

# Concerts at The University

Tuesday 22 November 2011

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

## **The Edinburgh Quartet**

Tristan Gurney · violin

Philip Burrin · violin

Clara Biss · viola

Mark Bailey · cello

Programme of works by MOZART and SHOSTAKOVICH.





## String Quartet in D major K.499 'Hoffmeister'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

- (i) Allegretto
- (ii) Menuetto Allegretto
- (iii) Adagio
- (iv) Allegro

K.499 stands alone, between the six works which Mozart dedicated to Haydn and the three he wrote for the King of Prussia. It is called 'Hoffmeister' after its original publisher in 1788.

That it is to be a work of shining beauty is evident from the first, with a perfectly balanced falling in octaves which is soon heard to become an integral part of the whole movement. Textures are clear, with frequent pairing of instrumental colours and a good deal of wonderfully effective imitation.

The minuet is passionate and strong. Its chromatic tendencies can be heard in the opening viola line, which is later developed into an imitation of the violin theme. The Adagio is of a heartfelt expressive nature, and the finale starts on its way with a sort of off-beat humour whose running triplet movement is perhaps to find a later echo in Beethoven's String Trio (1797/8) and F major Quartet Op. 18 (1798).

## Quartet No.7 Op.108

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-75)

- (i) Allegretto
- (ii) Lento
- (iii) Allegro - Allegretto

This work was written in February and March of the same year as the eighth quartet, at a very difficult personal time for the composer. The work is subtitled 'In memoriam Nina' as a tribute to the composer's first wife who had died in 1954 and would have been 50 in this year. This was the era of the Khrushchev regime, which encouraged citizens to spy on each other to rid the streets of parasites and to harass any non conformists. It was an uncomfortable and critical time for artists and intellectuals in the Soviet Union, who faced the sort of isolation they had already experienced several times earlier in the century.

This work is one of the shortest of the cycle of fifteen quartets, lasting under a quarter of an hour - and yet its length is no reflection of its intensity. Attention has been drawn to a possible suppressed programmatic content of the work, beyond an outline portrait of its dedicatee.

The first movement, based on a simplistic-sounding theme with a menacing repeated three-note figure, is concise almost to the point of brusqueness. The second movement is a threnody, much of it in a stark two-part texture. Some of the material is reminiscent of the first cello concerto, a work completed the previous year. The third movement begins with an inversion of the opening of the whole quartet, but transformed into a violent and cruel outburst. The temperature continues to rise as Shostakovich begins with a fugue, the violence of which is unprecedented in quartet writing. The tension builds until the repeated figure of the first movement takes over all four players. The release from this heralds the last section of the work, a mysteriously calm Allegretto, cast in the style of a minuet, but with occasional bars of duple or quadruple time, designed to upset a smooth running of rhythm. The repeated note motive is never far away, even leading to an extended passage of pizzicato. What is Shostakovich referring to here? Perhaps this is a way of indicating a lack of consciousness - death, or even worse? The movement ends inconclusively and very disturbingly with a major chord - but is this really an end or merely a stop?



## THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

After its formation, the Edinburgh Quartet quickly became established as one of Britain's foremost chamber ensembles, appearing regularly at prestigious venues across the country including London's Wigmore Hall and The South Bank Centre. It achieved international recognition after winning the Contemporary Prize at the Evian-les-Bains String Quartet Competition and has since toured extensively across Europe, the Far East, North and South America and the Middle East. The Quartet has made numerous BBC TV and BBC Radio 3 broadcasts and can also be heard on Classic FM.

Now embarking on its sixth decade, the Quartet is one of the longest running chamber ensembles in the UK with a busier performing schedule than ever before. The Quartet is resident at Edinburgh Napier and Aberdeen Universities and also collaborates with Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities.

### FORTHCOMING CONCERTS:

Thursday 24 November

7.00pm

St. Giles' Cathedral

Royal Norwegian Advent Concert

Edinburgh University Chamber Choir

Musicians from Hordeland, Norway

Eric von Ibler - conductor and solo organ

Music and Carols for Advent and Christmas

ADMISSION FREE

Friday 25 November

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Michael Bawtree - organ

ALBERT DE KLERK Variations on the Sequence 'Laudes organi' (1980)

SWEELINCK Balletto del granduca

ANDRIESEN Thema mit variaties (1949)

BUXTEHUDE Passacaglia in D minor BuxWV 161

J. S. BACH Three organ chorales on 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland' BWV 659-

661

ADMISSION FREE