
CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Spring - Summer 2019

Tuesday 22 January 2019

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

The Edinburgh Quartet

Tijmen Huisingh · violin

Tom Hankey · violin

Catherine Marwood · viola

Mark Bailey · cello

with Oscar Holch · viola

Programme of works by MOZART and BRUCKNER



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

String Quintet in C major K515

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

1. Allegro
2. Menuetto. Allegretto
3. Andante
4. Allegro

Mozart wrote six string quintets in his career, the first coming at the ripe old age of sixteen. By the time he returned to the genre in 1787, he was at the height of his powers and popularity: the C major and G minor quintets, written successively, follow immediately on the heels of the triumphant Prague performances of *The Marriage of Figaro* and the *Symphony no. 38*.

The first of its four movements is striking for several reasons. First, it is long: in terms of timing and measure numbers, this is one of the longest sonata form movements of the 18th century, fully anticipating Beethoven in its expanded dimensions. Second, it features striking harmonic shifts, touching on a wide range of often unexpected key areas. Beginning in C major, the music moves abruptly to C minor, D minor, F major, and D-flat major, but always returns to C. Of course, you don't need to know the specifics of what's going on to catch its overall drift: the effect of moving between these key areas serves to create musical drama and tension, and to separate out the "pure" C major.

Instead of following the first movement with a slow movement (as was customary), Mozart opted to place the minuet as his second movement. It offers the perfect respite for what has immediately preceded it, filled with buoyant charm and phrases of all sorts of odd-lengths (or at least unpredictable durations). The chromaticism of the opening movement creeps in again during the trio, but things resolve peaceably before the movement wraps up.

If there's one characteristic that applies to all of Mozart's instrumental music, it is probably the deeply lyrical quality of his writing: regardless of genre and instrument, he possessed the unique ability to make non-vocal instruments sing. The slow, third movement of the String Quintet demonstrates this gift with great refinement, as the first violin and first viola engage in a heartfelt duet. The writing here recalls the middle movement of the glorious *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin and viola written in 1779, but here the music is imbued with the aching expressivity of Mozart's late style.

The finale is a tour-de-force rondo of high spirits and brilliant energy, featuring ecstatic solos (at one point or another) for each member of the ensemble. Though it begins rather straightforwardly, the movement is filled with hints that something more complex is lurking: stretches of counterpoint that sound so simple yet are, in fact, as rigorous as anything Bach wrote; a marvellously unexpected detour into the submediant, A-flat major (which is something Beethoven and the Romantics would later make a habit of doing); and so forth. It's a movement Mozart's biographer Alfred Einstein described as "godlike and childlike," an overstatement, perhaps – but, if so, not by much.

String Quintet in F major

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

3. Adagio

If you only know Bruckner as the composer of big symphonies, you're not alone and any surprise you may feel at finding that he wrote chamber music is entirely understandable: the sheer scope of his symphonies, for instance, suggests a composer not naturally comfortable writing for more intimate forces. There are, however, a smattering of pieces for chamber groups, including a youthful string quartet and this mammoth String Quintet, which dates from the central part of Bruckner's career.

The Quintet was composed on a commission from Josef Hellmesberger, Sr., then the director of the Vienna Conservatory and concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic. Hellmesberger took his time getting around to playing the piece – it wasn't premiered in full until 1885 – but, once he did, it became, during Bruckner's lifetime, one of its composers most frequently-performed scores.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the four-movement Quintet has much in common with Bruckner's symphonic catalogue. It features passages of vigorous counterpoint; rich, chromatic harmonies; a Wagnerian approach to its motivic materials; references to Austrian folk music (particularly the rustic Ländler, a dance also much-loved by Mahler); and a treatment of the five instruments (a pair each of violins and violas, plus cello) as a scaled-down version of a full symphony orchestra.

That last quality is abundantly evident in the Quintet's gorgeous third-movement Adagio. It's scored in the somewhat surprising (and, for string players, rather unfriendly and unflattering) key of G-flat major. There are two principle themes at work in it, the first, a long-breathed violin melody that unfolds like a hymn above a fervent series of chord progressions.

After the opening melody is stated in full, an austere transitional section, marked by dotted rhythms, occurs. It eventually leads to the second theme, which is itself an inversion of the first theme's motive – the downward melody is now flipped to move upwards – bracketed by pulsing eighth notes.

The music makes its way back to a restatement of the first theme before a highly-involved development section begins. It passes through several key areas before reaching a huge climax marked *lang gezogen* (literally, "long, drawn out") and then, gradually, dissipating. After cycling through the two main themes again (this time in reverse order), the transitional section recurs, now leading to a serene coda back in G-flat.

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. Recently this has included live appearances on *Classics Unwrapped* (BBC Radio Scotland) and *Jazz Line-Up* and *In Tune* (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 the University of Stirling and 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 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 their annual tours around Scotland.

Oscar Holch is currently studying at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with David Takeno, where his studies are generously supported by the Leo Birnbaum Scholarship. He graduated in Summer 2017 with a First Class degree from the Royal Academy of Music, where he was awarded the Max Gilbert Prize. He enjoys performing in many different chamber music contexts, exploring this rich and varied repertoire with recent highlights including performing at the Festival Internacional de Música de Cámara Fundación Monteleón and the 'Sala Umberto', Rome, with the Alauda Quartet, performing Berio's Folk Songs for chamber ensemble in the Duke's Hall and performing the chamber music of Colin Matthews live on BBC Radio 3, at the BBC Proms. He recently completed a Leverhulme Fellowship with Pro Corda, coaching chamber music on their senior course. Oscar has been the Edinburgh Quartet's Apprentice during 2018, and has joined them for performances at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, University of Edinburgh and Variations Summer School in Ullapool.

FORTHCOMING CONCERT:

Friday 25 January, 1.10pm, McEwan Hall

Jeremiah Stephenson (organ)

J.S. BACH arr. Dupré. Sinfonia from *Wir danken dir, Gott* BWV 29

J.S. BACH *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot* BWV 678

MOZART *Fantasia in F minor* K608

OORTMERSSEN *Nun ruhen alle Wälder*

ROXANNA PANUFNIK *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgethan, Es bleibt gerecht*

IAIN FARRINGTON *Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir* (Prelude on Old 100th)

VIERNE *Romance and Final* from *Symphony no. 4 in G minor*

Admission Free