

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 2 November 2022
7.30pm

Novus String Quartet

Jaeyoung Kim violin
Young-Uk Kim violin
Kyuhyun Kim viola
Wonhae Lee cello

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

String Quartet in D minor K421 (1783)

*I. Allegro moderato • II. Andante •
III. Menuetto and Trio. Allegretto •
IV. Allegretto ma non troppo*

Alban Berg (1885-1935)

Lyric Suite (1925-6)

*I. Allegretto gioviale • II. Andante amoroso •
III. Allegro misterioso - Trio estatico •
IV. Adagio appassionato •
V. Presto delirando - Tenebroso •
VI. Largo desolato*

Interval

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

String Quartet in C minor Op. 51 No. 1 (c.1865-73)

*I. Allegro • II. Romanze. Poco adagio •
III. Allegretto molto moderato e comodo - Un
poco più animato • IV. Allegro*

CLASSIC *fm*

Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



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

Friends of Wigmore Hall – celebrating 30 years of friendship

Over the past 30 years, Friends have been providing transformational support for the Hall, ensuring this historic building remains a home for great music making. Enjoy the benefits of friendship by joining as a Friend today, and be a part of the Wigmore story. Visit: wigmore-hall.org.uk/friends | Call: 020 7258 8230

FRIENDS OF
WIGMORE HALL

30

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



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



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



The history of the string quartet is indelibly associated with Vienna, as told in the three chapters of tonight's concert: Classical; Romantic; Modern. In 1785, four years after **Mozart** settled in the imperial capital, Artaria issued six of the composer's string quartets. Dedicated to Haydn, they were, according to Mozart's florid but sincere introduction, 'the fruit of a long and laborious endeavour'. Certainly, the D minor Quartet K421, published second in the set and composed in 1783, communes that intensity across its movements.

The opening *Allegro moderato* begins in nervous terms. Although Mozart preserves the first subject's equal four-bar phrases, there are discrepancies in both rhythm and dynamic. Its lyrical successor initially appears less restive, though there is nervousness here too, accentuated in the minor-key recapitulation. Such irregularities are similarly present in the aria-like *Andante*, in which Mozart's typically flowing melodic style proves more stuttering.

Even the courtly *Menuetto* shows petulance, before the *Trio* strikes a more refreshing note, graciously skipping over the bruises of what has gone before. But tensions then reappear in the D minor finale, featuring a highly involved set of variations. There are feints towards major keys, but the music drives ever onwards, with the theme itself returning in its original guise. Only during the coda are we offered a last-minute shift to D major.

Viennese Classicism was the bread and butter of **Berg's** studies with Schoenberg, with his analysis of works from the period in part reflected in the composition of his String Quartet Op. 3, the last work he wrote under his teacher's guidance. By the time Berg returned to the genre in the mid-1920s, however, it was on very different terms: as the passionate outpourings of an adulterous man.

Berg had been married to Helene Nahowski since 1910, the year he composed Op. 3, but he was not always faithful, including when he pursued a brief but devastating relationship with Hanna Fuchs-Robettin while visiting Prague in 1925. The wife of a culturally adroit businessman, Hanna was, moreover, the sister of Franz Werfel, the third husband of Berg's close friend Alma Mahler, who, along with the composer's own pupil Theodor Adorno, acted as the lovers' messenger.

Later, Adorno called Berg's *Lyric Suite* 'a latent opera' which had 'the character of an accompaniment, as it were, to a course of events absent from it'. While the public was initially kept in the dark as to the nature of those events, the six-part score was later revealed to have been inspired by the affair. The lovers' initials, for instance, are found throughout – A and B flat for Alban Berg, B natural and F for Hanna Fuchs – while numerological ciphers, derived from the sum of the vowels and consonants in their names, provided metronome markings and formal subdivisions. These codes may be largely indiscernible in performance, but they demonstrate the intensity of Berg's confession.

After a giddy opening movement, capturing the first flushes of passion, an *Andante* shows Hanna with her children: her son, nicknamed 'Munzo', is described in a Czech dance, while her daughter, known as 'Dodo', is characterised by two Cs (the note 'do'). In Berg's copy of the score for Hanna, the ensuing *Allegro* was marked '20 May 1925', the day he had to leave Prague. This scherzo, featuring whispered iterations of the lovers' initials, encloses a *Trio estatico*, the programme of which needs little explanation.

The ensuing *Adagio* offers a tender, post-coital response, with allusions to Zemlinsky's *Lyrische Symphonie* and its – here unspoken – words 'Du bist mein Eigen' ('you are my own'). The *Presto* may recall the dance rhythms of the first two movements, but they have now been transformed by the pain of separation, before a final *Largo*, itself an internalised song (as revealed in the 1970s, when a musicologist deciphered the shorthand in Hanna's copy of the score), portrays an emotional wasteland, with a reference to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and a painful, evaporating coda.

Brahms published many chamber works during the early part of his career, but he clearly struggled with his First String Quartet, Op. 51 No. 1. Like the genre of the symphony, the string quartet was, for him, directly associated with Beethoven. Indeed, Brahms's choice of C minor, that most Beethovenian of keys – also found in the First Symphony – may have been an attempt to confront those ghosts. Begun in the 1860s, however, it was not until 1873 that the work finally saw the light of day.

Unlike the expansive First Symphony, this is an often terse work. The first movement, with hints of Beethoven's 'Pathétique' Sonata, is subject to constant variation, with each theme the upshot of its predecessor. Such transformations likewise serve to delay the return of the tonic until the very last bars, where it appears in a somewhat premature major guise.

The *Romanze* quells the battle with a generous melody, though it can also reveal uncertainties. And it is those chromatic inflections, turning the theme's smile into a frown, that dominate the penultimate section. Only during the trio of the third movement are we given a melody unimpeded by chromaticism, though this too is framed by a pensive *Allegretto*, whose final F minor provides the springboard for the off-kilter finale.

A recollection of the *Romanze* introduces this last movement, where harmonic disparities and emotional unpredictability are, again, paramount. There are several recollections of the slow movement too, though these are often placed at a distance, a tactic repeated in the recapitulation, where Brahms develops an almost grim attachment to the tonic. And while the bold reprise of the work's opening statement provides a sense of unity, it also blocks the escape from that fatalistic home key.

© Gavin Plumley 2022

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.