

The Tippett Quartet

The Tippett Quartet regularly appear at Kings Place, Purcell Room, Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Bridgewater Hall and frequently perform on BBC Radio 3. They have performed at the BBC Proms and toured Europe, Canada and Mexico. Their broad and diverse repertoire highlights the Tippett Quartet's unique versatility. Their impressive catalogue of recordings have been released on Naxos, EMI Classics, Signum, Decca, Classic FM, SOMM Records, Vivat, Guild, Real World, Dutton Epoch and Tocatta Classics with universal critical acclaim. Alongside their concert programming, the Tippett Quartet has a serious commitment to working with children by making chamber music an interactive and exciting experience. This is an important feature of their educational work as it will inspire younger generations to become more involved in music making.

Emma Abbate (Piano)

Described as 'an amazingly talented pianist' by Musica, Emma Abbate enjoys a demanding career as a piano accompanist and chamber musician. She works with some of the finest singers and instrumentalists of her generation and has performed in duo recitals for international festivals and concert societies in Austria, Portugal, Italy, Poland and the USA. In addition to broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, appearances in the UK include the Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre, Royal Opera House, St John's Smith Square, St George's, Bristol and the Aldeburgh Festival.

Next Concert: The New London Chamber Ensemble (Wind Quintet)
Saturday 29th November 2021

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Programme Notes
30th October 2021

The Tippett Quartet with Emma Abbate (Piano)

John Mills (Violin) Jeremy Isaac (Violin) Lydia Lowndes-Northcott (Viola)
Bozidar Vukotoc (Cello)

Felix Mendelssohn. (1809-1847): String Quartet No. 1 in E flat major Op.12

1. *Adagio non troppo- Allegro non tardante.* 2. *Cantonetta: Allegretto*
3. *Andante espressivo* 4. *Molto allegro e vivace.*

Mendelssohn wrote the String Quartet in E flat major in 1823 when he was fourteen. Published posthumously in 1879 and not originally allocated an opus number, it has been severely neglected over the years, despite its special charm and invention. In the work, we find a youthful composer appearing, confronting and partially transcending the classical traditions of his predecessors Haydn and Mozart.

The sonata form of the opening movement *allegro moderato* is very regular in its layout with two conventionally patterned themes through exposition, development and recapitulation.

The second movement *adagio non troppo* is much more lyrical and chromatic and the influence of Haydn and Mozart is strongly felt. The penultimate movement is a sprightly minuet that is very reminiscent of the eighteenth century.

Mendelssohn then proceeds to show off his skill in a double-fugue finale, where for the first time we hear the second violin, viola and cello as individuals. Fugal finales were characteristic of Haydn's early string quartets showing the young Mendelssohn drawing inspiration from his predecessors.

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Stephen Dodgson (1924-2013)

Piano Quintet No.2

1. *Allegro comodo.* 2. *Alla fantasia- Allegretto.* 3. *Moderato e pesante*

The work of the composer Stephen Dodgson, who died in 2013 aged 89, was galvanised by the personalities and the often unusual requests of the musicians for whom he wrote – and they usually came back for more. His more than 250 works ranged from his chamber operas, *Margaret Catchpole* (1979) and *Nancy the Waterman* (2007), through choral music, songs and chamber music to large-scale orchestral and wind-band works.

His Piano Quintet No. 2 follows a standard 3-movement format. The first movement, *Allegro comodo*, opens with a gyrating cello melody, quite short, but returning periodically to mark out the paragraphs of the music, which is the source of the richer harmonies and expressive moments. It also serves to emphasise by contrast the bolder and brighter elements which generally tend to dominate, but not at the ending, which fades away with the cello's favourite final chord of B major.

The slow movement, *Alla Fantasia – Allegretto*, is a nocturne. The Strings are muted, atmospheric and lit with dramatic accents, silences and tremolandi. The ending, though calm, is questioning.

The finale, *Moderato e pesante*, is more fully scored than the earlier movements, possessing an underlying rustic character (*pesante!*). It is like an abbreviated rondo. Its one transparent episode – a wistful conversation piece for the strings – encounters an increase in tempo after its second appearance which hurries the music on to a festive conclusion in B major.

*** Interval ***

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Piano Quintet in E flat major Op 44

1. *Allegro brillante.* 2. *In modo d'una marcia. In poco largamente.*
3. *Scherzo: Molto vivace.* 4. *Allegro ma non troppo.*

The Piano Quintet in E-flat major, Op.44, was composed in 1842 and received its first public performance the following year. Noted for its extroverted and, exuberant character, Schumann's piano quintet is considered one of his finest compositions and a major work of nineteenth-century chamber music. Composed for piano and string

quartet, the work revolutionized the instrumentation and musical character of the piano quintet and established it as a quintessentially Romantic genre.

Schumann's choice to pair the piano with a standard string quartet reflects the changing technical capabilities and cultural importance, respectively, of these instruments. By 1842, the string quartet had come to be regarded as the most significant and prestigious chamber music ensemble, while advances in the design of the piano had increased its power and dynamic range. Bringing the piano and string quartet together, Schumann's Piano Quintet takes full advantage of the expressive possibilities of these forces in combination, alternating conversational passages between the five instruments with concertante passages in which the combined forces of the strings are massed against the piano. At a time when chamber music was moving out of the salon and into public concert halls, Schumann reimagines the piano quintet as a musical genre suspended between private and public spheres alternating between symphonic and more chamber-like elements.

The tempo marking for the first movement is *Allegro brillante*. The energetic main theme is characterized by wide, upward-leaping intervals. The contrasting second theme, marked *dolce*, is reached after a transitional section by glances at remoter flat keys. It is presented as a duet between cello and viola, and its meltingly romantic character is typical of Schumann's ardent inspiration in this quintet.

The theme of the second movement is a funeral march in C minor. It alternates with two contrasting episodes, one a lyrical theme carried by the first violin and cello, the second *Agitato*, carried by the piano with string accompaniment, which is a transformation of the principal theme disguised by changes in rhythm and tempo.

The main section of the lively third movement is built almost entirely on ascending and descending scales. There are two trios. The first in G-flat major, is a lyrical canon for violin and viola. The second, added at the suggestion of Mendelssohn, is a heavily accented *moto perpetuo* whose meter and restless tonality are in sharp contrast to the relative stability of the rest. After the third and final appearance of the scherzo based on the scales a brief coda concludes the movement.

The final movement is cast in an unusual form that partly reflects, but ultimately triumphs over Schumann's frequent difficulties with the conventional sonata form in his larger-scale instrumental movements. The original handling of both form and key contrasts sharply with the largely conventional formal organization of the previous three movements.