

Palazzo Tornabuoni

Monday, 25 April 2016, 6.30pm

QUARTETTO MUSICA RICERCATA

Warwick Lister, Michael Stüve, violins

Claudia Wolvington, viola

Roger Low, cello

PROGRAM

Quartet Opus 20, No. 4

*Allegro di molto*

*Un poco adagio e affetuoso*

*Menuet alla Zingarese*

*Presto e scherzando*

Josef Haydn

*Andante* from Quartet Opus 67

Johannes Brahms

*Haydn: Opus 20, No. 4*

Josef Haydn composed more than 70 string quartets, over a period of almost 50 years, from the 1750s until 1803. It was Haydn who, more than any other single composer, brought the string quartet from its infancy to its first great maturity. He had already composed 24 of them by the time he came to write the six quartets comprising Opus 20 in 1772, aged forty,

The first movement alternates passages of tranquil lyricism with outbursts of fiery impetuosity. A typical Haydnesque feature is the so-called false recapitulation about two thirds of the way through the movement: Haydn pretends to be returning to the opening material, but returns really and truly only after one or two false starts.

The second movement is a noble, serious Theme and Variations. In the first variation the second violin takes the lead, in the second, the cello, in the third, the first violin, after which the theme returns in its original form, followed by an expansive, freely expressive coda.

In the third movement, a Minuet 'in Gypsy style', Haydn wreaks havoc with the dignified triple metre of the traditional minuet with a welter of disruptive accents, scattered seemingly at random amongst the four instruments, against the traditional metre, and against each other.

The last movement is one of Haydn's rollicking finales, replete with a scampering main theme, unexpected turns of harmony, flashes of wit and raucous surprises. But, like the first and second movements, it ends quietly, as if tired from all the exertion.

*Brahms: andante from Opus 67*

Brahms, by nature cautious, himself declared that he wrote several string quartets before allowing one to be published. This is the second movement of his quartet, Opus 67, his third and last, composed in 1875. It is one of the most romantic and passionate utterances of the composer who in his time was considered an arch-Classicist.

W.L.