

CONCERTS

AT THE UNIVERSITY

AUTUMN—WINTER 2014

Tuesday 14 October 2014

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

The Edinburgh Quartet

Tristan Gurney · violin

Gordon Bragg · violin

Catherine Marwood · guest viola

Mark Bailey · cello

Programme of works by J.S. BACH and SCHUMANN.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Three movements from *The Art of Fugue* BWV 1080

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Contrapunctus 1

Contrapunctus 2

Contrapunctus 3

The Art of Fugue was J.S. Bach's final work and was left incomplete at his death. The work comprises a series of fugues – a genre of composition based on one theme, or subject, which is then put into imitative 'voices'. All 14 fugues are based on the one subject, heard at the outset of the first movement. Each is titled Contrapunctus – a Latin word best used to describe the genre of fugue. *The Art of Fugue* appears to have been intended for keyboard – i.e. harpsichord, clavichord or organ – though its first publication, begun during the composer's life, was in open score, leaving the way open to different interpretations of the playing forces. There are very good reasons for the work to be played on string quartet, a medium which enables the different 'voices' of a fugue to be heard with great clarity.

To construct a complete work lasting over an hour in one key, on one theme and using only one method of construction, might not seem a likely recipe for commanding a listener's attention. But Bach's sheer inventiveness, the varied techniques and the different moods of the movements, all contribute to making this one of Bach's most fascinating and inventive works.

The first Contrapunctus uses the fugue theme in a very correct and classical manner, with the four voices imitating each other. The Alto starts on D, is answered by the Soprano on A, then the Bass enters on D and the Tenor part answers on A.

The second Contrapunctus adds a dotted rhythm to an extension of the main theme which this time begins in the Bass 'voice', answered by the Tenor, with the Alto and the Soprano following.

Contrapunctus 3 turns the theme upside down – in inversion – and begins with the Tenor voice, answered by the Alto, the Soprano and finally the Bass voice.

(Roger B Williams. Sept. 2014)

Quartet in A Major Op. 41 no.3

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Andante espressivo-Allegro molto moderato

Assai agitato

Adagio molto

Finale. Allegro molto vivace

If Schumann's song year was 1841, his year of chamber music was the following year. During the early summer he completed his three string quartets op.41 and never again returned to the medium. They were dedicated to his great friend and colleague Mendelssohn and are a tribute to that composer's three quartets Op.44, completed four years earlier. If Schumann is better known today for his songs and piano music, and, increasingly, his symphonies, the string quartets are not so frequently heard and a true evaluation of these wonderfully skilled and inspirational works would seem to be overdue.

Schumann approached the writing of quartets with an intensive study of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven quartets, and in the proportions of the A Major quartet something of this study can be detected. Much of the coherence of this work is drawn from the interval of a falling fifth, played as the opening notes on the first violin. This interval and its inversion, (a rising fourth), are present in most of the main themes. The mention of themes is, in itself, significant, as we usually associate Schumann more closely with the creation of vocal and melodic tunes.

This composition counterbalances the view of Schumann as a poetic dreamer. In his handling of the medium, clarity of structure, and in compositional craft, Schumann shows himself a master composer. The proportions of the whole work are beautifully balanced, and, as Joan Chissell notes: 'Schumann's heart is involved as much as the head'.

(Roger B Williams 2014)

The **Edinburgh Quartet** has a long and colourful history 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. Recently this has included live appearances on Classics Unwrapped (BBC Radio Scotland) and Jazz Line-Up (BBC Radio 3) as well as video recordings for Studio One Sessions, which appear on the BBC Radio Scotland website.

The Edinburgh Quartet is committed to nurturing talent and is resident at Edinburgh Napier University and the University of Aberdeen. The Quartet has recently embarked on a new residency at the University of Stirling and it continues to maintain a strong association with the University of Edinburgh. 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 working with university students 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.

The Quartet has always been a champion of new music and has worked with many important and prolific composers of our age including James MacMillan, Michael Tippett and Howard Blake.

The Quartet has an extensive discography available on various labels such as Delphian, Linn, Meridian and RCA. Among their recordings are the complete string quartets of Hans Gál (Meridian), Kenneth Leighton (Meridian) and Mátyás Seiber (Delphian), as well as discs of Bartók, Robert Crawford, Haydn, Schubert and Thomas Wilson. New releases include a "Russian"-themed CD of Haydn, Prokofiev and Shostakovich and a James MacMillan disc, both on Delphian.

FORTHCOMING CONCERT:

Friday 17 October

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Ian Watt · guitar

SOR Variations on a theme of Mozart (from *Die Zauberflöte*), Op. 9

JOHN McLEOD Three Mythical Pieces

Fantasy on themes from Britten's *Gloriana*

ALBENIZ Granada Op. 47/1

Torre Bermeja Op. 92/12

ADMISSION FREE