

Brodsky Quartet

Beethoven Late Quartets

Sat 31 Oct

Hall One | 2pm 4pm 6pm

KINGS PLACE



PHOTO: GIORGIA BERTAZZI

Programme

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

String Quartet No. 16 in F, Op. 135

I. Allegretto

II. Vivace

III. Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo

IV. Grave, ma non troppo tratto – Allegro

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Fugue for String Quartet in E-flat, Op. 81, No. 4

Beethoven

Große Fuge for string quartet, Op. 133

This performance will last approx. one hour with no interval

BRODSKY QUARTET

Gina McCormack violin

Ian Belton violin

Paul Cassidy viola

Jacqueline Thomas cello

Gina McCormack plays a violin made by Alessandro Gagliano, 1749; Ian Belton's violin is by Giovanni Paolo Maggini, c.1615. Paul Cassidy plays on La Delfina viola, c.1720, courtesy of Sra. Delfina Entrecanales and Jacqueline Thomas's cello is by Thomas Perry of Dublin, 1785.

Programme Notes

After the mighty 'late' quartets, Beethoven's final quartet, written in October 1826, is a modest affair, which takes a nostalgic affectionate and often playful look at the form and its roots in a musical conversation between friends. True, the hushed Lento has a visionary gleam, 'the sweet song of rest' he intended.

But the enchanting Allegretto is the composer at his most pastoral, and the fiery scherzo recalls the sly wit of Haydn, as does the joking finale, which asks: 'Must it be?' (as the wealthy Ignaz Dembscher groaned when asked for 50 florins for a quartet). Beethoven's retort kicks off a defiant Allegro: 'It must be!'

Beethoven's late quartets had been thoroughly studied by the young Mendelssohn. The publisher's decision to close the posthumous four-part Op. 81 collection with a Fugue from 1827 is a nod to Beethoven's influential style, and here provides an apt bridge to the pinnacle of his writing in the quartet form, the Op. 133 *Große Fuge*.

Stravinsky hit the nail on the head when he called Op. 133 'this absolutely contemporary piece of music that will be contemporary forever'. Originally the finale of Op. 130, this epic fugue of unparalleled intensity gives Bach's favoured process new expressive potency.

The *Große Fuge* actually comprises three fugal sections in different speeds. Dig a little deeper and its formal complexities astound. After a 24-bar overture (itself divided into three tempi) comes a highly dissonant double fugue, punctuated by a *Meno mosso e moderato* passage in G flat. An ornate, stop-start *Allegro molto e con brio* follows before Beethoven recalls wisps of melody heard earlier and restates the fugue theme to begin his dash to the end. Above all, it is this succession of forms, angular rhythms and contrasting tempi that casts this epic work.

Programme notes by Helen Wallace / Dr Chris Dromey

Biography

Since forming in 1972, the Brodsky Quartet have performed over 3,000 concerts on the major stages of the world and have released 70+ recordings. A natural curiosity and an insatiable desire to explore has propelled the group in a number of artistic directions and continues to ensure them not only a prominent presence on the international chamber music scene, but also a rich and varied musical existence. Their energy and craftsmanship have attracted numerous awards and accolades worldwide, while their ongoing educational work provides a vehicle to pass on experience and stay in touch with the next generation.

Throughout their career of nearly five decades, the Brodsky Quartet have enjoyed a busy international performing schedule, and have extensively toured the major festivals and venues throughout Australasia, North & South America, Asia, South Africa and Europe, as well as in the UK. The quartet are also regularly recorded for television and radio with their performances broadcast worldwide.

Over the years, the Brodsky Quartet have undertaken numerous performances of the complete cycles of quartets by Schubert, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Britten, Schoenberg, Zemlinsky, Webern and Bartók. It is, however,

the complete Shostakovich cycle that has now become synonymous with their name: their 2012 London performance of the cycle resulted in their taking the prestigious title 'Artistic Associate' at London's Kings Place and, in October 2016, releasing their second recording of the cycle, this time live from the Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam.

The Brodsky Quartet have always had a busy recording career and currently enjoy an exclusive and fruitful relationship with Chandos. Releases on the label include 'Petits Fours', a celebratory album of 'Encore' pieces arranged exclusively by the quartet for their 40th year; a Debussy compilation; 'In the South', featuring works by Verdi, Paganini, Wolf and Puccini; 'New World Quartets', comprising works by Dvorak, Copland, Gershwin and Brubeck; the quartets of Zemlinsky, including the world premiere recording of his unpublished early quartet; two Brahms discs, featuring the iconic Piano and Clarinet Quintets; the complete quartets of Shostakovich and the Elgar Quartet and Piano Quintet with Martin Roscoe. Their most recent release, the Late Quartets of Beethoven, was released to coincide with their performance of the repertoire at Kings Place.

As well as partnering many top classical artists, the quartet have had groundbreaking collaborations with some of the world's

BRODSKY QUARTET AT KINGS PLACE

Fri 6 Nov | 6pm & 8pm

BEETHOVEN QUARTET OP. 130

Wed 9 Dec | 7.30pm

ON WENLOCK EDGE

BRODSKY QUARTET WITH DANIEL NORMAN & SHOLTO KYNOCH

presented with Jeremy Hamway-
Bidgood's shadow-play film

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leading artists across many genres and have commissioned and championed many of the world's most respected composers.

Awards for recordings include the Diapason D'Or and the CHOC du Monde de la Musique, and the Brodsky Quartet have received an RPS Award for their outstanding contribution to innovation in programming.

The quartet have taught at many chamber music courses and have held residencies in several music institutes including the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where they are visiting International Fellows in Chamber Music. They were awarded Honorary Doctorates by the University of Kent and an Honorary Fellowship at the University of Teesside, where they were founded. The quartet took their name from the great Russian violinist Adolf Brodsky, the dedicatee of Tchaikovsky's violin concerto and a passionate chamber musician.

"GET BEETHOVEN!"

A memoir by Paul Cassidy



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A comic book character is born, the youngest of 16, into a war-torn country. Facing extreme brutality at school and on the streets, not to mention the oppression of the Catholic Church, he finds music. Armed with a violin and a burning passion, he flees the madness and sets off to pursue his dreams.

"Get Beethoven!" (Troubadour, 2019) is the inspirational story of Paul Cassidy's life. Overcoming adversity in his younger years, Paul recounts tragedy, joy, horror and humour. Informative and entertaining, the book charts his journey up to joining the Brodsky Quartet in 1982.

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