

ENSEMBLE 360

Tuesday 11 May

7.00pm Live-streamed Performance

Crucible Studio, Sheffield

BENJAMIN NABARRO violin
CLAUDIA AJMONE-MARSAN violin
RACHEL ROBERTS viola
GEMMA ROSEFIELD cello

BEETHOVEN
String Quartet Op.18 No.4
String Quartet Op.74 'Harp'

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Quartet in C minor Op.18 No.4

Allegro ma non tanto

Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto

Menuetto. Allegretto

Allegro – Prestissimo

The key of C minor was used by Beethoven for some of his most dramatic music – works like the Fifth Symphony, the 'Pathétique' Sonata, and the 'Coriolan' Overture – and Sir George Grove wrote that 'the pieces for which he has employed it are, with very few exceptions, remarkable for their beauty and importance'. The fourth of the Op.18 quartets has something of the turbulent mood of other pieces in C minor. The first movement is uneasy, though surprisingly, perhaps, this is especially apparent in the so-called Minuet third movement, which has a particularly dark, brooding kind of energy. But there's something paradoxical about this work: Beethoven has no real slow movement, and instead he has written a playful Andante in C major. The rondo finale is reminiscent of Haydn, written in the 'Hungarian' style he often used (but a rarity in Beethoven). An exciting minor-key main theme is interspersed with gentler episodes, culminating in a wild dash to the finish.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

String Quartet in E flat Op.74 'Harp'

Poco adagio

Allegro Adagio, ma non troppo

Presto Allegretto con variazioni

The E flat major Quartet Op.74 was composed in 1809 and its nickname, the 'Harp' Quartet, comes from the distinctive pizzicato passages in the first movement. The work begins with a slow introduction that seems to suggest a great stillness. The main Allegro moves briskly, but it has a sense of serenity too (so different from the Op.95 Quartet that was written as a companion piece). The Adagio is one of Beethoven's most overtly lyrical slow movements, dominated by a rapturous violin melody. Everything changes with the ferocious Presto, an urgent and angry scherzo in C minor with a short contrasting trio section that none the less continues to rage. The finale is a set of variations that returns to a gentler, less troubled world; and there are some radiant moments here, including a variation featuring the viola that seems to prefigure Brahms by half a century.

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ENSEMBLE 360

Ensemble 360 has gained an enviable reputation across the UK not only for the quality and integrity of its playing, but also for its ability to communicate the music to a range of different audiences. Formed in 2005, 11 musicians of international standing came together to take up residency in Sheffield with Music in the Round, establishing a versatile group of five string players, five wind players and a pianist. The musicians believe that concerts should be informal, friendly and relaxed occasions, and perform 'in the round' wherever possible. Critical acclaim has greeted all the group's CDs to date: Mozart and Spohr (ASV Gold), Beethoven and Poulenc (Nimbus Alliance).

Ensemble 360 has performed at many of the leading festivals and venues in England, including Wigmore Hall, National Centre for Early Music, Bath and Buxton International Music Festivals. It appears regularly on BBC Radio 3 and at a number of small-scale venues nationally with Music in the Round. Ensemble 360 is at the heart of chamber music in South Yorkshire, appearing regularly in Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster as part of Music in the Round's concert series, and is central to the nine-day Sheffield Chamber Music Festival in May each year.

Outside Ensemble 360 many of the musicians have highly successful careers, performing with groups including the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, English National Opera, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Camerata Bern, Manchester Camerata and Nash Ensemble.

MUSIC IN THE ROUND

Music in the Round is the leading national promoter of chamber music. For over 35 years we have been bringing people and music closer together through our friendly and informative style of 'in the round' performances, touring to numerous venues around the country as well as presenting two concert series and the Sheffield Chamber Music Festival each year at our home venue, the Crucible Studio. Our concerts are characterised by passion, excellence and proximity, and even in these challenging times of a global pandemic we have been striving to connect people through music by presenting socially-distanced live concerts and creating films featuring our musicians to enjoy online.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING SHEFFIELD CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Sheffield Chamber Music Festival is the highlight of the year for all of us, so although it's online again, we have put everything into creating a digital event that everyone can come together to enjoy, across Sheffield, South Yorkshire, the UK, and even the world!

Your generosity in the last year has made it possible for us to continue with our aim to bring people closer to music. It is thanks to you, our Friends, supporters and audiences, that we are able to bring you such a full Festival programme this May.

We are not charging for any of the events, but we are relying on your generosity to keep us going. For over a year now, musicians have been unable to work properly and earn a decent living. After facing such a challenging time for so long they need us more than ever. Any support that you give us makes a difference to them. **Please donate as you feel: every single gift makes a difference.**

Music in the Round is a registered charity no. 326811