

Total performance time: approximately 60', with no interval

Leonkoro Quartet II

Jonathan Schwarz violin

Amelie Wallner violin

Mayu Konoe viola

Lukas Schwarz cello

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
String Quartet in C, Op.33, 'Russian',
No.3 (1781)

22'

- i. Allegro moderato*
- ii. Scherzo: Allegretto – Trio*
- iii. Adagio ma non troppo*
- iv. Rondo: Presto*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
String Quartet No.13 in B flat,
Op.130 (1825–6)

34'

- 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*

The **Leonkoro Quartet** are Britten Pears Young Artists for 2022–23 and are participants on Chamber Music in Residence at Snape Maltings.

It was founded in Berlin in 2019, and takes its name from the Esperanto word for 'Lionheart'. It has won numerous awards over the last year, including 1st prize at the Quatuor à Bordeaux competition, and multiple prizes at the International String Quartet Competition at Wigmore Hall, including 1st prize and the Britten Pears Young Artists Programme prize. In May they were appointed BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists for 2022–4, and most recently they received the Merito String Quartet Award, which includes support over four years and a composition commission.

The quartet has studied with Heime Müller at the Musikhochschule Lübeck, Günter Pichler (Alban Berg Quartet), and with members of the Artemis Quartet at the Berlin University of the Arts.

This season, the Leonkoro Quartet performs at venues including the Konzerthaus Berlin, the String Quartet Festival in Heidelberg and the Dresden Music Festival, and begins a three-year residency in Leeds.

Haydn: String Quartet in C, Op.33 No.3

By the time he wrote his Op.33 quartets, Haydn had spent 20 years at the Esterházy palace in the service of Prince Nikolaus. The workload was huge: quite apart from the administrative burden of hiring and firing court musicians, he was also expected to teach the royal children and to write an abundance of operatic, orchestral and chamber music to which the Prince had exclusive rights. In 1779, however, his contract was renegotiated and Haydn was at last free not only to publish his work but also to accept commissions from elsewhere. One of the first of these came from Grand Duke Paul of Russia, who wanted some new quartets. Spotting a neat business opportunity, Haydn accepted the request and then – unbeknownst to the duke – also offered them to his publisher. There was an awkward moment when it seemed the works might appear in print before the duke had seen them, but the publisher agreed to delay their release and Haydn duly collected fees from both.

As a result of his new contract, the ‘Russian’ quartets, as they are known, were some of the first works from his Esterházy years to find fame much further afield. They were among Mozart’s favourite compositions by Haydn and inspired him to write his own ‘Haydn’ quartets as a tribute. The nickname of the one performed today – ‘The Bird’ – is explained from the very start, with gentle pecking and chirruping underpinning flights of more sustained birdsong, and even – in the Scherzo – a twittering avian duet.

Beethoven: String Quartet in B flat, Op.130

Another Russian request, this one from the mid-1820s when Beethoven was approached by Prince Galitzin, a keen amateur cellist. The prince asked him for ‘one, two or three’ quartets and promised to pay whatever the composer ‘deemed adequate’. Despite his failing health, Beethoven accepted the commission and produced three of his late, great quartets, of which this was the last to be completed.

The first two movements came relatively easily but after that, Beethoven was suddenly plagued by indecision, partly about the structure of the work as a whole but also about the sort of finale he should write – something that continued to bother him for over a year. He eventually decided on six movements – the central, dance-like sections creating something akin to a suite and including one of the most beautiful movements Beethoven ever created, a cavatina, which reportedly moved him to tears. Never, he said, had his own music made such an impression on him.

For the finale, Beethoven planned a vast double fugue that he intended as the climax to the whole work, but it turned out to be quite the opposite. The music was of such extraordinary complexity and so far ahead of its time that critics, performers and audiences were genuinely baffled. Reluctantly, he agreed to remove it. It was later published separately as his Op.133 ‘Grosse Fuge’ and in its place, he wrote the finale we hear today – lighter, shorter and considerably more accessible: it became the last full-scale movement he completed before he died.

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