

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 14 October 2026
7.30pm

Chiaroscuro Quartet

Alina Ibragimova violin
Charlotte Saluste-Bridoux violin
Emilie Hörnlund viola
Luise Buchberger cello

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

String Quartet in G minor Op. 20 No. 3 (1772)

*I. Allegro con spirito • II. Menuetto. Allegretto •
III. Poco adagio • IV. Finale. Allegro di molto*

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

*I. Allegro di molto e scherzando •
II. Adagio. Cantabile • III. Menuetto. Allegretto •
IV. Fuga a 3 soggetti. Allegro*

Interval

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

String Quartet No. 15 in A minor Op. 132 (1825)

*I. Assai sostenuto – Allegro • II. Allegro ma non
tanto • III. Molto adagio – Andante •
IV. Alla marcia, assai vivace – Più allegro •
V. Allegro appassionato – Presto*



Become a Member and play a part in every performance

Join from just £5.50 a month at wigmore-hall.org.uk/membership and enjoy
Priority Booking for our concerts.



Join & Support
Membership

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. Mobile devices must be powered off during performances. Devices required for medical reasons should be set to silent. Photography and filming are prohibited, other than at the end of concerts during applause. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster, persons are not permitted to stand or sit in gangways intersecting the seating, or in any other gangways. If standing is permitted at the sides and rear, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited. Disabled Access and Facilities – full details from 020 7935 2141. Hearing aids – if your hearing aids have a music setting, this should be selected. For the best listening experience and to avoid feedback sound, ensure hearing aids are snugly and securely fitted, and set to a comfortable volume.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other
electrical devices which can become audible are switched off.
Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn
Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan

In November of 1772, the historian Charles Burney attended a dinner and soiree at the Vienna home of the British diplomat David Murray, the Seventh Viscount of Stormont. Burney was particularly impressed with a performance of new quartets by **Joseph Haydn**, in which the violinist Joseph Startzler 'played the *Adagios* with uncommon feeling and expression'. In his travelogue, Burney describes how 'all who had any share in this concert... were animated to that true pitch of enthusiasm, which, from the ardor of the fire within them, is communicated to others and sets all around in a blaze'.

Haydn's quartets were written for intimate occasions like this, in which social contagion causes an active, engaged listening orientation to spread through a crowd. Naturally, not all such 'quartet parties' were this successful, but the potential for having a devoted, attentive audience for chamber music contributed to the experimental approach that Haydn took in his quartets. He composed his groundbreaking Op. 20 Quartets in 1772, and though they were only published two years later, it is likely that they circulated right away in manuscript form and could well have been heard on the programme that Burney so cherished.

The *Poco adagio* from the Quartet in G minor, Op. 20 No. 3, certainly contains 'uncommon feeling and expression' of the sort he noted. In it, the cello has an emotion-laden line of sixteenth notes that forms a determined contrast to the pristine chorale sung by the other voices. This figure is repeated in the first violin and varied over the course of the movement to astonishing effect, until eventually it acts as an accompaniment for a new theme heard in the cello. In the other movements, Haydn plays around with phrase lengths, using lopsided groups of seven measures in the first subject of the opening *Allegro con spirito* and units of five in the *Menuetto*. In the *Finale*, the primary theme fits into a square, four-measure frame, but the instruments enter and exit at separate times as if they are trying to conceal a rendezvous, giving the music a thrillingly off-kilter quality.

In one of the most beautiful moments in the Peter Shaffer film *Amadeus*, a fictionalised Antonio Salieri adoringly describes the beginning of the third movement of WA Mozart's 'Gran Partita' Wind Serenade as sounding 'almost comic. Just a pulse – like a rusty squeeze box.' His words could well be applied to the touching *Adagio. Cantabile* we find in Haydn's Quartet in A, Op. 20 No. 6, in which the bouncing offbeats supplied by the cello, viola and second violin create a thrumming, accordion-like pulse on top of which the first violin plays poignant melodies full of 'such longing, such unfulfillable longing'. Movements one and three are both dances: the first is a bounding *Allegro scherzando* in 6/8 time full of capricious pauses, and the third is an elegant minuet containing a somber, softspoken contrasting trio section. The subject of the quartet's fugal finale features a sequence

of sporty octaves, which acquire a particularly rambunctious character when, near the joyful end of the movement, Haydn turns the theme upside down.

Ludwig van Beethoven's Quartet in A minor Op. 132 is the second of three string quartets he wrote in the 1820s for Prince Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin. The first of the set, the Quartet in E flat Op. 127, had been subject to a disastrous première in March 1825 at which 'few were moved' according to violinist Joseph Böhm. To help listeners with comprehension, Beethoven agreed that the work could be played twice in a row in concerts, and the Schuppanzigh Quartet also used this double-performance strategy when they ran through the newly minted A minor Quartet at a closed-door event in September of that year.

The piece opens with the spare presentation of a set of yearning motifs, figures that bind together not just the separate chapters of this composition, but also others of Beethoven's late quartets. In the A minor Quartet's structurally beguiling opening movement, Beethoven fixates on and develops these gestures while incorporating a striking range of theme types and nods to other genres, from a jolly Schubertian song to scampering figures that recall the frothy *bel canto* operas that were popular at the time. The easy-going *Allegro ma non tanto* contains a chiming contrasting trio that sounds like it is being played on a music box. The work's latter two movements form a mirror image of the first two, with a cheerful if angular march and, following a dramatic recitative for the first violin, an angsty rondo that is a pitch-perfect preview of Johannes Brahms's music and ends in a chorus of hard-won celebration.

The Quartet's startlingly powerful cornerstone is the third movement, which carries the subtitle 'Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit' (Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Deity of a Convalescent). Beethoven uses a double variation form, in which he alternates and varies two themes in succession, and the more light-hearted second subject is based on a popular 18th-century stock harmonic scheme. These are somewhat antiquated, Haydnesque features, but in fact the scale and tenor of the movement is unprecedented. The first section, a touching chorale, is repeated a total of three times, and with each rendition Beethoven's subtle rhythmic modifications make the instruments' contrapuntal statements more intensely lyrical and personal. The whole movement is set in the Lydian church mode, which means that phrases tend to resolve on chords that glisten with hopeful uncertainty. When he wrote the A minor Quartet, Beethoven had recently suffered from intestinal disease that he worried would kill him, and he poured his sincere feelings of relief and gratitude for his recovery into this ambitious, spiritually rich musical statement.

© Nicholas Swett 2026

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.