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DUDOK QUARTET AMSTERDAM

Thursday 21 April 2022, 7.30pm
Djanogly Recital Hall, Lakeside Arts

PROGRAMME

Suite from Castor et Pollux

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)
arr. Dudok Quartet

Sonata XXI con Tre Violini

Giovanni Gabrieli
(c.1554/1557-1612)

Ave Maria a 4 voci

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
(c.1525-1594)

String Quartet in E flat Op.20 No.1

Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Interval

String Quartet No.3 in B flat Op.67

Johannes Brahms
(1833-97)



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Overture, Gavotte & Chaconne from Castor & Pollux

Jean-Philippe Rameau

The string quartet as a genre could only emerge in a music scene that was very lively already. The music by Jean-Philippe Rameau which just preceded it fits the ensemble quite naturally. Having exceptional knowledge of his craft, Rameau always searched for ways to make his art more expressive while simultaneously developing the theoretical musical concept. Rameau developed a dispute with philosopher and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau about the antithesis of freedom of expression versus traditional rules and procedures. The very nature of this friction (and its synthetic resolve) formed the upbeat towards the operas-without-words that comprise the String Quartets Opus 20 by Joseph Haydn around 30 years after Rameau composed this opera.

Sonata XXI con Tre Violini

Giovanni Gabrieli

Brahms was one of the first to combine jobs as a composer-performer and teacher with that of a music-historical scholar. The poly-choral music by Giovanni Gabrieli, which Brahms studied extensively and conducted at the Singakademie concerts in 1864, left its traces throughout his own symphonic oeuvre. In his symphonies, Brahms is "sharing out the material between families or 'choirs' of instruments and creating a whole host of subtle antiphonies, internal conversations and harmonic tensions between these separate choirs" according to conductor John Eliot Gardiner. We chose to focus on Gabrieli's instrumental music. We gladly adopted his playful sonata as if it were a proto-string quartet, pre-dating the first historical string quartet by over 125 years!

Ave Maria a 4 voci

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina was among the first composers to regain prominence during the canonization of renaissance music in the 18th and 19th century. His fluent polyphonic style was universally adopted by European music theoreticians around one century after his death. As a consequence Palestrina's music was recognized with great clarity by wider 19th century audiences. As you can hear in his setting of Ave Maria for four voices, the counterpoint never loses its spiritual motivation.

String Quartet in E flat Op.20 No.1

Joseph Haydn

Allegro moderato

Menuetto: Allegretto

Affettuoso e sostenuto

Finale: Presto

Though they followed little more than a year after the six quartets Op.17, Haydn's Op.20 quartets of 1771 represent a qualitative advance in the medium which the composer was already making his own. An early edition of the set printed by Hummel around 1779 featured an engraving of the sun on the title page, and these works have been known ever since as the 'Sun' quartets. And not just known: they are among the first works by any composer to have enjoyed an unbroken performing tradition (by connoisseurs and amateurs) right up to the present day. They won the admiration of Mozart and Beethoven, and Brahms owned the autograph manuscripts for the set, later bequeathing them to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. Not for nothing did Tovey proclaim Op.20 as:

... a sunrise over the domain of sonata style as well as quartets in particular. Every page [...] is of historic and aesthetic importance, and although the total result still leaves Haydn with a long road to travel, there is perhaps no single or sextuple opus in the history of instrumental music which has achieved so much or achieved it so quietly.

Among the remarkable achievements in these works is Haydn's mastery of counterpoint, which comes boldly to the fore in the fugal finales of three of the set, numbers 2, 5 and 6.

Just as notable, however, is the full emancipation of the cello line from what had previously been in essence a continuo function to the status of a fully integrated member of the ensemble. This is evident from the very opening of the E flat quartet heard this evening: after the expansive opening theme (based entirely on a scalar figure), the cello interjects with a short fanfare that prepares for the consequent phrase. Towards the end of the exposition, the cello rises to the treble clef, leaving the viola to form the real bass line (it rises again to the treble in what proves to be a premature recapitulation — or 'false reprise' — later in the movement). This type of writing was unprecedented in Haydn's earlier quartets. In the minuet, placed second in the older style,

the trio provides a marked contrast in character, a difference felt all the more keenly for it being in the same key. This is a true trio for just three instruments, the viola joining in only for the final cadence which deftly prepares for the return of the minuet proper. In Haydn's other E flat quartets he uses the dominant, B flat, as the key for the slow movement. The present work, a compressed sonata form movement marked *Affettuoso e sostenuto* and *mezza voce*, is unique in that it uses the subdominant, A flat. Mozart's E flat 'Haydn' quartet, K428, seems to have paid conscious tribute to this work in using the same key scheme. The binary-form Finale includes a typically Haydnesque double-take in its opening bars, and makes a special feature of a series of syncopations as a sustained transitional idea in a sonata form structure with more than a hint of rondo style about it.

Mark Audus

String Quartet No.3 in B flat Op.67

Vivace

Andante

Agitato (Allegretto non troppo)

Poco Allegretto con Variazioni

Johannes Brahms

In his early years Brahms had learnt the core of his creative equipment from Mozart and Beethoven, in part by modelling movements on specific examples from his admired predecessors, and, in choosing his C major Piano Sonata to be his opus 1, he selected a work which at its outset references and builds on Beethoven's Hammerklavier and Waldstein sonatas. Yet, when it came to the genres of string quartet and symphony, Brahms found it altogether more problematic to be at once true to his heritage and expressively original. He withdrew and destroyed an early string quartet in B minor, which Schumann had liked; he remarked to a friend that he had already written 'over twenty others' before he published his first two quartets in 1873, and these appeared only after he had written them 'for the second time'. In its rigorous motivic and rhythmic urgency and retreat from lyricism, Brahms' First String Quartet, Op.51, No.1, is surely one of his most Beethovenian works. But by the time of the Third Quartet, composed in 1875, one can sense that he had become more comfortable, more relaxed, and distinctly also more Mozartean in his handling of the genre.

Indeed, his Third Quartet would seem to respond specifically to Mozart's Hunt Quartet. There are particular rhythmic, thematic, textural and structural resonances from Mozart's first movement in Brahms's, but this is no longer a case of modelling or quoting: the source-ideas are appropriated, reshaped and creatively assimilated within Brahms's distinctive mature style, for he was now entirely at ease with the texturally restricted and rarified medium of the quartet. The sonata-form first movement of Op.67 begins with a short-phrased theme in 6/8 metre based around the tonic arpeggio in a strong echo of Mozart's precursor work, but Brahms introduces early complication in hemiola cross-rhythms and in the melodic inversions and minor inflections of the bridge material. The multi-faceted second subject picks up these enrichments and consolidates them in the context of its own themes, now in part in the altered metre of 2/4 and impacting as a sublimated Polka. The development begins with a further new theme and includes marked contrapuntal intensification, both features Brahms had garnered from his Mozart experiences.

The second movement is in a richly extended three-part form, with a wide-ranging cantabile melody for violin at its outset, truly an instrumental song-without-words. The middle section contrasts this with emphatic chords and sonorous legato writing for all four instruments together; when the opening returns it is varied in key and figure. The third movement has as scherzo an *agitato* for viola solo; although the other instruments have thematic roles, especially later in the scherzo, they are muted throughout, while the viola is not, giving a special colour to the sound-world and a special balance to the texture. In the trio, the opening accompaniment provided by the other three instruments is so characterful that it would aspire to an equal status with the emerging viola theme. The fourth movement is a set of variations on a winsome melody of only ten bars, persuasively combining Mozartean grace with Haydnesque wit. Eight variations and coda follow. Variations 1–3 increase the rhythmic vitality; variations 4–6 modify tonality and expression within a context of sustained lyricism – variation 6 is a particularly delicate and beautiful simplification of the theme on pizzicato cello in G flat major. Variation 7, in disruptive contrast, is a fast and vigorous treatment of the opening of the first movement, and variation 8 then treats part of the second subject from that movement. The coda explores rapprochement between these first-movement themes and that of the finale in a sophisticated cyclic thrust to closure.

Brahms's friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim, gave the first public performance with his quartet on 30 October 1876 in Berlin, when the work's reception was mixed, becoming more favourable only with later performances. Both Joachim and Clara Schumann themselves were particularly drawn to the third and fourth movements. Although the Third Quartet testifies to Brahms's creative ease with the genre, hard-won but all the more real for that, this was to remain his last string quartet. He returned thereafter to the richer sounds and more expansive textures of the quintet and of chamber music with his own instrument, the piano.

Robert Pascall

DUDOK QUARTET AMSTERDAM

Judith van Driel *violin*

Marleen Wester *violin*

Marie-Louise de Jong *viola*

David Faber *cello*

The Dudok Quartet Amsterdam is forging a reputation as one of the most creative and versatile quartets of its generation. With its mission of "sharing the heart of music", the Dudok Quartet is committed to crafting unique and eclectic programmes in order to engage with its audiences in new and imaginative ways.

In repertoire ranging from Ligeti, Shostakovich and Weinberg through to Mendelssohn, Mozart and Beethoven the Quartet constantly strives to forge and explore new pathways and connections in music. Their intelligent approach and flair for programming also sees them regularly perform their own arrangements of pieces and they have so far produced arrangements of composers including Gesualdo, des Prez and Brahms. Collaboration is also a key part of the Quartet's ethos and recent partners have included Pieter Wispelwey, Daria van den Bercken, Vladimir Mendelssohn, Erik Bosgraaf and Annelien Van Wauwe.

The Dudok Quartet has performed at many of the major European venues and festivals including the Vienna Konzerthaus, Beethoven Haus Bonn, De Doelen, Carinthischer Sommer Festival, Gergiev Festival, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Festival Jeunes Talents, Festival Quatuors à Bordeaux and the Amsterdam String Quartet Biennale, as well as appearing regularly at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Amsterdam Muziekgebouw. The Quartet made its USA debut in January 2018 at the Northwestern University Winter Chamber Music Festival, with future US plans including its New York debut at the Park Avenue Armory. Highlights of the 2018/19 season include engagements in Milan, Mantova, Utrecht and Rotterdam, as well as returns to the Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam and performances at the Heidelberg String Quartet Festival.

In 2015 the Dudok Quartet released its first recording on the Resonus Classics label. 'Métamorphoses' explores the theme of musical innovation through works by Ligeti, Haydn and Brahms and was awarded Editor's Choice in Gramophone, with the Quartet also being praised by The Guardian for its "lithe, lively sound and alert sense of structure and detail". The Quartet's critically acclaimed second release in 2017, entitled 'Labyrinth', explores the use of counterpoint in works by Mozart, Ligeti and Bach. Their most recent disc 'Solitude' (2018) features works by Mendelssohn, Weinberg and Shostakovich curated around the theme of loss and loneliness, with The Strad praising the disc as "an intense listening experience that will have you on the edge of your seat".

Other recent projects have included the world premiere of Kaija Saariaho's opera *Only the Sound Remains* with Philippe Jaroussky and Dutch National Opera and a collaboration with director Rosabel Huguet re-imagining Beethoven's Op.132 String Quartet for children. Entitled 'Quartet! A card game with Beethoven' the Quartet takes the project to venues including the Vienna Konzerthaus, Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, Flagey and De Doelen as part of their ongoing commitment to education and outreach work.

Having first met as members of the Ricciotti Ensemble, a Dutch street symphony orchestra, the Dudok Quartet studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne with the Alban Berg Quartet and later at the Dutch String Quartet Academy with Marc Danel of the Danel Quartet. Other important mentors include Eberhard Feltz, Peter Cropper (Lindsay Quartet), Luc-Marie Aguera (Quatuor Ysaÿe) and Stefan Metz. Winner of a

2018 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, other awards include prizes at the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition and Joseph Joachim International Chamber Music Competition Weimar as well as the prestigious Dutch Kersjes Prize (2014).

The Quartet performs on instruments generously on loan from the Dutch Musical Instrument Foundation (NMF); violins by Francesco Goffriller and Vincenzo Panormo, viola by Max Möller and cello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. The Quartet takes its name from renowned Dutch architect Willem Marinus Dudok (1884 – 1974). A great lover of music, Dudok came from a musical family and composed in his spare time, saying “I feel deeply the common core of music and architecture: after all, they both derive their value from the right proportions”.