



www.coffeeconcerts.com

A “virtual” Coffee Concert recorded at the Holywell Music Room, Oxford

Available from Sunday August 16, 2020 at 11:15

**The Coffee Concerts Trust is a registered charity no.1095243.
A huge thank you to all our Patrons, Friends and Supporters.**

We very much hope you enjoy this concert. If you would like to become a patron of the Oxford Coffee Concerts or make a donation to help support our exciting “virtual” concert project, please get in touch with us via the contact page at coffeeconcerts.com.

The first three of our virtual concerts were recorded on July 24, 2020.

Further concerts will be recorded in September. They will be streamed from 11:15 on Sunday mornings throughout autumn. (They will also be available for a limited time after release.)

The Adderbury Ensemble

Martyn Jackson, Jenny Sacha (violins) • Chris Windass (viola) • Jane Fenton (cello)

- Beethoven: String Quartet no 6 in B flat major, op 18 no 6
- Dvorák: String Quartet no 12 in F major, op 96 (“American”)

Formed in 1986 by a group of the UK’s finest young freelance musicians, the Adderbury Ensemble have always had a flexible line-up, mixing and matching different players to deliver performances primarily as quartets, quintets or small chamber groups and occasionally adding further instruments to play symphonies and concertos by the likes of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn or Brahms – *with* or *without* a conductor.

Everyone who performs as part of the Adderbury Ensemble is an eminent instrumentalist, usually a principal player with one or more of the leading orchestras of Europe. From their early years playing Sunday evening concerts in the beautiful village of Adderbury in north Oxfordshire, the

group have gone on to develop a global reputation. They perform regularly throughout Britain and other European nations and played their first concerts in the United States in Spring 2016. They also helped found the world-famous Oxford Coffee Concerts at the Holywell Music Room, the oldest purpose-built music venue in Europe.

The Adderbury Ensemble have released ten recordings in their own right since their first CD was released in 1997, and individual members have recorded many more, either as soloists or as members of other groups.

More information:
www.adderburyensemble.com

**String Quartet in B flat, Op 18 No 6
by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

- 1. Allegro con brio; 2. Adagio, ma non troppo; 3. Scherzo. Allegro;
4. La Malinconia. Adagio – Allegretto quasi allegro.**

When Beethoven settled in Vienna in 1792 it was as a pianist that he first made his name. To build a reputation as a composer he seems to have had a deliberate plan, writing works for himself to play (several piano sonatas and two concertos), while carefully avoiding the string quartet and the symphony, genres particularly associated with his teacher, Haydn. His first large-scale works for string ensemble were for trio – not a limbering-up exercise for writing quartets as has sometimes been claimed, since the medium is actually a trickier one to handle successfully. It was not until 1798 that he began work on a group of six quartets, by which time Haydn had composed his last completed set of quartets.

In spite of the confidence shown in his earlier works, Beethoven seems to have had problems tackling the quartet medium (as did Mozart before him). He radically revised Nos 1 and 2 of the Op 18 set in the summer of 1800, and possibly No 3 also, before they reached their final form. Sending the new version of No 1 to his violinist friend Karl Amenda in 1801, he commented “...only now do I know how to write quartets properly.”

No 6 is in some ways the strangest of the set, with its unresolved contrasts of style and mood. The first movement sets out with an air of Haydnesque good humour – bright and alert, clear and simple in both scoring and

structure; so clear and simple, in fact, that we suspect Beethoven is preparing a major surprise.

The *adagio* also adopts a relatively cool tone to start with. But after an unadorned statement of the main theme Beethoven gradually surrounds it with a wealth of intensely expressive detail. The atmosphere clears but does not lift altogether, as the nagging accents keep reminding us.

The third movement is one of Beethoven’s wildest scherzos. The syncopations and off-beat accents are disruptive in the extreme, and it is some time before we feel ourselves on rhythmically firm ground. The trio section is a capricious solo for the first violin, discreetly supported by the other three instruments. Four minor-key, comically self-important bars lead back into the scherzo.

Now comes that major surprise: the profoundly emotional *adagio* which opens the finale. Entitled ‘La Malinconia’ and marked to be played “with the greatest delicacy”, it probes deeper than even the slow movement’s climax. The *allegretto* which follows is genial and rather bland, so that only the briefest recollection of the *adagio* is necessary to reinforce the indelible impression it leaves on the whole movement, despite the rushing *prestissimo* coda.

String Quartet in F, Op 96, 'American' by Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

1. Allegro ma non troppo; 2. Lento; 3. Molto vivace; 4. Vivace ma non troppo.

In September 1892 Dvořák began his three-year appointment as director of the newly established National Conservatory in New York. The following summer he spent a holiday in the Czech settlement at Spillville, Iowa. Finding himself in idyllic surroundings, and now joined by his children, he began two chamber works: the F major String Quartet and the String Quintet in E flat, Op 97. The quartet was sketched in three days and completed two weeks later. Its spontaneity and freshness, and the transparently simple structure and harmonic language that Dvořák deliberately cultivated, have helped to make it by far the most popular of his quartets.

Tremolando figures on the violins and a sustained note on the cello provide a backdrop for the viola's rhythmically alert opening theme. The mood remains genial, becoming even more relaxed with the second main theme, one of Dvořák's most gloriously expansive melodies.

Like the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony ('From the New World'), completed two months before, the *Lento* has a

melancholy wistfulness all its own. Based on a single song-like theme, it reaches a passionate climax before subsiding to its gentle conclusion. It is followed by a bright, rhythmic scherzo, whose opening theme includes a phrase said to be based on the call of a bird known as the scarlet tanager, that Dvořák heard on his walks in the woods surrounding Spillville. The two trio sections are based on a slower version of the scherzo's main theme.

The second violin and viola launch the finale with a syncopated rhythmic figure which provides much of this ebullient movement's forward drive. There is a quiet central chorale-like episode, which a number of writers have suggested evokes Dvořák improvising for the congregation on the organ of the settlement church in Spillville. The high spirits soon return, and they carry the movement through to its exuberant final pages. How appropriate that the happiest period of Dvořák's American stay should have produced one of his sunniest, most carefree works.

(c) Mike Wheeler, 2020

Virtual Coffee Concerts starting August 16, 2020

Sunday August 16, 2020

Adderbury Ensemble

- Beethoven: String Quartet no 6 in B flat major, op 18 no 6
- Dvořák: String Quartet no 12 in F major, op 96 ("American")

Coming soon...

Alice Neary (cello) and David Adams (violin)

- Bach: Cello Suite no 3 in C major, BWV 1009
- Ravel: Sonata for Violin and Cello
- Handel/Halvorsen: Passacaglia in G Minor for Violin and Viola (arranged for violin and cello)

Coming soon...

Tim Horton (piano)

- Beethoven: Six Bagatelles, op 126
- Schubert: Piano Sonata no 20 in A major, D 959