

LSO St Luke's

CHAMBER MUSIC

BBC
RADIO 3

**NEW GENERATION ARTISTS
QUATUOR AROD**

Thursday 19 September 2024 1-2.05pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

Karol Szymanowski String Quartet No 2
Robert Schumann String Quartet No 3

Quatuor Arod

Recorded for future broadcast on **BBC Radio 3**

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THE CRYPT BAR

The Crypt Bar is open from one hour before concerts and during the interval (where applicable). Please note, card payments only. Only cold drinks are permitted inside the Jerwood Hall.

PROGRAMME NOTE WRITER

Kate Hopkins is English-language editor (concerts) for Salzburg Festival. She has written articles for organisations including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the Salzburg Festival and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and book reviews for *NB Magazine* and *The Wagner Journal*.

In accordance with the requirements of Islington Council persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any gangway.

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are strictly forbidden without formal consent from LSO St Luke's.

Please make sure that digital watch alarms and mobile phones are switched off during the performance.

String Quartet No 2 Op 56

Karol Szymanowski



1927



30 minutes

- 1 **Moderato, dolce e tranquillo**
- 2 **Vivace scherzando**
- 3 **Lento**

The Polish composer Karol Szymanowski was born in Tymoszwówka (Tymoshivka) in what is now Ukraine. He studied in Warsaw, then travelled widely, including to France, Sicily and North Africa. In 1919 he returned to Poland, now an independent country. He became increasingly interested in its folk music, especially that of the Tatra mountains on the country's southern border, which he used in compositions including the ballet *Harnasie* and the Second String Quartet.

Szymanowski wrote the quartet in the autumn of 1927 for a chamber music competition run by the Philadelphia Musical Fund (he lost out to Béla Bartók, who won First Prize with his Third String Quartet). It is one of his most experimental works, with an adventurous harmonic language, and use of extended string techniques such as pizzicato (plucking the strings), *sul ponticello* (creating a distinctive 'scratchy' sound by playing near the instrument's bridge) and *sul tasto* (playing near the fingerboard to get a 'flute-like' tone quality).

The first movement opens with a sustained melody played by the first violin and cello, who use mutes to create a mysterious, veiled sound. The inner two instruments provide delicate undulating accompaniment. The ensuing music remains predominantly quiet and introspective, albeit with occasional *sul ponticello* and *pizzicato* outbursts. The second movement draws on traditional Tatra music, and quotes the brigands' song from *Harnasie*. Its rugged rhythms and fragmented melodies also reveal the influence of Igor Stravinsky, whom Szymanowski much admired.

The closing *Lento* is a melancholy fugue: a piece in which a recurring theme – here again inspired by Tatra music – is accompanied by increasingly elaborate counter melodies. The dissonant harmonies and predominantly melancholy mood seem to anticipate the later works of Shostakovich. The closing bars, however, are surprisingly assertive and positive.

String Quartet in A major Op 41 No 3

Robert Schumann



1842



28 minutes

- 1 **Andante espressivo – Allegro molto moderato**
- 2 **Assai agitato – Un poco adagio – Tempo risoluto**
- 3 **Adagio molto**
- 4 **Allegro molto vivace**

In February 1842, Robert Schumann noted that he was having 'quartettish thoughts'. He subsequently devoted himself to studying examples in the genre by Mozart and Beethoven. This proved inspirational, and between 2 June and 22 July he composed three quartets of his own.

They were followed by his Piano Quartet and Piano Quintet, making 1842 his 'Year of Chamber Music', just as 1840 was his 'Year of Song'. Following playthroughs of the string quartets with his friend and fellow-composer Felix Mendelssohn in attendance, Schumann dispatched them to his publisher Breitkopf and Härtel. In his accompanying letter, he wrote that 'they seemed to give pleasure to players and listeners [...] you may rest assured that I have spared no pains to produce something really respectable'. The quartets were published the following year, with a dedication to Mendelssohn.

The Third Quartet's reflective introduction leads into a graceful Allegro with two main themes. The first features a distinctive two-note motif that derives from the music of the introduction; the second is introduced as an elegant cello melody with offbeat accompaniment. Other than a brief burst of vehemence in its central section, the movement is relaxed and genial. It is followed by a set of variations on a distinctive 'gasping' theme. The first two are energetic, while the third is a graceful Siciliano (a measured triple-time dance). The final variation is also dance-like, but more vigorous, with a hint of the Central European folk music that would inspire Schumann's friend Johannes Brahms.

The third movement opens with a serene, almost hymn-like melody, but becomes progressively more impassioned; only in its closing section is calm restored. The finale, by contrast, is light-hearted throughout, with a jaunty recurring theme, an extended central section (marked 'quasi trio') that resembles a rustic dance, and a vigorous closing section that ends the piece in great high spirits.

Quatuor Arod



© Laure Bernard

Taking their name from J R R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Quatuor Arod formed in 2013 at the Conservatoire de Paris, where all four members studied under Jean Sulem. One of the group's first outings was the FNAPEC competition, winning first prize in 2014. Since then, they have undertaken the Pro Quartet residency at the European Centre for Chamber Music.

Pushed into the limelight by their successes at the Carl Nielsen International Chamber Music Competition and the ARD International Music Competition (Munich), Quatuor Arod was named as a BBC New Generation Artist from 2017–2019 and a ECHO Rising Star from 2018–2019. In the five years since their first rehearsal at the Conservatoire, the quartet have performed at some of the world's most prestigious concert halls: the Philharmonie de Paris,

Wigmore Hall, the Berliner Philharmonie, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Oji Hall (Tokyo) and Carnegie Hall.

Critics have hailed the rare energy of the Quatuor Arod in concert as well as the quality of their recordings, the first of which was devoted to Felix Mendelssohn, ahead of dedications to Mathilde Zemlinsky, Franz Schubert, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Benjamin Attahir.

In 2023, Quatuor Arod starred in the documentary *Ménage à Quatre* directed by the iconic Burno Monsaingeon, which depicts a funny and intimate portrait of the group.

The quartet also enjoys working with such artists as Elsa Dreisig, Adam Laloum, Antoine Tamestit, Alexandre Tharaud and Camille Thomas. More than just being performers, they are also invested in the music of tomorrow: in 2017, they premiered *Al Asr*, Attahir's first string quartet, commissioned by La Belle Saison and ProQuartet.

FUTURE CONCERTS

Thursday 26 September 1pm
LSO St Luke's

BEETHOVEN DEDICATIONS

Ludwig van Beethoven 12 Variations on
'Se vuol ballare' (from Mozart's 'The
Marriage of Figaro')
Violin Sonata No 9, 'Kreutzer'

Chloë Hanslip violin
Danny Driver piano

Thursday 3 October 1pm
LSO St Luke's

ORNAMENTS OF THE BAROQUE

A selection of Sonatas by **Georg Philipp
Telemann**

Forma Antiqua

Thursday 3 October 6pm
LSO St Luke's

ORNAMENTS OF THE BAROQUE

A selection of pieces by **Francesco
Geminiani, Johann Sebastian Bach,
Alessandro Marcello, Francesco
Geminiani, and Antonio Vivaldi**

Victor Julien-Laferrrière cello
Justin Taylor harpsichord

Friday 18 October 1pm
LSO St Luke's

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

A selection of pieces by **John Corigliano,
Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Liszt, and
Frédéric Chopin**

Alexander Gadjiev piano

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