
CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Autumn - Winter 2017

Tuesday 7 November 2017

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

The Edinburgh Quartet

Nicolas Dupont · violin

Tom Hankey · violin

Catherine Marwood · viola

Mark Bailey · cello

Programme of works by SIBELIUS and HAYDN.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Suite in A Major for String Trio

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Prelude. Vivace

Andante con moto

Menuetto

Gigue. Allegretto

Sibelius had wanted to be a violin virtuoso rather than a composer. 'I was determined to be a celebrated violinist at any price,' he said later. 'From the age of 15 I played my violin practically from morning to night . . . and it was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of a virtuoso too late.'

From 1885 to 1889, while he studied at the Helsinki Music Institute (now renamed the 'Sibelius Academy'), he wrote several chamber works of which the *Suite in A* is the best-known. After its first performance on 13th April 1889, Busoni, who was on the teaching staff, noted: 'We pricked up our ears when we realised that here was something that vastly exceeded the level of a student-work.'

After leaving the institute, Sibelius seems to have quickly discovered the musical sound-world he was to explore for the rest of his creative life. He began producing works that spoke for the whole of Finland, then struggling for independence from Russia. The *Kullervo* symphony, with a sung text in Finnish, was quickly followed by *En Saga* and symphonic poems which took their inspiration from Finnish mythology and from the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. Finally, in 1899, came *Finlandia*.

Realising that the composer was helping to forge a sense of national identity, the enlightened Finnish government awarded the thirty-one-year-old Sibelius a quite considerable pension, initially for ten years, and then for life. To his wife's continued exasperation, this lover of the mysterious forests and the brooding lakes of his native countryside was also a *bon viveur* who enjoyed extravagant wining and dining, relishing frequent dinners of lobster and champagne.

Sibelius's series of seven magnificent symphonies continued until 1924. Unfortunately, he was a chronic perfectionist, and laboured with increasing desperation over his eighth. At one point he sent two completed movements to a publisher only to write again shortly after, asking for them to be returned as he wished to make some corrections. He worked and he worked and he worked, endlessly correcting and revising. Finally, in despair, he laid down his pen, then burnt every last page of what would have been his 8th Symphony. He lapsed into silence for the remaining thirty years of his life.

The composer died at the age of 91 in 1957. The Finnish 100-mark note carried his image until 2002, when the mark was replaced by the euro. Finland celebrates the 'Day of Finnish Music' on the composer's birthday.

The first movement of the *Suite in A* major is spiked with unexpected dissonances, and it is no wonder that Busoni and his colleagues at the institute were captivated. The succeeding movements are perhaps more conventional, but radiate genuine grace and charm, showing the promise of the great things to come from this most individual of composers.

Ron Butlin – www.ronbutlin.co.uk

String Quartet in B Flat, Op.76 No.4, 'Sunrise'

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Allegro con spirit

Adagio

Menuetto – allegro

Finale. Allegro ma non troppo

Haydn was born in 1732 in the village of Rohrau, some 30 miles from Vienna. Showing great musical promise from an early age, he became a chorister-scholar at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. After his voice broke he left the choir to live a hand-to-mouth existence over the next few years, busking in the Vienna streets and giving music lessons. Following a short period as an assistant to Porpora, a well-known opera composer, he became Kapellmeister to Count Morzin, for whom he wrote his first few symphonies. In 1760 Haydn fell in love with a daughter of a wigmaker. The wigmaker insisted, however, that his eldest daughter was to be married first. So the young composer married her instead, and his beloved went into a nunnery. The marriage brought Haydn neither children nor happiness. Finally he was taken on by Prince Esterházy to assist Kapellmeister Werner in the prince's new and no-expense-spared palace that was being built in the Hungarian marshlands. When Werner died four years later, Haydn took on the responsibilities of Kapellmeister.

During his thirty years at the palace, Haydn composed at an astonishing rate, providing music for the prince and his numerous guests (the new palace had 200 guest bedrooms!). In addition to 80 symphonies, he wrote many concertos, operas and religious works as well as a vast amount of chamber music, including nearly 70 string quartets. Over the course of his life Haydn was to write 83 quartets and has come to be known as the Father of the String Quartet. The string quartet started out as a vehicle for lighter music, for serenades, divertimenti and the like. In general, the lead violin took the melody while the other instruments were restricted to a more or less accompanying role. Haydn's earliest quartets were in this manner and are truly delightful. His Op.20 quartets of 1772 show a profound shift as the individual instruments now complement each other, creating a more equal partnership. In his Op.33 set of 1781, which contains some of his best-loved quartets (e.g. 'The Bird' and 'The Joke'), Haydn achieved the perfectly integrated form that was to become the model for Mozart, Beethoven *et al.*

Written in 1797, Haydn's quartet Op.76 No.4 is known in the English-speaking world as the Sunrise, its nickname deriving from the opening bars – a rising phrase set against a sustained chord from the other instruments. The rest of the movement is a masterpiece of melodic development. The deeply-felt adagio is followed by a brisk minuet with a contrasting Trio section in F Minor. The finale rushes headlong, with passages of almost playful counterpoint *en route*, towards a most satisfying conclusion. A truly wonderful quartet.

Ron Butlin – www.ronbutlin.co.uk

The Edinburgh Quartet has long been celebrated as one of Britain's foremost chamber ensembles, having appeared regularly at prestigious venues across the UK and toured extensively across Europe, the Far and Middle East, and North and South America. In addition to a busy concert schedule the Edinburgh Quartet is frequently featured in radio broadcasts for the BBC and other stations. It is committed to nurturing talent and is resident at the University of Aberdeen and the University of Stirling whilst maintaining strong associations with the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier University. As well as giving a regular classical concert series at each of these institutions, the players work with composition students, instrumentalists and student teachers. In addition to this the Edinburgh Quartet's outreach programme encompasses workshops for primary and secondary school children and tutoring adults on the Variations Summer School in Ullapool and an annual Spring Chamber Music Course in Linlithgow.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS:

Friday 10 November

1.10pm

St Cecilia's Hall, 50 Niddry Street

Varpu Haavisto (viola da gamba)

Assi Karttunen (harpsichord)

VARPU HAAVISTO Contemplation

FRANÇOIS COUPERIN movements from Suites in E minor and A major

GRAHAM LYNCH Beyond the River God: Rondeau II

MATTHEW WHITTALL The Violet and the Vine

OLLI KORTEKANGAS Ai margini della luce

GRAHAM LYNCH Pastorale

Admission Free

Tuesday 14 November

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall, Bristo Square

Auricle Ensemble

Chris Swaffer (conductor)

STRAVINSKY The Soldier's Tale

Featuring Amy Cardigan on violin, this music theatre work is presented in a concert version with the complete extant music, and Ramuz's text in a modern translation by playwright Jeremy Sams.

Admission Free