

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 23 January 2023  
1.00pm

## Doric String Quartet

Alex Redington violin

Ying Xue violin

Hélène Clément viola

John Myerscough cello

Brett Dean viola

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

String Quartet in F Op. 50 No. 5 'The Dream' (1787)

*I. Allegro moderato • II. Poco adagio •*

*III. Menuetto. Allegretto • IV. Finale. Vivace*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

String Quintet in C Op. 29 (1801)

*I. Allegro moderato • II. Adagio molto espressivo •*

*III. Scherzo. Allegro • IV. Presto*



This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

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When he began composing the six quartets of Op. 50 in February 1787, **Haydn** had not produced a set of quartets for six years (his last had been Op. 33). He had been busy: his role at Esterháza required him to put on numerous operatic performances, and his growing international reputation necessitated some savvy handling of publishers. Yet throughout this time string quartets remained on Haydn's mind, encouraged by his friendship with Mozart; the two composers enjoyed playing chamber music together whenever they could.

No. 5 in F major was the last of the set to be composed, in September 1787. In his guide to Haydn's Op. 50 quartets, W Dean Sutcliffe describes it as 'showing more textural self-awareness' than the rest of the set. Throughout, Haydn plays with different combinations of instruments within the quartet, starting with a perky duet between the violins that the entrance of viola and cello seems to want to throw off course, by disagreeing with the harmony. Similar exchanges pervade the piece: if this is the string quartet as conversation, these interlocutors quite often agree to disagree.

The fantasy-like reveries of the first violin and the occasional dissonances in the second movement, *Poco adagio*, lend Op. 50 No. 5 its nickname, 'Der Traum' or 'The Dream'. While the association is unlikely to have come from Haydn, dreams were a popular theme of contemporary literature and art; for instance, Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1782 and prints swiftly circulated around Europe. Something unsettling pervades the next movement: the minuet takes some time to settle into its home key, and instead of providing contrast the central trio pursues the same theme in the minor. Yet any minor-key thoughts in the *Finale* are soon dispatched by the recurrent main theme, which dances up and away.

On 21 April 1787, Friedrich Wilhelm II wrote to Haydn thanking him for sending copies of his six 'Paris' symphonies and enclosing a golden ring as a token of his admiration. Haydn, midway through composing the six quartets that comprise Op. 50, negotiated with his Viennese publisher Artaria that he could dedicate the set to the Prussian King.

Meanwhile, Haydn offered Op. 50 to the English firm William Forster, who stole a march on the Austrians by publishing first. Neither publisher had been aware of the other until afterwards; Haydn managed to dodge the blame such that Artaria published the set some months later - and even sent the composer cheese and sausages as a peace offering.

The publishing house of Artaria was also involved in a controversy over the publication of **Beethoven's** String Quintet in C Op. 29 at the start of the next century. Beethoven had been commissioned to write the quintet by Count Moritz von Fries who, as was customary, had the rights to the manuscript for six months before it was published. After the necessary time had lapsed,

Beethoven sold the rights to Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. However, Artaria had somehow procured the parts of the quintet from Fries and published them, without Beethoven's permission. According to the memoirs of Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven undertook revenge with some ingenuity:

Since it had been copied in a single night, there were countless mistakes and even entire measures had been omitted. Learning of this, Beethoven acted in a way so cunning that one could hardly find its equal. He asked A.[Artaria] to send to my house for correction the 50 copies which were ready, and instructed me to correct them so heavily with ink on the coarse paper and to cross out so many lines that not a single copy could be sold or used. [...] I followed his instructions closely, and to avoid a law-suit, A. was forced to melt the plates down.

It seems that in reality, Beethoven was rather heavier-handed. He took to the pages of the *Wiener Zeitung* in January 1803, to protest about inaccuracies in the Artaria edition. The publishers took him to court. It turned out that Beethoven had been aware of, and even corrected, their parts. The composer initially refused to retract his statement but eventually did so - at least, sufficiently to satisfy Artaria.

For his other string quintets, Beethoven reworked existing pieces: Op. 4 is an arrangement of the Octet for Winds (later published as Op. 103) and Op. 104 is an arrangement of a Piano Trio. Op. 29, by contrast, was composed for two violins, two violas and cello, a combination favoured by Mozart. Throughout, Beethoven enjoys exploring the timbral variations created by different groupings of instruments: from the trio of violin, viola and cello, each in their lower register, which introduces the twisting theme that begins the *Allegro moderato*, through the beautiful filigree of the *Adagio*, to the violin's virtuosic flourishes over the agitated semiquavers of the other instruments in the *Presto*. Contrasts are important: dynamic accents heighten the tension of the *Scherzo*, and while it is the dramatic fugato in the finale that seems most Beethovenian, there is something Haydnesque in the impertinent interruption to the development by a minuet, marked *Andante con moto e scherzoso*, that recurs, even more surprisingly, in the coda.

While the Quintet Op. 29 might be among Beethoven's less familiar pieces today, it was a favourite of 19th-century violinist Joseph Joachim, who owned the autograph manuscript and often programmed the work in concert. Joachim may have suggested it as a model to Johannes Brahms, as he revised his String Sextet Op. 18. The 'textural self-awareness' of Haydn's String Quartet Op. 50 No. 5 is expanded in these pieces for larger ensembles, bringing in more voices and extending their musical conversations.

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