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

Sunday December 6, 2020 at 11:15

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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 “virtual” concerts, please get in touch with us via the contact page at coffeeconcerts.com.

This is one of the virtual Coffee Concerts recorded and streamed from our YouTube channel at 11:15 on Sunday mornings throughout autumn 2020. (These concerts will be available for a limited time after release.)

The Adderbury Ensemble with Fiona Cross (clarinet)

- **Mozart: String Quartet no 14 in G major, K 387 (“Spring”)**
- **Mozart: Clarinet Quintet in A major, K 581**

Fiona Cross

Fiona Cross is one of the leading clarinet players of her generation. She combines chamber music with a solo career and playing guest principal clarinet with all the leading British orchestras. She is principal clarinet of the Manchester Camerata and joint principal clarinet of the Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra. She has performed concertos with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, Manchester Camerata and the English Sinfonia. She has performed chamber music with various ensembles including the Vanbrugh and Alborn string quartets, Kegelstatt Trio, New Music Players, LPO Ensemble and Adderbury Ensemble. She was also invited to perform chamber music with Andreas Schiff at his festival in Weimar.

Fiona has recorded the Lefanu Concertino for Naxos, the Horowitz concerto for Dutton, the Simpson clarinet quintet for Hyperion and a virtuoso CD of clarinet and harp music for the Dinmore label. She takes a keen interest in promoting new music and has commissioned many new works for clarinet and piano and clarinet and harp. She has given many recitals in all the major venues in Britain, including London’s South Bank Centre, as well as performing in many of the established music clubs and festivals. She is a professor of clarinet at Trinity College of Music, London.

Adderbury Ensemble

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

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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:

<https://www.adderburyensemble.com/>

String Quartet no 14 in G major, K 387 (“Spring”) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

1. Allegro vivace assai; 2. Menuetto. Allegro; 3. Andante cantabile; 4. Molto allegro.

Shortly after settling in Vienna, in 1781, Mozart came across Haydn’s latest set of string quartets, his recently published Op 33. Haydn had described the quartets, in his letter to potential buyers, as “written in an entirely new and special manner”. Although this may have been, partly at least, shrewd sales-talk, there is a sense of Haydn’s quartet writing reaching a new level of maturity. As such, they presented Mozart with a challenge he found difficult to rise to but impossible to ignore, as he began work on the first set of quartets he had written since 1773.

Responding to Haydn’s example cost Mozart a considerable amount of serious effort. He was never to find writing quartets easy, and the manuscripts of the six quartets he composed between December 1782 and January 1785 are full of corrections and false starts, witness to the “long and

laborious toil” which he mentions in his letter dedicating the quartets to Haydn.

The G major Quartet is the first of the group. Although Mozart may not, at this stage, have been thinking in terms of a set of six, nor of dedicating them to Haydn, he is already absorbing lessons from his older colleague. All four instruments play a full part in the texture, which is well varied, as is the material. The first movement opens with a broad, lyrical theme; the second main theme is rhythmically more incisive, and a taut little march-figure rounds off each half of the movement.

Although the minuet is graceful on the surface, the many off-the-beat accents and chromatic scale figures carry a latent tension which comes to the surface in the stormy G minor trio section, with its stark unison opening. The andante cantabile is the calm

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after the storm, one of those movements in Mozart whose rich decorative detail and considerable surface activity mask a profound underlying stillness.

It is followed by one of his most impressive finales. This exhilarating movement is a

pre-echo of its counterpart in his Symphony No 41, 'Jupiter', combining as it does intricate counterpoint, based on the opening five-note figure, with bustling, energetic music straight out of the world of comic opera. Mozart may have laboured long and hard over it, but the music itself sounds completely effortless.

Clarinet Quintet in A major, K581 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

1. Allegro; 2. Larghetto; 3. Menuetto; 4. Allegretto con variazioni.

The clarinet was first developed just after the start of the early eighteenth century, and early forms of it were used occasionally by composers including Rameau, Telemann and Vivaldi. But it was Mozart who probably did more than anyone else to establish it as both a solo instrument and a regular member of the orchestra. His love-affair with the clarinet began during his visit to London as a child in 1764-5 (the English composer Thomas Arne had used clarinets in his 1762 opera *Artaxexes*), and his comment on the famous Mannheim orchestra in a letter to his father in December 1778, "if only we had clarinets too!" (i.e. in Salzburg), shows how much the instrument's agility and warm tone had captured his imagination.

In the early 1780s, soon after settling in Vienna, Mozart met Anton Stadler, clarinettist with the Viennese court orchestra, who was admired for his beautifully expressive playing. Over the next few years Mozart wrote parts for him in the Trio for clarinet, viola and piano, K498, and the Quintet for piano and wind instruments, K452, culminating in the Clarinet Quintet and Concerto, as well as obbligato parts for clarinet and basset-horn (a lower-pitched relative) in two of the arias from his opera *La Clemenza di Tito*.

Stadler played a modification of the standard instrument, which he helped to develop in 1788, and which today is called a basset-clarinet. It was fitted with extra keys extending the lower end of its compass by four semitones. Mozart made use of the extra notes, especially in the Concerto, but the new instrument failed to catch on, and when the Quintet and the Concerto were published the solo parts were adjusted to fit the conventional clarinet.

With the Quintet Mozart created one of his most beguilingly sensuous pieces of chamber music. The first movement opens with a gracefully floating string theme to which the clarinet replies with a rising two-octave arpeggio and a descending flurry. The second main theme is a long, song-like melody for the first violin, which the clarinet immediately turns towards the minor key, to poignant effect. The opening section ends with a less expansive idea for, again, the strings answered by the clarinet, and a brief recall of the opening theme which, after a magical twist into the remote key of C major, the clarinet plays for the first time. Each of the strings, in turn, takes up the clarinet's original answering phrase, which becomes the basis of the short development section.

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The strings are muted for the second movement, which begins as an aria-like piece for the clarinet, making occasional but telling use of the instrument's lowest register. The first violin later joins it in a duet. The haunting tenderness of this movement is counter-balanced by the robust minuet which, unusually, has not one but two contrasting trio sections. The first, in A minor, is for strings alone; the second suggests the rustic fore-runner of the waltz, known as the *ländler*.

Mozart originally drafted a rondo finale but abandoned it in favour of the present set of

variations, on a jaunty theme with all the simple directness of eighteenth-century Viennese popular songs. The first two variations maintain the theme's brisk energy. The viola has the spotlight for much of the minor-key third variation, while the fourth, in the major again, is marked by infectiously bubbly figuration for the clarinet and first violin. The fifth variation is an *adagio* which recalls the mood of the second movement; the sixth returns to the main tempo and is extended to form a lively finale.

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Virtual Oxford Coffee Concerts coming up...

Sunday December 13, 2020

Maria Wloszczowska (violin), Steffan Morris (cello) and Dinis Sousa (piano)

- Haydn: Piano Trio no 45 in E flat major, Hob XV:29
- Schubert: Piano Trio in B flat major, D 898

Sunday December 20, 2020

Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective

- Walker: Lyric for Strings
- Beach: Romance for Violin and Piano, op 23
- Elgar: Piano Quintet in A minor, op 84
- Mancini: Moon River