

The logo consists of four white lines of varying lengths and orientations that intersect to form a stylized, abstract shape resembling a four-pointed star or a cluster of lines.

LIGETI
QUARTET





PRESS

"Harvey's [2nd Quartet] was fruitful terrain for these accomplished young players who stretched and wound the membrane of sound in this questing and intricate piece, scudding through harmonics with chattering bows." Claudia Pritchard, *The Independent* on Sunday, December 2012

"Making light of the technical difficulties involved, the Quartet delivered a magnificent performance of Beethoven's Grosse Fuge, emphasising its still cutting-edge, uncompromising power." Giles Woodforde, *The Oxford Times*, January 2015

"The Ligeti Quartet conveyed both the romanticism and modernism of [Berg's Lyric Suite], the sweeping range of diverse emotions balanced by a cerebral appreciation of the work's architecture and language." Claire Seymour, *Opera Today*, April 2014

"Stylistic overlays fuel Crumb's construction, and the Ligeti Quartet's feral cracked right into its soul." Phillip Clark, *The Strad Magazine*, September 2015

"Bartok's Fourth Quartet was tough and gritty, full of rhythmic bite but always tonally focused. There was wonderful quicksilver playing in the Prestissimo second movement, featherlight but clear. The long meditative soliloquy that opens the Non troppo lento was beautifully played by cellist Valerie Welbanks. After the snappy pizzicato fourth movement, the finale flowed forwards in great paragraphs. Throughout, dynamics were superb, as was the dovetailing of parts." Tim Homfray, *The Strad Magazine*, June 2014



ABOUT

The Ligeti Quartet have been at the forefront of modern and contemporary music since their formation in 2010. They have established a reputation as one of the UK's leading ensembles, breaking new ground through innovative programming and championing of today's most exciting composers and artists.

Having played at landmark venues around the world including Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Barbican Hall and Kings Place they also regularly escape the stage to appear at museums, galleries, theatres, pubs, an IMAX Theatre, a fishing boat, and on iceberg sculptures as part of a Greenpeace campaign. International festivals include the Osterfestival Tirol (Austria), Pablo Casals Festival (France), Incubate Festival (Netherlands), Musik 21 Nachwuchsfestival (Germany) and 'HellHot!' New Music Festival (Hong Kong). In February 2016 they were broadcast live on BBC Radio 3's In Tune.

They have commissioned many new works and have collaborated with artists from all types of musical backgrounds including Anna Meredith, Elliot Galvin, Kerry Andrew (Juice Vocal Ensemble, You Are Wolf), Laura Jurd, Meilyr Jones, Neil Hannon (The Divine Comedy), Seb Rochford (Polar Bear), Shabaka Hutchings (Sons of Kemet, The Comet is Coming), Shed 7 and Submotion Orchestra. They are currently working on a long-term project with Ernst von Siemens prize-winning composer Christian Mason to create a series of 'Songbooks' for string quartet, based on overtone singing traditions from around the world.

The Quartet are passionate about supporting emerging composers and taking new music to diverse audiences. As Quartet in Residence at the University of Sheffield for 2015-17 and St John's Smith Square Young Artists 2015-16, they regularly lead composition workshops, and undertake education and community outreach work. They have recently been appointed Ensemble in Residence at Cambridge University and are City Music Foundation Artists 2016-18.

Ligeti Quartet are grateful to have received grants from the Britten-Pears Foundation, Hinrichsen Foundation, RVW Trust, and St John's Smith Square. They have also been generously supported by Help Musicians UK, the Tillett Trust, and the Zetland Foundation to further their training with the European Chamber Music Academy (ECMA), under the tutelage of Hatto Beyerle of the Alban Berg Quartet. The quartet comprises graduates from the Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music and the University of Oxford and they have been coached by members of the Arditti, Chilingirian, and Lindsay Quartets. They have been mentored by the Kronos Quartet at the Barbican Centre (2012) and Carnegie Hall (April 2016).

Mandhira de Saram • violin 1 | Patrick Dawkins • violin 2 | Richard Jones • viola | Valerie Welbanks • cello



MICROCOSMS

'to express a novel in a gesture...'
Arnold Schoenberg

- **György Kurtág** • Six Moments Musicaux, op. 44 (2005) 14'
- **Anton Webern** • Six Bagatelles (1913) 5'
- **Elliot Galvin** • Valentine (2016) 10'
- **György Ligeti** • String Quartet No. 2 (1968) 20'

INTERVAL

- **Igor Stravinsky** • Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914) 7'
- **Béla Bartók** • String Quartet No. 5 (1926) 31'

(TOTAL DURATION: 49' + 38')

In the preface to a score of Webern's Six Bagatelles, the composer's mentor Arnold Schoenberg wrote: "Consider what moderation is required to express oneself so briefly. Every glance can be extended into a poem, every sigh into a novel. But to express a novel in a single gesture, joy in a single breath – such concentration can only be present when there is a corresponding absence of self-indulgence."

This programme explores the possibilities of building the most expressive music by the smallest means. Kurtág, Webern and Stravinsky provide very different takes on the idea of a miniature composition, each distilling their own musical universe into its most essential components. In the second of his two quartets, Ligeti applies his orchestral technique of micropolyphony to chamber music in five distinct movements of explosive drama, mystery and humour. Similarly, Bartók uses the smallest musical cells to create large-scale structures across the course of his Fifth Quartet. The Ligeti Quartet's 2016 commission 'Valentine' by jazz pianist and composer Elliot Galvin is made up entirely of quotes from love songs, some more apparent than others.

SAMPLE PROGRAMME ONE

SAMPLE PROGRAMME TWO

METAMORPHOSES

Musical architects finding new forms

- **Conlon Nancarrow** • String Quartet No. 1 (1945) 11'
 - **Christian Mason** • Tuvan Songbook (2016 LQ commission) 17'
 - **Béla Bartók** • String Quartet No. 3 (1926) 15'
- INTERVAL
- **Iannis Xenakis** • Tetras (1983) 17'
 - **György Ligeti** • String Quartet No. 1 'Métamorphoses nocturnes' (1952) 23'

(TOTAL DURATION: 43' + 40')

This is a programme of music conceived as sonic mass: as shape and form, transforming from beginning to end. Two great innovators in mathematical construction open each half. Nancarrow, whose early quartet is a labyrinth of blues-inspired counterpoint precursing his automated player piano experiments, and Xenakis, who explores the visceral possibilities of texture in Tetras, arguably his most famous and brutally virtuosic piece of chamber music.

Alongside these pieces are three composers who each in their own way radically transform folk traditions into new musical languages. Bartók's tightly woven third quartet grows from a haunting opening into dance-like melodies over the course of a single movement. Ligeti's dazzling first quartet, though clearly indebted to this piece by his compatriot, hints at the extreme abstraction and occasional absurdity that would later become hallmarks of the Ligeti style. Ernst von Siemens prize-winner Christian Mason's 2016 commission for the Ligeti Quartet explores how Tuvan throat singing can be translated to the string quartet.

DIASPORA (AMPLIFIED)

Identity and belonging in the 20th century

- Wadada Leo Smith • String Quartet No. 3 'Black Church' (1998) 15'
- Joanna Bailie • Five Famous Adagios (2006) 10'
- George Crumb • Black Angels (1970) 20'
- INTERVAL
- Wadada Leo Smith • String Quartet No. 4 'In the Diaspora' (1999) 7'
- Steve Reich • Different Trains (1988) 30'

(TOTAL DURATION: 45' + 37')

This is a programme built around two modern American classics which explore themes of identity and belonging in the context of momentous 20th-century events. In *Different Trains*, for amplified quartet and tape, Steve Reich compares train journeys he made in America during World War II with journeys made in Europe by victims of the Holocaust, by layering survivors' testimonies as musical textures. George Crumb's *Black Angels* was written in response to the American war in Vietnam and grapples with the polarity of good and evil.

Also in the programme are two works inspired by the American civil rights movement by the jazz trumpeter and composer Wadada Leo Smith, both of which are taken from his Pulitzer Prize winning *Ten Freedom Summers*. In contrast, Joanna Bailie's *Five Famous Adagios* explores the more abstract idea of musical displacement by taking music of the past, distorting it through electronic processing and transcribing the results for quartet.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

This programme requires a sound engineer, a PA system, on-stage monitoring, front of house mixing desk, and the ability to play an audio backing track. The following percussion items are required for the performance of *Black Angels*: tam tam 16 inch, tam tam 24 inch, soft tam tam beater x 2, hard tam tam beater x 1, bass bows x 2, keyboard stands x 3.

FELLOW TRAVELLERS

Iconic 20th-century composers take on pop culture in America and Soviet Russia

- **John Adams** • Fellow Traveller (2007) 5'
- **Alfred Schnittke** • String Quartet No. 3 (1983) 20'
- **Samuel Barber** • String Quartet, Op. 11 (1936) 20'

INTERVAL

- **John Zorn** • Cat O'Nine Tails (1987) 15'
- **Laura Jurd** • Jump Cut Shuffle (2016) 9'
- **Dmitri Shostakovich** • String Quartet No. 13, Op. 138 (1970) 20'

TOTAL DURATION: 45' + 44'

The concert is built around two major works by Barber and Shostakovich, contemporaries who in this programme represent classics of the mid-20th century USA and USSR. Their music was related in language but written under very different circumstances; Barber composed his quartet in the prime of his life, buoyed by the artistic perks of The New Deal; Shostakovich wrote of his fear of mortality, in the grips of terminal illness and under Soviet scrutiny.

Barber's iconic Adagio for Strings, based on the slow movement of his string quartet, has pervaded late 20th-century popular culture - from its use in the depiction of the Vietnam War in the 1986 film 'Platoon' to the 1995 house remix by William Orbit/Ferry Corsten. The chamber music of Shostakovich is often heard as the voice of a lone individual railing against authoritarianism. His 13th String Quartet - like Barber's Adagio, also in B-flat minor - is one of his most deeply personal and also experimental works, with forays into jazz and twelve-tone music.

Alongside these are two late 20th-century works by compatriot composers, both known for their magpie-like interest in building pieces out of disparate music styles. Schnittke's Quartet No. 3 uses as its starting point three quotes from three disparate composers of very different periods: Lassus, Beethoven and Shostakovich. John Zorn's Cat O'Nine Tails (1987), subtitled 'Tex Avery Meets the Marquis de Sade', presents itself like a comically violent, anarchic Looney Tunes cartoon, with an explosive collage of jazz, American folk, punk, hardcore, modernist and classical music.

Rounding off the programme are two works in archetypically American styles: the rock riff influenced minimalism of John Adams, and a piece inspired by Duke Ellington, newly commissioned from Ligeti Quartet collaborator Laura Jurd.

SAMPLE PROGRAMME FOUR

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