


**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

ZEHETMAIR QUARTET

—

10 Aug 12pm & 2.30pm

OLD COLLEGE QUAD

The performance lasts approx. 1hr with no interval.

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ZEHETMAIR QUARTET

Brahms

String Quartet in C minor Op 51 No 1

- 1 Allegro
- 2 Romanze: Poco adagio
- 3 Allegretto molto moderato e comodo
- 4 Allegro

Brahms

String Quartet in A minor Op 51 No 2

- 1 Allegro non troppo
- 2 Andante moderato
- 3 Quasi minuetto, moderato
- 4 Finale: Allegro non assai

PROGRAMME NOTES

It's said that Johannes Brahms destroyed around 20 attempts at string quartets before consenting to the publication of his 'first' two works in the genre (which you hear in today's programme) in 1873 at the age of 40. Even then, these quartets had a long gestation – Brahms began the C minor Quartet as far back as 1865.

Part of the problem was the long shadow cast by Beethoven. In explaining the 14 years it took him to produce a First Symphony, Brahms famously said of his great predecessor: 'You can't have any idea what it's like to always hear such a giant marching behind you!' The same could be said of the string quartet, another genre that Beethoven took to its expressive limits.

Brahms had settled in Vienna in 1872 and took the habit of retiring to the countryside for the summer, where he could devote his time to composition. It was in Tutzing, near Munich, on the shores of Lake Starnberg, that he put the finishing touches to these two works, writing to his publisher that, just as Mozart had taken particular trouble with his six 'Haydn' Quartets a century earlier, so he hoped to do his 'very best to turn out one or two passably decent ones'.

The C minor Quartet, Op 51 No 1, is the shorter of the two, and is so richly scored in its outer movements that Brahms seems to be aiming for almost orchestral-sounding textures. The A minor Quartet, Op 51 No 2, is more lyrical and more expansive, culminating in the flashing energy of a Hungarian *czárdás* folk dance.

David Kettle

David Kettle is a music and arts writer based in Edinburgh, who contributes regularly to the *Scotsman* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He has also written for publications including *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Times*, *The Strad* and *Classical Music*, and for organisations including the BBC Proms, Glyndebourne and Scottish Opera.

ZEHETMAIR QUARTET

Thomas Zehetmair Violin

Jakub Jakowicz Violin

Ruth Killius Viola

Christian Elliott Cello

Founded in 1994 by Austrian violinist and conductor Thomas Zehetmair, the Zehetmair Quartet ranks among the world's finest string quartets.

Highlights of previous seasons include a complete Schumann cycle at London's Wigmore Hall; the premiere of Heinz Holliger's String Quartet No 2, commissioned by Köln Musik for the Zehetmair Quartet; performances at major venues and festivals including Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Salzburg Festival, Hong Kong Arts Festival, Palau de la Música Barcelona and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival; and a performance at Elliott Carter's 100th birthday commemoration in New York.

Their discography is varied and highly acclaimed, including Schumann's First and Third Quartets (*Gramophone* record of the year), Hindemith and Bartók ('playing of huge finesse in both

pieces' – the *Sunday Times*, 'a real benchmark' – the *Guardian*) and Holliger, Hartmann and Beethoven, demonstrating their prowess in mainstream repertoire as well as the challenging works of the 20th century. Their next highly anticipated release is of Brahms string quartets.

In November 2014, the Zehetmair Quartet was awarded the Paul Hindemith Prize by the city of Hanau for outstanding musical achievement.


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