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# CHIAROSCURO QUARTET & MATTHEW HUNT

Thursday 26 October, 7.30pm  
Djanogly Recital Hall

## PROGRAMME

String Quartet in D, Op.33, No.6

**Joseph Haydn**

Clarinet Quintet in A, K581

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

**Interval**

String Quartet in A minor, Op.13

**Felix Mendelssohn**

There is a Sennheiser Infrared enhanced hearing system in the Djanogly Recital Hall, please ask for a headset from our front-of-house staff.

# PROGRAMME NOTES

String Quartet in D, Op.33, No.6

*Vivace assai*

*Andante*

*Scherzo. Allegretto*

*Finale. Allegretto*

**Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)**

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 imminent 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 sales talk. But there is a sense that in the Op.33 quartets Haydn no longer has anything to prove, whether to himself, to his players or to his listeners. Their emotional range is less extreme than that of Op.20, and the strenuous counterpoint of the earlier set, particularly the fugal finales, is not so prominent. 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 replaced ‘divertimento’, given to all his earlier works for the medium, with ‘quartet’. Also, the quick inner movements are 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.

No.6 opens with a perky theme that at first hearing might seem unduly simple, if not downright naïve, but Haydn uses it to build a movement of considerable subtlety, blurring the distinction between the first and second main themes in the process.

Where the first movement was buoyant and breezy, the second is sober and pensive. The first violin has a prominent role, sometimes holding a sustained high note over moving lower parts (as in the opening bars), sometimes taking off on melodic flights of its own. It even gets an opportunity for a brief cadenza towards the end.

Like the equivalent movements in the other Op.33 quartets, the scherzo is simply a minuet by another name. In the outer sections the music always seems on the point of turning into a canon without quite succeeding. The central trio section passes the spotlight in turn to the cello, then the first violin and viola, in whose duet the music breaks, at last, into a fully-fledged canon.

In the finale, Haydn uses, for the first time, a form which he himself devised and would return to in several later works, though more usually in his slow movements. It is a set of double variations, based on two alternating themes, one in the major key, one in the minor. Both are in two halves, each half repeated. Haydn treads a bit cautiously in this first example of the form. In the two variations on the major-key theme, only the repeats receive modest amounts of decoration; the minor-key theme, in its single variation, is explored in slightly more depth.

Clarinet Quintet in A, K581

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

*Allegro*

*Larghetto*

*Menuetto*

*Allegretto con variazioni*

The clarinet was first developed just after the start of the eighteenth century, and early forms of it were used occasionally by composers including Rameau, Telemann and Vivaldi. But Mozart was the composer who probably did more than any other to establish it as both a solo instrument and a regular member of the orchestra. His love-affair with it began during his visit to London as a child in 1764-5 (the English composer Thomas Arne had used clarinets in his 1762 opera *Artaxexes*), and his comment on the famous Mannheim orchestra, in a letter to his father in December 1778 “if only we had clarinets in the orchestra!” (i.e. in Salzburg), shows how much the instrument’s agility and warm tone had captured his imagination.

In the early 1780s, soon after settling in Vienna, Mozart met Anton Stadler, clarinetist with the Viennese court orchestra, who was admired for his beautifully expressive playing. Over the next few years Mozart wrote parts for him in the Trio for clarinet, viola and piano, K498, and the Quintet for piano and wind instruments, K452, culminating in the Clarinet Quintet and Concerto, as well as obbligato parts for clarinet and basset-horn (a lower-pitched relative) in two of the arias in his opera *La Clemenza di Tito*.

Stadler played a modification of the standard instrument, which he helped to develop in 1788, and which today is called a basset-clarinet. It was fitted with additional keys extending the lower end of its range by four semitones. Mozart made use of the extra notes, especially in the Concerto, but the new instrument failed to catch on, and when the Quintet and the Concerto were published, the solo parts were adjusted to fit the conventional clarinet.

With the Quintet, Mozart created one of his most beguilingly sensuous pieces of chamber music. The first movement opens with a gracefully floating string theme, to which the clarinet replies with a rising two-octave arpeggio and a descending flurry. The second main theme is a long, song-like melody for the first violin, which the clarinet immediately turns towards the minor key, to poignant effect. The opening section ends with a less expansive idea for, again, the strings answered by the clarinet, and a brief recall of the opening theme which, after a magical twist into the remote key of C major, the clarinet plays for the first time. Each of the strings, in turn, takes up the clarinet’s original answering phrase, which becomes the basis of the short development section.

The strings are muted for the second movement, which begins like an aria for the clarinet, making occasional but telling use of the instrument’s lowest register. The first violin later joins it in a duet. The haunting tenderness of this movement is counter-balanced by the robust minuet which, unusually, has not one but two contrasting trio sections. The first, in A minor, is for strings alone. Following the return of the Minuet, the second trio suggests the rustic fore-runner of the waltz, known as the *ländler*.

Mozart originally drafted a rondo finale, but abandoned it in favour of the present set of variations, on a jaunty theme with all the simple directness of eighteenth-century Viennese popular songs. The first two variations maintain the theme's brisk energy. The viola has the spotlight for much of the minor-key third variation, while the fourth, in the major again, is marked by infectiously bubbly figuration for the clarinet and first violin. The fifth variation is slow, and recalls the mood of the second movement; the sixth returns to the main tempo, and is extended to form a lively finale.

String Quartet in A minor, Op.13

**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**

*Adagio – allegro vivace*

*Adagio non lento*

*Intermezzo. Allegretto con moto – allegro di molto – tempo 1*

*Presto*

When Mendelssohn wrote his A minor Quartet in 1827, he was only eighteen, but he had already acquired considerable experience as a composer, particularly for string ensembles. He had behind him the series of string symphonies that culminated in one of his outstanding masterpieces, the Octet of 1825, as well as a string quartet in E flat, which was not published until 1879 and is still virtually unknown (and not to be confused with his Quartet, Op.12, also in E flat, written in 1829).

Like Schubert, Mendelssohn found the urge to measure himself against Beethoven's example irresistible, and the A minor Quartet, written the year Beethoven died, shows his influence very strongly. The result is one of Mendelssohn's more intensely passionate works.

It opens with a tender slow introduction in A major. Towards the end, Mendelssohn quotes from 'Frage' (Question), the first of his Twelve Songs, Op.9, before a big crescendo triggers a flurry of semiquaver figures, setting the main A minor *allegro vivace* in motion. This tense movement is worlds away from the clichéd image of Mendelssohn as all sentimental sweetness and fairy music.

The song leaves its mark, explicitly or implicitly, on the other movements as well. The warmly expressive opening to the second movement provides the frame for a serious-minded fugal passage, starting on the viola, which is an echo of the slow movement of Beethoven's F minor Quartet, Op.95. The Intermezzo begins in a similarly thoughtful frame of mind, but the central section is one of Mendelssohn's light-as-a-feather scherzos – fleet, delicate and ethereal – a fragment of which returns at the end.

The powerful recitative passage which opens the last movement is the clearest indication yet of the influence of Beethoven, the finale of whose Op.132 Quartet (also in A minor) opens in a similar way. Once into its stride, the music follows a turbulent path towards a forceful climax – a furious unison passage leading to a return of the recitative. Mendelssohn gradually eases the tension, before springing a gentle last surprise. The first violin, unaccompanied, brings back the fugato theme from the second movement, the key changes to A major and a recollection of the first movement's opening leads, again, to the song quotation.

Mendelssohn dwells on it at some length before letting it go. The words of the song begin: “Is it true that in the leafy walkway, you always wait for me by the vine-draped wall?” If they have any emotional significance for the quartet, Mendelssohn kept this to himself.

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## **CHIAROSCURO QUARTET**

Alina Ibragimova - Violin

Charlotte Saluste-Bridoux - Violin

Emilie Hörnlund - Viola

Claire Thirion - Cello

Formed in 2005 and dubbed ‘a trailblazer for the authentic performance of High Classical chamber music’ in Gramophone, this international ensemble performs music of the Classical and early Romantic periods on gut strings and with historical bows. The quartet’s unique sound – described in The Observer as ‘a shock to the ears of the best kind’ – is highly acclaimed by audiences and critics all over Europe.

Recent releases in their growing discography includes Beethoven Op. 18, Mozart ‘Prussian’ Quartets and Haydn Op.33 (1-3) with future plans featuring Beethoven Opp.74 and 130, and the second volume of Haydn Op.33

Chiaroscuro Quartet was a prize-winner of the German Förderpreis Deutschlandfunk/Musikfest Bremen in 2013 and received Germany’s most prestigious CD award, the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik in 2015 for their recording of Mozart’s Quartet in D minor, K. 421 and Mendelssohn’s Second String Quartet in A minor, Op.13.

Among the ensemble’s chamber music partners are renowned artists such as Kristian Bezuidenhout, Trevor Pinnock, Jonathan Cohen, Nicolas Baldeyrou, Chen Halevi, Malcolm Bilson, Christian Poltera, Cédric Tiberghien and Christophe Coin.

Recent engagements included their enthusiastically received debut concerts at Vienna Konzerthaus and Philharmonie Warsaw, their debut at Carnegie Hall as part of their first US tour and a return visit to Japan. Other highlights have taken the ensemble to the Edinburgh International Festival, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, London’s Wigmore Hall and King’s Place, Auditorio Nacional de Música Madrid, The Sage Gateshead, Auditorium du Louvre Paris, Théâtre du Jeu-de-Paume in Aix-en-Provence, Grand Théâtre de Dijon, Gulbenkian Foundation Lisbon, Boulez Saal and Beethoven Haus Bonn.

The 23-24 season sees them with multiple appearances at Wigmore Hall, further visits to Kings Place and Boulez Saal, a return tour to Japan and a performance at BOZAR Brussels. It also marks the culmination of their residency at Turner Sims Concert Hall.

Chiaroscuro Quartet are grateful to Jumpstart Jr Foundation for the kind loan of the 1570 Andrea Amati violin.

# MATTHEW HUNT - CLARINET

Matt began his musical career as a chorister at Lichfield Cathedral. He later studied at the Guildhall School of Music in London, where his teachers included the late Dame Thea King, and in Paris with Pascal Moragues. He is now a member of Ensemble 360 in Sheffield and one of the solo clarinetists of Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie (the German Chamber Orchestra).

In addition to his work with Ensemble 360, Matt enjoys a career as a chamber musician that takes him round the globe, in the past season he has performed in Japan, the United States, Romania, Germany, France and at the Wigmore Hall and Edinburgh Festival with partners including Pekka Kuusisto, Natalie Clein, Thomas Ades, the Arditti Quartet, Christine Schäffer, Lawrence Power and the Nash Ensemble. Matt is a regular visitor to the International Musicians' Seminar, Prussia Cove, taking part in the 2007 tour of the UK.

As an Orchestral musician, Matt is a frequent guest principal clarinetist with the Scottish Chamber and BBC Symphony Orchestras, and was a member of Claudio Abbado's Lucerne Festival

Orchestra. Since 2005 he has been a member of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, and Matt has been involved in projects playing and recording the cycle of all 9 Beethoven Symphonies with their principal conductor Paavo Jarvi. Matt has also recorded many film soundtracks, and can be heard playing the solo clarinet part on *Love Actually* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Education is an important part of Matt's schedule, in the past year, in addition to the work of Ensemble 360 at York and Sheffield Universities, he is visiting Clarinet consultant at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, he has given masterclasses in Japan at the Minato Mirai, at the RNCM in Manchester and has taught on a chamber music course at the Britten-Pears School in Snape.

Matt's plans for the future season include appearances in the USA, Finland and Japan, and the release of a disc of romantic music for clarinet and piano on the ASV label.