
FLINDERS QUARTET

THIBAUD PAVLOVIC-HOBBA violin

WILMA SMITH violin

HELEN IRELAND viola

ZOE KNIGHTON cello

with PIRULÍ STRING QUARTET

HAYDN & BRAHMS

Friday 5 August 2022 • Port Phillip Estate

Sunday 7 August 2022 • Montsalvat Upper Gallery

Monday 8 August 2022 • Tempo Rubato

Monday 22 August 2022 • FQ Digital premiere

Flinders Quartet acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, live and learn, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

JOSEPH HAYDN 1732-1809

String Quartet in A major, Op. 20, No. 6 (composed 1772)

I. Allegro di molto e scherzando

II. Adagio

III. Minuet - Trio

IV. Fuga con tre soggetti

“Every page of the six quartets of Op. 20 is of historic and aesthetic importance... there is perhaps no single or sextuple opus in the history of instrumental music which has achieved so much or achieved it so quietly...” - Sir Donald Francis Tovey

Haydn's Op. 20 was his third set of quartets written at the house of the Esterházy family so having 12 quartets under his belt, he took one mighty leap forward and ensured the string quartet had a permanent place, laying the first major stepping stones for this magic combination of four instruments. No wonder Beethoven wrote the six Op. 20 quartets out in full to have his own copy and as a form of study (in much the same way an artist may copy a masterpiece).

Do we thank Count Esterházy? Do we thank the musicians of the time? Perhaps Haydn's mum and dad for his talents as a composer and musician? Every string quartet written since (and this is no exaggeration) can be traced back to Haydn's string quartets numbers 13-18, his Opus 20.

Named the “Sun” Quartets after an image that appeared on the first edition, they are also sunny in nature with the first movement being inherently playful (as the term *scherzando* would suggest) and Haydn's practical joke of choice - silence - coming into play between the development and recapitulation. He also commands at times that the first violin is to play solely on one string, which can either be comical or virtuosic depending on the musical context. We have often wondered what the first violin at the Esterházy house did to incur such an inconvenient marking.

The second movement is akin to an Aria or song which is not surprising as Haydn was composing a great deal of opera for the Esterházy house at the same time. In the third movement, which has hints of the first movement in its themes, the term trio is taken quite literally and Haydn not only omits the second

violin entirely (perhaps to enable them to take an extra sip of wine) but demands *all* three remaining players to play solely on one string. It seems the entire joke was on the musicians.

The final movement is a masterpiece in fugal writing. With three parts (*tre soggetti*) and to be played *sempre sotto voce* it has all the tricks of the trade that Beethoven would later use in his grand Grosse Fugue Op. 133. Haydn even marks the section that is an upside-down version of the theme for the players, just so we can appreciate how clever he is.

“He could amuse, shock, arouse laughter and deep emotion as no other.” - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart speaking about Franz Joseph Haydn

JOHANNES BRAHMS 1833-1897

String Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 51, No. 1 (completed 1873)

I. Allegro

II. Romanze. Poco adagio

III. Allegretto molto moderato e comodo - Un poco più animato

IV. Allegro

It's no secret that Brahms lived constantly in Beethoven's shadow and he famously said of his first symphony when someone commented on the similarity to the “Ode to Joy” theme, “Any Ass can see that.”

(At the University of Melbourne in the 1990s, a first-year music history assignment was: “Brahms' first symphony is Beethoven's 10th - discuss”)

Brahms was notoriously self-critical, destroying early manuscripts and some accounts list as many as 20 quartets that never saw the light of day before this one. The reverence to his predecessors was palpable with Brahms writing to his publisher that, just as Mozart had taken extreme care over the quartets dedicated to Haydn, Brahms intended to be just as mindful. Here above all Brahms found that “It is not hard to compose, but what is fabulously hard is to leave the superfluous notes under the table.” Chamber music had played a crucial part in his composition around this time - the early version of the B major trio, the original version of the piano quintet for string

quintet (two cellos) and the horn trio to name a few, but it was the relatively sparse and revealing string quartet that raised his anxieties about his own artistic capability.

"You have no idea of how it feels - always to hear the tramp of such a giant [Beethoven] behind you." - Johannes Brahms

This first quartet is in C minor - no accident that he chose the same key as the mighty 5th symphony of Beethoven which also is the key of Brahms' first symphony. Brahms unifies the movements with a connection in the thematic material with dotted rhythms, minor scalar motion, melodies with falling sevenths; they all combine to ensure the movements fit together like a perfect jigsaw. His characteristic duplet against triplet rhythmical treatment is a feature throughout the quartet. The whole piece reads like a unified story with motivic development throughout each movement much the same way a great novel develops characters throughout each chapter.

Players tend to believe that the quartet they are playing in any particular moment is their favourite but there is something about the sound world created by Brahms, how gratifying each individual part is to play and how the parts interlocks that make this work one of the greatest romantic quartets of all time. It seems Brahms took almost eight years of creative thinking and gestation to get this piece onto the concert stage. We say it was worth the wait.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH 1906-1975

Two Pieces for String Octet, Op. 11 (composed 1925)

I. Prelude. Adagio

II. Scherzo. Allegro molto

with PIRULÍ STRING QUARTET

Jasmine Milton, violin

Haneulle Lovell, violin

Sterling Rieck, viola

Caleb Christian, cello

Shostakovich wrote this octet before his nineteenth birthday, before his fifteen symphonies and before his fifteen string quartets. Composed whilst he was still a student at the Petrograd Conservatory, it exemplifies his fascination and continuous study of J. S. Bach. The complexity of an eight-person piece is one in which Shostakovich revels. A slow prelude, fascinating fugal and contrapuntal writing and larger than life recitatives are all packed into this contrite first section.

As string quartet players, one wonders why he didn't write more than one octet. (In fact, we are yet to discover a composer who has written multiple string octets for independent voices.)

The scherzo is full of characteristic satire and drive, far removed from the scherzo of its main predecessor, in the octet of Mendelssohn. It's definitely not a scherzo which takes the literal meaning of "a joke" but more one that has evil twists and turns and many witch-like cackles. After an extended recitative up one string from a cello, the piece descends into a mad dash for the end and points to some of the easily identifiable Shostakovich rhythms that he was to use throughout his life.

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PIRULÍ STRING QUARTET

The Pirulí String Quartet was formed in 2017 at Concordia College Adelaide under the direction of Martin Butler, OAM. An extremely enthusiastic group of young musicians, they loved playing chamber music and spending time learning new works with each other each Monday lunchtime at school, and during the holidays.

Jasmine is mentored by Dr Elizabeth Layton and has been learning violin for thirteen years. Haneulle has also been playing the violin for thirteen years and learns from Wendy Heiligenberg. Sterling has played violin for the last ten years and is currently mentored by Shirin Lim. He has also been learning the viola for four years with the quartet's director Martin Butler, a violist in the ASO. Caleb has played the cello since he was four years old and learns from Ewen Bramble.

The quartet has performed in a variety of settings including weddings, school performances, and competitions, winning first prizes in the 2018 and 2019 Adelaide small ensemble Eisteddfods. They have all been heavily involved with the Adelaide Youth Orchestra over many years. Haneulle is the current concertmaster.

A hallmark feature of the quartet is their "string quartet catchup nights", which involve movies, popcorn, board games, a sprinkle of practice, and questionable cooking recipes.

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