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THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Fitzwilliam String Quartet

CHRISTOPHER ROWLAND, *Violinist*
JONATHAN SPAREY, *Violinist*

ALAN GEORGE, *Violist*
IOAN DAVIES, *Cellist*

FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1983, AT 8:30
RACKHAM AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Quartet in B-flat major (1865) TCHAIKOVSKY
Adagio misterioso
Allegro con moto
Adagio misterioso

Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 122 SHOSTAKOVICH
Introduction: andantino
Scherzo: allegretto
Recitative: adagio
Etude: allegro
Humoresque: allegro
Elegy: adagio
Finale: moderato

INTERMISSION

Quartet (1916) DELIUS
With animation
Quick and lightly
"Late Swallows": slow and wistfully
Very quick and vigorously

Grosse Fuge, Op. 133 BEETHOVEN
Overtura
Allegro
Meno mosso e moderato
Allegro molto e con brio

London, Decca, and L'Oiseau-Lyre Records.

The University Musical Society expresses thanks to Liberty Music Shop for its generosity and service to the community in underwriting the printing costs of this concert program.

PROGRAM NOTES

by ALAN GEORGE

Quartet in B-flat major (1865) PETER ILICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Of all the very greatest composers Tchaikovsky is possibly the least comprehensively known and understood: one could list about fifteen works which everybody knows inside out, most of them orchestral. But there is so much more than that, and amongst all this relatively unknown music are the five full-scale chamber works; only five, it is true, which suggests that Tchaikovsky felt far less at home in such limited surroundings.

One of the compositions he produced as a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire (no doubt a course requirement) was a string quartet in B-flat, first performed by colleagues at the conservatoire. Only the first movement survives, as Tchaikovsky destroyed however much else of the work he completed. But this dismembered torso does make an eminently satisfying whole, with its main *Allegro* flanked by slow music which begins rather like a grave Orthodox chorale, but with none of the darker implications in later examples obsessed by the minor mode (e.g., in the *Andante* of the E-flat minor quartet). This symmetrical type of first-movement form was also employed in Quartets 2 and 3, together with the second symphony, the "Little Russian," which shares with the quartet the use of Ukrainian folk material. Here the first subject of the *Allegro* is based on such a melody which was evidently a favourite of Tchaikovsky's, as he arranged it for chorus as well as incorporating it in his Op. 1, No. 1, the "Scherzo à la Russe" for piano. Its character certainly permeates the whole of this lively and resourceful *Allegro*, for which we therefore owe gratitude to a group of women singing at work in the garden of his sister's estate in Kamenka, so often a haven for Tchaikovsky during the more troubled years ahead.

Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 122 DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

The eleventh quartet was composed in 1966 and dedicated to the memory of Vassily Petrovich Shirinsky who, as second violinist of the Beethoven String Quartet, had taken part in the first performances of virtually all this work's predecessors. Not surprisingly, the character of the music is predominantly elegiac, but in a rather different way to what one might normally expect of a memorial piece. Apart from the *Elegy* there is little trace of the sorrow or tragedy which one naturally associates with death; instead, the music has a strangely withdrawn, almost whimsical, feeling which in the end is deeply touching. In this way it strongly resembles the seventh quartet, which arose out of similar circumstances, and for which the composer had a special affection. Those who know Shostakovich only through his large-scale symphonies will find here an aspect of his musical personality which might mildly surprise them.

The quartet takes the form of a short suite of seven continuous movements; the texture is as simple as could be imagined, being for the most part no more than straightforward melody-with-accompaniment. The danger of diffuseness is avoided by basing the whole work on a very small number of thematic ideas, so that all the movements bear a strong relationship to each other, though in a more subtle way than is at first apparent. So although this is not a work on which Shostakovich's powers of composition should ultimately be judged, its peculiar haunting quality and its unquestionable sincerity make it an experience of memorable significance.

Quartet (1916) FREDERICK DELIUS (1862-1934)

In his biography of Delius, Sir Thomas Beecham has expressed the opinion that the outbreak of war in 1914 was the greatest single blow the composer suffered during his entire life (always excepting the blindness and paralysis which were surely the cruellest manifestations of that ultimately fatal disease which he contracted many years earlier). But Delius was no Nielsen: he was no supreme optimist whose ideals had been shattered; rather he was the ultimate egocentric, and his seclusion in the countryside south of Paris had increased his indifference to the affairs of the outside world. The war was inconvenient. It undermined his considerable fame in Germany (despite his German origins he was still an English composer) and compelled him to evacuate his house in Grez-sur-Loing and return to England, thus destroying the serenity which was such an essential backcloth to his creative process. And so that period of his career (starting around 1900) which saw the composition of most of his greatest works — e.g., *Sea Drift*, *A Mass of Life*, *The Song of the High Hills* — was now drawing to a close. There followed a series of works in which Delius (outwardly) subjected himself to the discipline of classical forms. The "Delius Sound," however, became ever more individual and progressively less receptive to the mainstream European influences.

The string quartet, written in 1916, was in fact the only work in this period to be cast in the conventional four separate movements. The scoring is, on the whole, effective and idiomatic, and Delius' feeling for individual lines makes the instrumental parts eminently grateful to play. Delius had his own intuitive feeling for natural shape and formal balance, based principally on inspiration and a sense of flow; occasionally these deserted him but not, I feel, in the first three sections of the string quartet. The beauty and purposefulness of the opening movement is ideally contrasted by the lightweight and skittish *scherzo*, with its good old plantation-hat tune in the trio. This is followed by a unique and exquisite example of the archetypal Delius tone-poem in miniature — not surprisingly the most representative and memorable part of the work. Eric Fenby writes how Jelka Delius told him, "When we were away from home Fred missed the swallows most," and the angular violin line which runs all the way through the central section evokes most poignantly a picture of swallows weaving in and out of the eaves and trees in the garden at Grez. If the *finale* is somewhat four-square, repetitive, and lacking the true Delian touch, at least it is good fun and tuneful, providing an undeniably effective conclusion to the whole quartet. Very few pieces by Delius end in such spirits as this — one can almost imagine him chuckling to himself, with intentional irreverence, "After all, it's only a string quartet!"

Grosse Fuge, Op. 133 LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

In "Man and his Music" Wilfrid Mellers quotes the closing passage of "Little Gidding," the fourth of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets, at the end of the section on the late quartets of Beethoven, suggesting that Eliot "has been trying to deal with precisely the kind of experience with which Beethoven was preoccupied." Professor Mellers feels that this poetry "comes about as close to describing in words what Beethoven's last quartets are about as is humanly possible" — certainly closer than the scratchings of any programme annotator. As these lines seem particularly relevant to the Grosse Fuge, they are quoted here in the hope that the listener might, as a result, feel closer to both Eliot and Beethoven:

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was at the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for

But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always;
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one."

(Abridged)

About the Artists

The **Fitzwilliam String Quartet** began its professional life in 1971 as Quartet-in-Residence at the University of York, after playing together as undergraduates at Cambridge. In 1974 they moved to a similar post created for them at the University of Warwick, but three years later returned to York where the Quartet's contribution to that university has now been recognized in a permanent residency. The ensemble has given concerts throughout the British Isles, made two concert tours in the Soviet Union, and performed throughout Europe, North America, and Australia. They have recently made debuts in Paris, Geneva, Amsterdam, Dublin, and Montreal. Its members are also affiliate artists at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania.

The Fitzwilliam Quartet has garnered international recognition for its close association with the music of Dmitri Shostakovich, and presented the British and American premières of his last three quartets. In November 1972 the composer visited them in York, after which their friendship developed through regular correspondence. At the time of his death, they were preparing to spend a week with him in Moscow. The Fitzwilliam Quartet has presented the complete cycle of Shostakovich's quartets on five occasions (most recently in New York's Lincoln Center), and in May 1979 participated in the making of a BBC television film about them. The recorded performances of these quartets have gained four international recording awards for the Fitzwilliam. They have now been invited to record the entire Beethoven cycle, and the Shostakovich Piano Trio and Piano Quintet, with pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy.

The Fitzwilliam Quartet makes its first Ann Arbor appearance this evening.

Christopher Rowland was born in 1946 in Barnet. As a teenager he studied at the Royal Academy of Music, making concert appearances in London, Copenhagen, and Berlin. He won an Open Exhibition to Trinity College, Cambridge, where his tutor was Raymond Leppard. After graduation in 1968 he returned to the Royal Academy as a Graduate Scholar, studying with David Martin and Sidney Griller, and winning many prizes for violin playing. He was leader of the Sartori Quartet until 1974, holding posts at the Universities of Sussex and Lancaster and performing at Windsor in August of that year. He is a member (along with Alan George) of the contemporary music group Lumina and during the past few years has commissioned a considerable number of new works for violin and orchestra, solo violin, violin and piano, and violin with tape.

Mr. Rowland's violin was made by J. B. Guadagnini, c. 1739, Milan, generously lent by the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Jonathan Sparey was born in Keswick in 1949. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music before winning an Associated Board Scholarship to the Royal Manchester College of Music, during this period playing concertos with the College Orchestra and the Northern Sinfonia. He has performed the Mozart *Sinfonia Concertante* over 20 times with his sister, Carolyn, and together they appeared many times with Alfred Deller in Britain and the United States, and also recorded with him. His teachers have been David Martin, Gyorgy Pauk, Bela Katona, and Sascha Lasserson.

Mr. Sparey's instrument dates from 1702, by Giovanni Grancino, Milan.

Alan George was born in 1949 in Newquay, Cornwall. While at school he traveled to Dartington Hall for violin lessons with Colin Sauer, having previously studied with Stuart Foord and Harold Petts, and then won an Open Exhibition in music to King's College, Cambridge; at this time he changed to viola for quartet playing, studying with Herbert Downes in London. His long-time interest in playing baroque and classical music on authentic instruments has embraced appearances with the Yorkshire Baroque Soloists and the Music Party, often in company with his wife, the clarinetist Lesley Schatzberger. His other musical activities include conducting the university orchestra at York, and lecturing and writing on music. Apart from programme notes he has collaborated with Christopher Rowland on two studies of Shostakovich's chamber music, one of which is for BBC Music Guide Series.

Mr. George plays a viola crafted by Pietro Antonio Testore, 1764, Milan.

Ioan Davies was born in Carmarthen, South Wales, and began playing the violin at an early age. He later changed to the cello, and became a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales (with which he has since appeared as soloist). At the age of 15 he gained a scholarship to study the cello at the Welsh National School of Music, and then proceeded to St. John's College, Cambridge, graduating in 1971 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music. While at Cambridge he continued his cello studies with Peter Muscant, and later with Douglas Cameron at the Royal Academy of Music in London. In addition to quartet commitments, he is in increasing demand for cello and piano recitals, having appeared at several music societies and summer festivals in England, including the Cheltenham International Festival and the Three Choirs Festival.

Mr. Davies' cello was made in 1750 by Luigi Montenari, Naples.

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