

LSO St Luke's

# CHAMBER MUSIC

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## BEETHOVEN DEDICATIONS

Thursday 7 November 2024 1-2.05pm

Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

**Ludwig van Beethoven** String Quartet No 8 in E minor, 'Razumovsky'

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** String Quartet No 3 in G major

**Quatuor Modigliani**

Recorded for future broadcast on BBC Radio 3

LSO

# STILL TO COME

## ORNAMENTS OF THE BAROQUE

November

Full of fantasy and charm, discover the beauty of Baroque music.

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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

**Wendy Thompson** studied at the Royal College of Music, before taking an MMus in musicology at King's College, London. In addition to writing about music she is Executive Director of Classic Arts Productions, a major supplier of independent programmes to BBC Radio.

*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 8 in E minor, 'Razumovsky'

## Ludwig van Beethoven



1806



34 minutes

- 1 **Allegro**
- 2 **Molto adagio**
- 3 **Allegretto**
- 4 **Finale: Presto**

Ludwig van Beethoven's three string quartets published as his Op 59, known as the 'Razumovsky' Quartets, belong to his fertile so-called 'Middle Period', years that produced the Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Violin Concerto, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the opera *Fidelio*, and the 'Waldstein' and 'Appassionata' Piano Sonatas.

The 'Razumovsky' quartets, composed in 1806, five years after the publication of Beethoven's first set, Op 18, represent a huge leap forward in terms of length, density of texture and complexity. A contemporary Viennese critic described their reception: 'Three new, very long, and difficult Beethoven string quartets are attracting the attention of all connoisseurs. The conception is profound

and the construction marvellously worked out, but they are not easily comprehended.' Indeed, some of the musicians who first tried to play the quartets thought that Beethoven must be joking.

The nobleman responsible for commissioning these perplexing pieces, Count Andrey Kirillovich Razumovsky, was the Russian Imperial ambassador to the Habsburg court in Vienna. A competent violinist who had taken lessons with Joseph Haydn, Razumovsky was related by marriage to two important Viennese patrons of Beethoven, who became a frequent and favoured visitor – 'cock of the walk', as the conductor Ignaz Seyfried put it – at Razumovsky's sumptuous palace on the Landstrasse.

In 1808 the Count established a house string quartet, led by the esteemed violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh with Josef Linke as cellist. This ensemble went on to give many premieres by Beethoven, who enjoyed the privilege of having a new quartet rehearsed 'hot from the frying pan and performed ... just as he wanted it'.

# String Quartet No 3 in G major

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



1772–73



22 minutes

- 1 **Presto**
- 2 **Adagio**
- 3 **Tempo di Menuetto**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's third string quartet was the second of a group of six that he composed in the winter of 1772–73, while he and his father Leopold were undertaking their third trip to Italy. Wolfgang, then aged 16, had been invited to compose an opera to open the carnival season at the Milanese court – a prestigious commission for such a young composer. The Mozarts left Salzburg on 24 October 1772, arriving in Milan eleven days later. Even the discomfort of coach travel over the Alps didn't deter Wolfgang from working – Leopold wrote to his wife during a stop-over that their son was 'writing a quartet to while away the time'.

After pre-Christmas festivities during which Wolfgang was invited to perform before an aristocratic audience every day, his opera, *Lucio Silla*, was finally staged on 26 December. Unfortunately the premiere itself started three hours late and ran into the early hours of the next morning,

but according to Leopold, subsequent performances were 'an extraordinary success'. They returned home to Salzburg at the beginning of March, by which time Wolfgang had a set of six quartets under his belt.

All are in three movements, with finales either in rondo or minuet form. Although the string quartet was still in its infancy in the early 1770s, and none of Mozart's early efforts could be considered a masterpiece, K156 in G has been described as 'a perfect and inspired miniature'. It certainly offers a fascinating preview of the composer's mature genius, especially in the impassioned slow movement that lies at its core.

The graceful theme of the opening Presto has a waltz-like character: nearly two decades later the dying composer returned to the contour of its melody for the 'Lacrimosa' movement of his *Requiem*. The same shape inflects the main theme of the Quartet's central Adagio, in the key of E minor, which achieves an operatic level of anguished intensity; while the finale is a charming if relatively conventional Minuet with a minor-mode Trio.

The second 'Razumovsky' quartet is the most enigmatic and experimental of the three, partly because of its constantly shifting harmonic foundation. It opens with two powerful chords on the tonic and dominant, which reappear throughout the Allegro in different guises, while the ensuing 'theme' is strangely fragmentary, the movement's impulsion being created largely from tiny rhythmic motifs or melodic intervals.

Beethoven specified that the Molto Adagio should be played 'with great feeling': his friend – the composer Carl Czerny – suggested that Beethoven had been inspired to write it 'when contemplating the starry sky and thinking of the music of the spheres', and certainly this extraordinary movement has a rapt, transcendental quality far removed from the banality of everyday life.

Razumovsky's only stipulation with regard to the three quartets which bear his name was that each should include a Russian folk tune, which here pops up in the E major trio section of the playful Allegretto third movement. The dignified tune was later used by several Russian composers, notably by Modest Mussorgsky

in the Coronation scene of his opera *Boris Godunov*, but here Beethoven treats it as a quasi-fugue, the tune appearing successively on viola, second violin, cello and first violin. The spirited finale, characterised by snappy dotted rhythms, begins in the 'wrong' key of C major, and veers between that and its home key during the course of a dancing sonata-rondo.

## Quatuor Modigliani



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Founded in 2003, the Quatuor Modigliani is recognised as one of today's most sought-after quartets, featuring regularly in prominent international series and on the world's most prestigious stages.

In addition to annual tours in the United States and in Asia, the quartet's numerous European tours have brought them to Wigmore Hall, the Paris Philharmonie, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Berlin Philharmonie, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Saint-Petersburg Philharmonia and the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg.

The Quartet's rich collaboration with the record label Mirare has led to 15 recordings representative of their vast repertoire, encompassing Franz Schubert, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn, Felix Mendelssohn and Béla Bartók, winning

numerous awards in France and abroad, including Choc de Classica and Diapason d'Or. On the occasion of their last recording release, *The Strad* selected the quartet as their cover feature.

Quatuor Modigliani also performs and commissions a wide range of contemporary works from composers including Mark-Anthony Turnage, Philippe Hersant, Peter Vasks, Kaija Saariaho and Evgeny Kissin.

A year after their founding, the Modigliani Quartet won three First Prizes successively at the Eindhoven International Competition (2004), the Vittorio Rimbotti in Florence (2005) and the prestigious Young Concert Artists Auditions in New York (2006). Following studies with the Ysaÿe Quartet and masterclasses with Walter Levin and Gyorgy Kurtag, Quatuor Modigliani were invited to work with the Artemis Quartet at the Berlin Universität der Künste.

The Quartet enjoys cultivating close friendships with their chamber music partners, amongst them artists such as Sabine Meyer, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Jean-Frédéric Neuberger, Beatrice Rana, Michel Dalberto, Fazil Say, Augustin Dumay, Amihai Grosz, Gary Hoffman, Paul Meyer, Michel Portal and Daniel Müller-Schott. The Modigliani Quartet also thanks the SPEDIDAM for its help.

# FUTURE CONCERTS

## At LSO St Luke's

Thursday 21 November 1pm  
LSO St Luke's

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A selection of pieces by **Johann Sebastian Bach, Georg Philipp Telemann, Francesco Barsanti**, and more.

**Lucie Horsch** recorder  
**Rachel Podger** violin

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## At the Barbican

Thursday 21 November 7pm

### NATURE'S HEART: KINOSHI AND BEETHOVEN 6

**Anna Clyne** This Midnight Hour  
**Ludwig van Beethoven** Symphony No 6, 'Pastoral'

*Interval*

**Cassie Kinoshi** HEART

**Ben Gernon** conductor  
**seed.**

**Aiko Roudette** visual artist  
**London Symphony Orchestra**

Thursday 28 November 7pm

**Helmut Lachenmann** My Melodies  
(Music for Eight Horns and Orchestra)

*Interval*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** Symphony No 7

**Ilan Volkov** conductor  
**LSO Horns**

**London Symphony Orchestra**

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