

MUSIC
IN THE ROUND 
DORIC STRING
QUARTET

Premieres on Wednesday 12 March,
7.00pm, Live-streamed Performance
The Guildhall, Portsmouth

ALEX REDINGTON violin
YING XUE violin
HÉLÈNE CLÉMENT viola
JOHN MYERSCOUGH cello

Sheffield
**CHAMBER
MUSIC**
Festival

BARTÓK String Quartet No.3
SCHUBERT String Quartet No.13 D804 'Rosamunde'

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

String Quartet No.3 (1927)

Prima parte. Moderato –

Seconda parte. Allegro –

Recapitulazione della prima parte. Moderato –

Coda. Allegro molto

Composed in 1927, Bartók's Third String Quartet was written for a competition launched in 1925 by the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia for a new piece of chamber music, with three prizes totalling \$10,000. When the competition closed at the end of 1927, 643 compositions had been submitted to a panel that included the conductors Willem Mengelberg and Fritz Reiner. The judges awarded the \$6,000 first prize jointly to Bartók (for this quartet) and the Italian composer Alfredo Casella. The quartet was premiered at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia on 30 December 1928 and given for the first time in Europe a few weeks later, in Budapest on 19 February 1929.

The work is played without a break, but falls into two large sections, each one slow-fast. The quartet fuses a Beethoven-like sense of interweaving musical lines and extremely economical use of musical ideas with rhythmic elements and melodic contours that derive from Bartók's study of Hungarian folk music, expressed in a harmonic language that is uncompromisingly of its time. For the first time in this quartet, Bartók uses techniques (including playing with the bow as close as possible to the bridge, and the 'Bartók' pizzicato, when the plucked string snaps back to hit the fingerboard) that became familiar devices in his later quartets. Despite the contrasts between different sections, it is a work of fierce intensity that reaches a pulverizing conclusion.

'FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

String Quartet in A minor D804 'Rosamunde'

Allegro ma non troppo

Andante

Menuetto – Allegretto – Trio

Allegro moderato

Schubert finished his Octet on 1 March 1824 and the A minor Quartet was completed just a few days later. By the end of the same month he had not only written a handful of songs but also the 'Death and the Maiden' Quartet. In the space of little more than a month, he had composed three chamber music masterpieces, each of them highly distinctive. The A minor Quartet was given its first performance at the Musikverein in Vienna, played by the Schuppanzigh Quartet, which went on the following year to give the premieres of Beethoven's Op.127, Op.130 and Op.132 quartets. Most of Schubert's chamber music (including 'Death and the Maiden') was only published after his death, but the A minor Quartet – optimistically billed as the first in a set of three – was published by Sauer & Leidesdorf in September 1824, with a dedication from Schubert 'to his friend Schuppanzigh'.

For much of the time, the mood of this quartet is one of almost numbing melancholy. The first movement opens with a bleak accompaniment figure, the cello introducing a tremulous rhythm, over which the first violin enters with a drooping melody of infinite sadness. This sets the tone for much of what follows. The slow movement is a reworking of one of the entr'actes from the incidental music Schubert wrote for 'Rosamunde', giving the quartet its nickname. The wraith-like Minuet also draws on an earlier source, the song Der Götter Griechenlands D677, composed

in 1819 and setting the words: 'Schöne Welt, wo bist du?' – 'Beautiful world, where are you?' The mood of quiet restraint is maintained in the finale but here the clouds seem to lift, at least for a moment, and the music ends with a strong cadence in A major.

All notes © Nigel Simeone 2021

DORIC STRING QUARTET

Firmly established as one of the leading quartets of its generation, the Doric String Quartet receives enthusiastic responses from audiences and critics across the globe. With repertoire ranging from Haydn through to Bartók, Adès and Brett Dean, the Quartet's schedule takes them to the leading concert halls around the world including Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berlin Konzerthaus, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Louvre, Carnegie Hall and Kioi Hall Tokyo, as well as regular performances at London's Wigmore Hall.

Formed in 1998 the Doric String Quartet won first prize at the 2008 Osaka International Chamber Music Competition and 2nd prize at the Premio Paolo Borciani International String Quartet Competition. In 2015 the Quartet was appointed as Teaching Quartet in Association at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and from 2018 the Quartet took over the Artistic Directorship of the Mendelssohn on Mull Festival, a position that sees them play a key role in implementing the Festival's core mission of providing young chamber music professionals with a week of intensive mentoring, coaching and development.

The Quartet's violist, Hélène Clément, plays a viola by Guissani from 1843, generously on loan from Britten-Pears Arts and previously owned by Frank Bridge and Benjamin Britten.

www.doricstringquartet.com

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.**

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