



EMMANUEL COLLEGE

BURNABY CONCERTS 2021

Friday 5 March at 6.15pm

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String Quartet No. 23 in F major - Mozart

Three Pieces for String Quartet - Stravinsky

String Quartet in B minor, Op. 33 No. 1 - Haydn

Echéa Quartet



Recipients of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Albert and Eugenie Frost Chamber Music Prize (2019/20), the Echéa Quartet was formed in 2017 at the Royal Academy of Music, London. They are recent winners of the 'Tremplin' at the Philharmonie de Paris' String Quartet Biennale (2020) and prizewinners of the International Anton Rubinstein Competition (2017). The quartet are currently Chamber Music Fellows at the Royal College of Music, artists for the Concordia and City Music Foundations (2019/20) and Yeomen of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. The quartet are mentored by John Myerscough, Simon Rowland-Jones and Mathieu Herzog. With many thanks to the Harrison-Frank and City Music Foundations, the Echéa Quartet are fortunate to play on a quartet of W.E. Hill & Sons instruments and bows (2019).

The quartet has appeared at international festivals such as Ferrandou Musique (France), Festival de los Siete Lagos (Argentina) and West Cork Chamber Music (Ireland). They have also attended a residency at the Banff Centre (2019). The quartet has performed in venues such as the Musikverein (Vienna), Wigmore Hall (London), Philharmonie de Paris and collaborated with Marin Alsop at the World Economic Forum (Switzerland). The quartet was featured on BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune', and more recently on CBC National Radio (Canada) as part of their six-week tour of the west coast of North America (2019). Due to the Covid19 pandemic, the quartet were unable to attend IMS Prussia Cove and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. They will however be Fellows for the Advanced String Quartet Program at Aspen Summer Music Festival, 2021.

The Echéa Quartet's continued dedication to new music is central to their work. They have commissioned works by UK-based composers, including Louise Drewett, Freya Waley-Cohen and Robert Laidlow. More widely, the quartet have worked closely with Harrison Birtwistle and Andrew Norman, and will be working with Mark Anthony-Turnage (2021).

Programme

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - String Quartet No. 23 in F major, K590 (1790)

Allegro moderato

Andante

Menuetto: Allegretto

Allegro

The last of Mozart's Prussian quartets written for King Frederick William II is arguably the most forward-looking for its time. It comes at the end of Bärenreiter's enormous tome of famed *10 Celebrated Quartets*, a much thumbed edition owned by any string quartet player.

The impression is often given that Mozart, uniquely among the most prominent classical composers, was able to compose easily and without the aid of sketches. His later quartets, at least, cost him a great deal of effort and he wrote of the 'exhausting labour' that they entailed.

Mozart allows the royal cello to discourse with its colleagues, a refinement the composer confessed to finding "troublesome" in execution. The customary four movements are an opening Allegro moderato, an affecting, valedictory Andante, Menuetto, and Allegro finale. From the first movement this piece is filled with aural miracles. Dialogues scurry about and return slightly altered, like double entendres uttered in one of Mozart's operas. At the movement's end, the coda restates the development, gracefully winds down, and ends on a witty high note. Mozart never specified whether the second movement is an Allegretto or an Andante. Alfred Einstein said of it: "It seems to mingle the bliss and sorrow of a farewell to life. How beautiful life has been! How sad! How brief!" The Menuetto is charged with ornamental appoggiaturas and contrary phrases. The finale is packed with remarkable devices, such as unexpected silences and intricate counterpoint.

Igor Stravinsky - *Three Pieces for String Quartet* (composed in 1914)

The concept of primitivism is inherent in Stravinsky's rhythmic and energetic gestures that tie these *Three Pieces* together. They are bare and enigmatic, and act as contrasting studies in dance, liturgical and charismatic music. Later, the three movements were entitled 'Danse', 'Eccentrique' and 'Cantique', and the music embodies each one of these natures from the start. The word 'String Quartet' used as the overall title of the work refers to the ensemble the piece is written for, rather than the genre itself, therefore questioning the musical form and idiom. The notion of quartet dialogue is completely foreign here, with fragmented textures characterising the discombobulated nature of the music, and each instrument sounding for itself.

Joseph Haydn - String Quartet in B minor, Op. 33 No. 1 (1781)

Allegro Moderato

Scherzo: Allegro di molto

Andante

Finale: Presto

Opus 33 no. 1 is set in the rare key of B minor: rare for Haydn, and almost unique within the entire standard quartet canon. This oddness seems to affect the music from the very outset of the first movement, the opening bars at first unsure whether to proceed in major or minor. The progress of the entire movement is plagued with difficulties: moving in fits and starts, stuttering at times, halted by eloquent pauses, often changing its mood on impulse. It is rhetorical rather than melodic music, questing in nature, and is over as soon as it reaches firm ground, almost by definition.

The second movement is a very brief Scherzo, alternating a clever main section with a luminous Trio in B major. Following this, the slow movement evokes the world of a stately, quiet dance – perhaps in reparation for the missing Minuet – which proves both adventurous and beautiful as it unfolds chromatically through many modulations.

The Finale, a breathless Presto, is an exciting romp which places the first violinist in the virtuosic spotlight, requiring swift arpeggiation, fiddle-like string crossings, and a constant ranging over all registers.

Notes by Eliza Millett

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endowed in memory of Hugh Burnaby (Fellow and Dean 1921–56 and
President of the Emmanuel College
Music Society) by his brother, John Burnaby of Trinity College.*
