

## BIOGRAPHY

The **FITZWILLIAM QUARTET** is now one of the longest established string quartets in the world: founded in 1968 by four Cambridge undergraduates, the quartet quickly achieved international recognition as a result of its members' personal friendship with Dmitri Shostakovich and their subsequent championing of his string quartets. He entrusted them with the Western premières of the last three, and before long they had become the first ever group to perform and record all fifteen. These discs, which gained many international awards, secured for them a worldwide concert schedule and a long term contract with Decca - all of them are newly available on their London or Eloquence labels.

Since 2000 their recordings have been produced by either Linn Records or Divine Art, the most recent being the Bruckner String Quintet/Quartet, and a jazz fusion collaboration with German saxophonist/composer Uwe Steinmetz and former Turtle Island Quartet violinist Mads Tolling. A new Liz Johnson complete edition follows the four quartets of eminent geologist John Ramsay and a compilation of chamber works by the South African Michael Blake. In 2017 a more long term ambition to record Beethoven quartets on gut strings - following the success of previous recordings on historical instruments - will be set in motion with a CD of Opp. 74/95/135. Indeed, the Fitzwilliam remains one of the few prominent quartets to play on older set-ups, but has simultaneously brought about the addition of over 50 new works to the repertoire.

Having been Quartet-in-Residence at York for twelve years and at Warwick for three, their university work continues at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge, at Bucknell (Pennsylvania), and latterly at St Andrews - where they run an annual quartet course ("Strings in Spring"), alongside their regular coaching weekend for Benslow Music in Hertfordshire. Just before Easter this year they arrived in Cambridge more or less straight off the plane from New York, and from there went on to their other British university at St. Andrews, with the second Fitzwilliam Hay-on-Wye Festival squeezed in between. Another busy clutch of festivals followed soon after, including Beverley Early Music, the English Haydn, and Swaledale. The 2016/17 season began with an exceptionally busy September, which included London concerts in Southgate, Copped Hall (Epping), Stow Festival (Walthamstow), St John's Smith Square, and King's Place.

For more information on the Fitzwilliam Quartet please visit <http://www.fitzwilliamquartet.org>.

## NEXT AT CONWAY HALL

Sunday May 28th 2017

*Pre-concert Performance 5:30pm*

**DUNJA LAVROVA & HIRO TAKENOUCHI**

Georgy Catoire's Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Op. 20  
'Poème'

*Main Recital 6:30pm*

**HIRO TAKENOUCHI & FRIENDS**

Catoire Piano Trio in F minor Op.14

Tchaikovsky Piano Trio in A minor Op.50

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CONWAY  
HALL  
SUNDAY  
CONCERTS



**Patrons** - Stephen Hough, Prunella Scales CBE, Roderick Swanston, Hiro Takenouchi, Petroc Trelawny and Timothy West CBE  
**Director of Music** - Simon Callaghan

**Sunday May 21st 2017, 6:30pm**

# FITZWILLIAM QUARTET

VIOLIN  
VIOLIN  
VIOLA  
CELLO

LUCY RUSSELL  
MARCUS BARCHAM-STEPHENS  
ALAN GEORGE  
SALLY PENDLEBURY

\* We are hugely grateful to the *CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust* for their support in providing free tickets for those aged 8-25.

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Conway Hall's registered charity name is Conway Hall Ethical Society (no. 1156033).

Please turn off all mobile phones and electronic devices.  
No recording or photographing allowed at any time.



## PROGRAMME

### Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

CONTRAPUNCTI 1, 9 & 11 FROM THE ART OF FUGUE BWV1080 (1742-46) [12']



### Liz Johnson (1964-)

TIDE PURL (2013) [5']



### Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75)

STRING QUARTET NO. 13 IN B FLAT MINOR OP. 138 (1970) [21']

I. Adagio - Doppio movimento - Tempo primo



### INTERVAL

(15 mins)



### Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

STRING QUARTET IN D MINOR D810 'DEATH AND THE MAIDEN' (1824) [38']

I. Allegro

II. Andante con moto

III. Scherzo: Allegro molto

IV. Presto

Tonight's performance will finish at approximately 8:30pm.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### BACH CONTRAPUNCTI 1, 9 & 11 FROM THE ART OF FUGUE BWV1080 (1742-46)

The Art of Fugue is not only an archetypal result of Bach's comprehensive studies in contrapuntal technique, but is also regarded as a lasting musical monument to the art of the Baroque era. It consists of 14 fugues and four canons, each movement featuring some variation of the main thematic idea. The second violin in Contrapunctus 1 states the main theme, followed by the other parts steering their own melodic paths before a final dominant chord marks a cliffhanger conclusion. Contrapunctus 9 pushes the contrapuntal gear up a level with precision-engineered passages from all four voices, ducking and weaving through each other under a perpetual rhythmic motor. Contrapunctus 11 is equally rich in texture with a tightly packed triple fugue that employs the inverted versions of three subjects in Contrapunctus 8.



### LIZ JOHNSON TIDE PURL (2013)

Liz Johnson is a British composer who teaches composition at the Birmingham Conservatoire. Her music has earned recognition by modern contemporaries, been broadcast on radio and selected for the opening of Kings Place in London. Tide Purl exudes an ethereal and absorbing air, woven together by the four serpentine string parts. After an airy chord introduces the piece, Johnson delicately weaves a winding and elusive narrative with trembling tremolo and slithering portamento effects. The central episode takes a different turn with pointy pizzicato penetrating the sonic landscape, and its intensity steers towards a climactic peak with added sul ponticello effects before gradually disappearing into the distance.



### SHOSTAKOVICH STRING QUARTET NO. 13 IN B FLAT MINOR OP. 138 (1970)

After touching on the ideas and techniques of serialism in his last decade, Shostakovich expanded on his curiosity for the progressive Schoenbergian language in his late string quartets. His String Quartet No. 13 draws a river of languid melodies and sombre textures, introduced by a 12-note theme in the viola and closely followed by the remaining players. Staccato iterations in the first violin mark the beginning of the Doppio movimento, and set the tone for the sinister monologue ahead, one full of knife-stabbing chords, jarring harmonic colours, pricking pizzicato and a macabre-toned rhythmic dance. The quartet returns to the mournful climate of the opening movement with the main 12-note theme recapitulated by the viola, and slithers through in doom-laden spirit before a final high b-flat unison rings out the final word to the piece.



### SCHUBERT STRING QUARTET IN D MINOR D810 'DEATH AND THE MAIDEN' (1824)

Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' Quartet not only stems from his earlier vocal lied of the same title, but also reflects the shadow of death that slowly approached the Austrian composer around that time. The piece launches straight into a fiery fortissimo exclamation followed by a contrasting lyrical response, setting the scene for a battle between Death and the fragile Maiden. Full-bodied unison statements, intense fugal interactions and dashing rhythmic passagework amplify the tension of the first movement. The main theme of the slow movement is taken directly from his lied, introduced through a dark funeral march and followed by a chain of variations branching away with various rhythmic, tonal and textural transformations. The Scherzo sees the struggle between the grim and the gentle reach new dramatic heights, where syncopated punches and dynamic surges blow furious gusts of wind between a gentle, melodic Trio. Based on the tarantella (a fast Italian dance in 6/8, said to repel the effects of the bite of a tarantula spider), the Presto conjures a fast and furious "dance of death" with galloping rhythmic phrases, exhilarating dynamic contrasts and a merciless coda stirring towards a tumultuous conclusion.

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