

Brodsky Quartet

Beethoven Late Quartets

Tue 3 Nov

Hall One | 6pm 8pm

KINGS PLACE



PHOTO: GIORGIA BERTAZZI

Programme

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

Chaconne in G minor, Z730

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

String Quartet No. 13 in B flat, Op. 130

I. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro

II. Presto

III. Andante con moto ma non troppo

IV. Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai

V. Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo

VI. Finale: Allegro

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 Alesandro 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

The late quartets have their origins in a commission from a twenty-eight-year-old Russian nobleman, Nikolas Galitzin, himself a fine amateur cellist, who wrote to Beethoven from St Petersburg on 9 Nov 1822 with a request for 'one, two, or three new quartets, for which labour I will be glad to pay you what you think proper'. Beethoven did not reply until more than two months later; he stated his financial terms and, with characteristic over-optimism, assured the prince that he would receive his first quartet 'at the end of February, or at the latest by the middle of March'.

In fact, he was extremely busy at the time with other major projects: the *Missa solemnis* was not quite finished, work on the 'Diabelli' Variations was about to be resumed after a break of nearly four years, and the composition of the Ninth Symphony had recently got underway. He was therefore unable to devote himself seriously to quartet composition until the summer of 1824, well over a year after delivery of the first work had originally been promised. [...]

Work on the last quartet for Galitzin, in B flat, overlapped with that on the quartet in A minor (Op. 132) and was finished in the late autumn of 1825. After the first performance, in March 1826, Beethoven decided to remove the long finale and publish it as a separate work; he also prepared a version of the finale for piano four hands in the summer of 1826. [...] But he did not get around to completing a shorter, substitute finale until the late autumn of that year, and the quartet was not performed with its new finale until after the composer's death.

The Galitzin set [Opp 127, 132 & 130] concludes with a work in no fewer than six discrete movements. While Op. 130 may be viewed as the giant of the quartets, the 'Hammerklavier' of the genre and lasting nearly an hour in its original form, it follows the overall plan of the classical divertimento, its substantial, deeply argued outer movements framing two contrasting pairs of scherzo and slow movement in alternation:

- I sonata form, with (recurring) slow introduction
- II faster 'scherzo'
- III faster 'slow movement'
- IV slower 'scherzo' (Alla tedesca)
- V slower 'slow movement' (Cavatina)
- VI finale: 'overture' and fugue in several contrasting sections

Viewed in this way, Op. 130 belongs in a tradition that originated in a lighter genre, although now imbued

with more sophisticated harmonies and part-writing, as found in such six-movement works as Mozart's String Trio, KV 563 (1788), Beethoven's First String Trio, Op. 3 (before 1794, a work modelled on KV 563) and Septet, Op. 20 (1800), and Schubert's Octet in F, D803 (1824). That Beethoven is using the divertimento model ironically in his late quartet is suggested by his capping it with the Große Fuge (Grand Fugue), a work of contrapuntal and textural complexity that has proved challenging to this day; that, on the other hand, he is taking the divertimento idea at its face value is shown by his ultimate rejection of the fugue as finale and his long search for a simpler alternative to it.


The sheer length and wide emotional range of Op. 130 led one of its early admirers, the violinist Karl Holz (1798–1858), to remark during one of his walks with the composer that he thought that it was the greatest he had yet written. Beethoven's reply, which Holz recorded in his memoirs, written late in his life, is instructive:

Each [work] in its own way! Art demands that we... do not stand still. You will notice a new type of part-writing in these works [by which he meant the distribution of material among the instruments] and there is no less imagination than ever before, thank God.

Abridged version of the notes by William Drabkin for Chandos Records.

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



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'At every turn of these engrossing and deeply considered readings, I like how the Brodskys ask questions of the music' Peter Quantrill, *Gramophone*

'There is no doubting that these performances of some of the greatest music ever written are to be taken seriously' Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*

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 North & South America, Asia, Australasia, 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,

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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.

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

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A memoir by Paul Cassidy



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 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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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.

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