

EDINBURGH  
UNIVERSITY  
CONCERTS

1976-77

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

Miles Baster    Peter Markham  
Michael Beeston    Christopher Gough

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12a West Newington Place Edinburgh (031-667 5506)

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 14 October 1976

DITTERSDORF 1739-99

Quartet in D major

*Moderato*

*Menuetto-Alternativ*

*Finale (Allegro)*

HAYDN 1732-1809

Quartet in B-flat major, opus 55, no. 3

*Vivace assai*

*Adagio ma non troppo*

*Menuetto-Trio*

*Finale (Presto)*

INTERVAL

MOZART 1756-91

Quartet in E-flat major, K428

*Allegro ma non troppo*

*Andante con moto*

*Menuetto (Allegretto)-Trio*

*Allegro vivace*

Tonight's concert is the first of two to be given by the Edinburgh Quartet this season which will look back to celebrated musical occasions of the 18th century. The first of these is recorded in the *Reminiscences* of Michael Kelly, the Irish tenor who was Mozart's first Don Basilio. During the period of rehearsals for Paisiello's *Il re Teodoro*, the English composer Stephen Storace gave a quartet party for his friends in Vienna. As Kelly writes,

The players were tolerable, not one of them excelled on the instrument he played; but there was a little science among them, which I dare say will be acknowledged when I name them:

The First Violin	-	-	-	-	Haydn
The Second Violin	-	-	-	-	Baron Dittersdorf
The Violoncello	-	-	-	-	Vanhall
The Tenor	-	-	-	-	Mozart

The poet Casti and Paisiello formed part of the audience. I was there, and a greater treat, or a more remarkable one, cannot be imagined.

Kelly does not tell us precisely what music was played before they 'sat down to an excellent supper and became joyous and lively in the extreme'. But all the players were well known in

Vienna as composers of chamber music (there are extant over a hundred quartets even by the least well-remembered of the group, Vanhall), so the performance may well have included works by each of them. Mozart's K428 was written by the time of the party; Haydn's opus 55, no. 3 belongs to 1788 and though the date of Dittersdorf's D major quartet is not known the whole of the programme tonight could well have been heard in the late 1780s.

Kelly is more concerned to tell us of the success of his *canzonetta* after supper, but we can imagine how a contemporary audience would have reacted to the quartets. In spite of the fact that this was the period of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, it was Dittersdorf who scored the greatest popular success at the time with his operas and instrumental music and who received the fullest approbation of Joseph II. However, Dittersdorf himself was a sound enough musician to recognise the gulf that yawned between him and the two great composers. Of Mozart he remarked: 'He is undeniably one of the greatest original geniuses, and I have never known any other composer to possess such an amazing wealth of ideas'. But he added, 'I wish he were not so spendthrift with them. He does not give the listener time to catch his breath, for no sooner is one inclined to reflect upon a beautiful inspiration than another appears, even more splendid, which drives away the first, and this continues on and on so that in the end one is unable to retain any of these beauties in the memory'.

This critique reflects some of the differences between the Dittersdorf and Mozart quartets. The former's D major quartet is one of his better works and retained its popularity well into the 19th century. (The Müller Quartet, one of the first professional quartets to travel on concert tours through Europe, brought out an edition as late as 1866.) But its charm is coupled with a certain thinness of incident and a degree of repetitiveness in the development section of the first movement which Mozart would never have tolerated.

Mozart's K428 belongs to the set of six quartets dedicated to Haydn in 1785 which embody in the style of his own full maturity all that he had learned from the study of Haydn's quartets up to opus 33. Haydn's subsequent reciprocal debt to Mozart is less often stressed, but in his B-flat quartet from opus 55 it is at its most evident. The opening unison and its later harmonisation are features that may well be an echo of similar devices in Mozart's K428. The cadence figures closing the exposition have an undeniably Mozartian ring to them, and the chromatically inflected scale added to the opening theme at its

recapitulation are very much in the younger composer's manner. Haydn is too great a composer for his individuality to be swamped by Mozart's, but his knowledge of Mozart's work certainly added new dimensions to his own.

Our concert is a period piece of the work of one lesser and two great composers. But it should illustrate too some of the stylistic inter-relationships between the composers who brought the string quartet to its first great peak of achievement in 18th-century Vienna. M.T.

*Wednesday 20 October, 2.30 pm*

ELISABETH KLEIN *piano*

A lecture-recital

New Scandinavian Piano Music

Programme to include works by Bibalo, Hegdal, Norgård, Stromholm, Fongaard and Nordheim.

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*Next concert: Thursday 21 October*

THE REID ORCHESTRA

KENNETH LEIGHTON *conductor*

RAPHAEL WALLFISCH *cello*

LEIGHTON Dance Overture

ELGAR Cello Concerto

SIBELIUS Symphony no. 3

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GEOFFREY ALLAN

*violin*

SUSAN TOMES

*piano*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 28 October 1976