, a movement that is song-like and straightforward both melodically and structurally. Brahms’s Romanze is simple in outline, but in other respects it is anything but straightforward, particularly in the central section when a triplet rhythm takes over – all broken, hesitant phrases suggesting strong emotions behind the reticence.

As so often in Brahms’s four-movement symphonic structures, the third movement is not a quick scherzo but a moderately-paced, gently melancholy piece. In F minor, it has a quicker F major trio section hinting slightly at the gypsy in Brahms’s soul. The intermezzo-like nature of this movement throws our attention forward onto the propulsive finale. This is driven by the same determined energy as the first movement and makes several more or less veiled references to the quartet’s opening theme, launched by a compressed version of its initial phrase. The most overt of these references occurs right at the end, bringing the work full circle. Whatever emotional issues Brahms was struggling with in this quartet, they remain, for the time being, unresolved.

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