

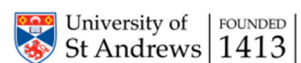
Virginia Woolf & String Quartets

Robinson College Chapel
Cambridge
3 November 2016, 7.45pm

Kreutzer Quartet

Peter Sheppard Skærved – Violin
Mihailo Trandafilovski – Violin
Clifton Harrison – Viola
Neil Heyde – Cello

Kindly supported by



PREFACE

Welcome to the third concert of 'Virginia Woolf & Music'. The project explores the role of music in Woolf's life and afterlives: it includes new commissions, world premieres and little-known music by women composers. Outreach activities and educational resources have been central to the project since it began in 2015. Concerts on Woolf and Bloomsbury continue throughout 2016-17. For further details see: <http://virginiawoolfmusic.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk>

Woolf (1882-1941) was a knowledgeable, almost daily, listener to 'classical' music, fascinated by the cultural practice of music and by the relationships between music and writing. Towards the end of her life she famously remarked, 'I always think of my books as music before I write them'. Her writing continues to inspire composers who have set her words or responded more obliquely to her work.

This concert takes its cue from Woolf's extraordinary experimental short fiction, 'The String Quartet' (1921). The work explores the pleasures and frustrations of 'capturing' music in language. Juxtaposing the banal remarks that frame the performance with the exuberant flights of fancy that unfold during the playing, Woolf's work celebrates music's capacity to stimulate memories and associations. And it celebrates too music's own 'weaving' into a formal 'pattern' and 'consummation'.

On 7 March 1920, Woolf attended a concert that included a Schubert quintet 'to take notes for my story'. Nonetheless, several works have been proposed as contenders as a 'source' – from a listener's exclamation 'That's an early Mozart, of course', to Schubert's 'Trout' Quintet, and even Schoenberg's Second String Quartet (Op. 10, 1908) which received its London premiere in 1914 following several years of interest in Schoenberg's music in the British press. But 'The String Quartet' seems more interested in exploring music's capacity to stimulate imagination than in representing a particular musical work in language. In selecting the repertoire for this concert we have embraced this aspect of 'The String Quartet', concentrating not on works that may have directly influenced her story but on those that illuminate her interest in the string quartet. Thus the programme includes works by composers Woolf loved (Bach and Beethoven), new music that responds to her writing (by Thurlow) and quartets that evoke her interest in contemporary music (Rainier) and in textual allusion (Schwartz). As 'The String Quartet' shows, Woolf seems to have been fascinated by the intimacy of the ensemble format, the formal constraints governing composition for four parts and, above all, the discursive character of string quartets.

- Lana Bode & Emma Sutton, Directors, *Virginia Woolf & Music*

**The concert will be recorded.
Please turn off mobile phones and other electronic devices.**

PROGRAMME

Fugue in E Major, BWV 878 J. S. BACH
Arranged Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) (1685-1750)

String Quartet PRIAULX RAINIER
(1903-1986)
1. Allegro molto serio
2. Vivace leggero grazioso
3. Andante tranquillo
4. Presto spiritoso

String Quartet No. 3: Portrait (for Deedee) ELLIOTT SCHWARTZ
WORLD PREMIERE (b. 1936)

INTERVAL

Memory is the Seamstress JEREMY THURLOW
WORLD PREMIERE (b. 1976)
1. Leggierissimo
2. Sostenuto
3. Molto vivace
4. Tremulous
5. Allegro, chiaro
6. Adagio, molto delicato

String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Op. 135 L. VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)
1. Allegretto
2. Vivace
3. Lento assai, cantata e tranquillo
4. Der schwer gefasste Entschluss/The difficult decision
(Grave – Allegro – Grave ma non troppo tanto – Allegro)

Well, here we are, and if you cast your eye over the room you will see that Tubes and trams and omnibuses, private carriages not a few, even, I venture to believe, landaus with bays in them, have been busy at it, weaving threads from one end of London to the other.

~ The String Quartet

J. S. Bach – Fugue in E Major, BWV 878 (arranged by Mozart, K 405)

Das wohltemperierte Klavier was central in establishing the tonalities of Western classical music and Bach's fugal writing has long been studied by composers to develop their knowledge of polyphony and counterpoint. Mozart had already composed fugues (e.g. the fourth movement of String Quartet No. 13, K 173) when he set out in 1782-3 to transcribe Bach's four-voice fugues for string quartet. The result allows the listener to hear Bach's fugal writing in a new way. The individuality of each voice is celebrated and coloured uniquely by each instrument's timbre, giving the fugue a clarity that keyboardists can only aspire to. Meanwhile, the interplay of the voices is celebrated, and the harmonic tensions heightened as the players respond to each other in counterpoint.



Illustration of Bach playing the organ

References to Bach's music pepper Woolf's fiction. In *The Voyage Out*, the pianist Rachel Vinrace has an 'intense enthusiasm' for the composer, drawing 'figures in the thin white dust to explain how Bach wrote his fugues'.



*Mozart composing in his room
Unknown painter. Private collection.*

It's possible that the double plot of *Mrs Dalloway*, whose protagonist 'loves Bach', is formally indebted to fugue's dualistic structure that juxtaposes subject and countersubject (it also evokes a contemporary term for shell shock, 'hysterical fugue'). Woolf attended performances at the Bach Festival of 1920 and the Woolfs eventually owned c.80 recordings of Bach's music (including, later, Wanda Landowska's famous recording of *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* on the harpsichord). Mozart's transcriptions of five four-voice fugues from Book II of *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* were educational exercises, not unlike Woolf's 1924 observation on her diary that 'in this book I practise writing; do my scales; yes & work at certain effects.' Typically, Woolf thinks of her own creative practice in musical terms.

For me it sings, unseals my sorrow, thaws compassion, floods with love the sunless world, nor ceasing, abates its tenderness but deftly, subtly, weaves in and out until in this pattern, this consummation, the cleft ones unify; soar, sob, sink to rest, sorrow and joy.

~ *The String Quartet*

Flourish, spring, burgeon, burst! The pear tree on the top of the mountain. Fountains jet; drops descend. But the waters of the Rhone flow swift and deep, race under the arches, and sweep the trailing water leaves, washing shadows over the silver fish, the spotted fish rushed down by the swift waters, now swept into an eddy where-it's difficult this-conglomeration of fish all in a pool; leaping, splashing, scraping sharp fins; and such a boil of current that the yellow pebbles are churned round and round, round and round-free now, rushing downwards, or even somehow ascending in exquisite spirals into the air; curled like thin shavings from under a plane, up and up....

~ *The String Quartet*

Priaulx Rainier – String Quartet

Born in South Africa in 1903, Priaulx Rainier grew up surrounded by the sounds and rhythms of Africa. In 1920, she moved to London to study the violin and it was not until the 1930s that she began to compose. Without any substantial formal compositional training she set out on the formidable task of finding her own voice and bringing her recollections of the sounds of Africa to Western classical music. Written in 1939 at the age of 36, the String Quartet was only her second published work and is striking in both its self-assurance and its individuality of style. Her use of contrasting textures is particularly striking, and it is perhaps the final movement where African influence can be most clearly heard.



Photograph by M. Lawson

The *Allegro molto serio* opens the work with an angular melody in quavers, which is then joined in unison at the octave before the upper instruments enter in strong triadic harmony. Throughout the movement, the triads provide a robust foundation, underpinning the harmonic development and contrasting vividly with further repetitions of the quaver melody. The *Vivace leggiero grazioso* opens with playful rhythmic fragments and an abundance of pizzicato before the eventual appearance of a melody that is elongated to a more lyrical crotchet rhythm. The rhythmic fragments and pizzicato textures continue throughout the movement, expertly woven round the melodic statements. The *Andante tranquillo* presents a theme at rest in a gentle homophonic texture, which grows in passionate intensity before it is offset by the brief appearance of a pizzicato rhythm in the lower register. The final movement, marked *Presto spiritoso*, presents jagged bursts of melody set against ostinato accompaniment, bringing the piece to a frenzied close.

Rainer's oblique connections to Woolf – her love of St Ives, where she had a studio; her brief study with Nadia Boulanger, who Woolf met in 1936; and her friendship with Michael Tippett (whose admiration for Woolf was such that he considered quoting *Between the Acts* in *The Knot Garden*) – are less significant than the formal parallels. Both spent their adult lives in the company of artists and sculptors (notably, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson in Rainier's case), acknowledging the formative influence of visual art on their own work; in 'The String Quartet', music is often evoked through colour and kinetic energy. Woolf and Rainier's shared commitment to constant formal innovation and assured handling of densely woven textures are also striking. Woolf was familiar with a number of contemporary musical idioms fusing African and European elements – notably jazz, a topic of several books on music published by the Hogarth Press – and the Woolfs' record collection included a few examples of non-Western music, including 'Congo' music.

Elliott Schwartz – String Quartet No. 3: Portrait (for Deedee)

My *String Quartet No. 3: Portrait* is, literally, a “portrait” of my late wife Dorothy, known to all as Deedee. It was composed for our good friend Peter Sheppard Skaerved and the Kreutzer Quartet.

I regard the work as a tribute to Deedee’s remarkably multi-faceted life, a look back at her rich artistic career, a response to her sudden death (after only a brief illness) in 2014, and a celebration of her wide-ranging musical tastes. Regarding the latter: I have embedded a number of quotes within the quartet’s texture. These include passages from the Western musical canon (works that she was particularly fond of), and compositions of my own that held special meaning for her. I’ve also based much of my thematic material on musical spellings of her name and mine.

Finally, three composer colleagues, on learning of Deedee’s death, were kind enough to write pieces in her memory. I’ve incorporated fragments of their memorial works into my quartet’s fabric.

~ Elliott Schwartz

When the moon comes through the trailing willow boughs, I see your face, I hear your voice and the bird singing as we pass the osier bed. What are you whispering? Sorrow, sorrow. Joy, joy. Woven together like reeds in moonlight.

~ The String Quartet

Elliott Schwartz taught at Bowdoin College for more than 40 years (1964 to 2007), including twelve years as department chair. During his Bowdoin tenure he founded the college electronic music studio and organised a series of new-music concerts that included student performances of Satie’s *Vexations*, the Cornelius Cardew *Treatise*, and Terry Riley’s *In C*. Schwartz has held visiting residencies at the University of California



(Santa Barbara and San Diego), Ohio State University, Harvard and Oxford. In addition, he was a visiting fellow at Robinson College, Cambridge on five occasions between 1993 and 2012. Performers of his music include the Minnesota Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, St Paul Chamber Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Tanglewood, Monday Evening Concerts (Los Angeles) and De Ijsbreker (Amsterdam). His appearances as visiting composer-lecturer include Paris, Strasbourg, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Weimar, Mannheim, Rotterdam, Copenhagen, London and Reykjavik. In the year 2006, his 70th birthday was celebrated with concerts of his music at Oxford, the University of Minnesota, the Royal Academy of Music (London), and the Library of Congress (the latter also holding the archival collection of his papers). Schwartz has written or edited four books on musical subjects, including *Music Since 1945; Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*; and *Electronic Music: A Listener’s Guide*. He has served as national president of the College Music Society and vice-president of the American Music Center. His compositions are published by the American Composers Alliance, G. Schirmer, Theodore Presser, Associated Music and Lauren Keiser. A number of his works are recorded on the New World, Albany, Metier, Folkways, Innova and BMOP-Sound labels.

Jeremy Thurlow – Memory is the Seamstress

Written specially for the Kreutzer Quartet and commissioned by *Virginia Woolf & Music*, my quartet comprises six short movements in contrasting moods. I took as my jumping-off point a marvellous passage from *Orlando* (1928):

Nature, who has played so many queer tricks upon us, making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbow and granite, and stuffed them into a case, nature, who delights in muddle and mystery, so that even now we know not why we go upstairs, or why we come down again, our most daily movements are like the passage of a ship on an unknown sea, and the sailors at the mast-head ask, pointing their glasses to the horizon: Is there land or is there none? to which, if we are prophets, we make answer "Yes"; if we are truthful we say "No"; nature, who has so much to answer for besides the perhaps unwieldy length of this sentence, has further complicated her task and added to our confusion by providing not only a perfect ragbag of odds and ends within us—but has contrived that the whole assortment shall be lightly stitched together by a single thread. Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind. Instead of being a single, downright, bluff piece of work of which no man need feel ashamed, our commonest deeds are set about with a fluttering and flickering of wings, a rising and falling of lights.

~ Jeremy Thurlow

Jeremy Thurlow is a composer, musicologist and pianist, and is Fellow and Lecturer in Music at Robinson College, University of Cambridge. His music has been performed by the BBC Philharmonic, the Fitzwilliam Quartet, Schubert Ensemble, Aronowitz Ensemble, BBC Singers, Sequenza and Peter Sheppard Skaerved, among many others, and was awarded the George Butterworth Prize. Current projects include string quartets for the Schubert Ensemble and for the Kreutzer Quartet, a character portrait of John Keats for bassoon and strings written for Mr McFall's Chamber, a celebration of the Orfordness Lighthouse past and future, for soprano and chamber orchestra, and a trumpet concerto. His writings include a monograph on Henri Dutilleux and a study of Messiaen's *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*. He broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, and also performs as a pianist, especially in chamber music.



Tramp and trumpeting. Clang and clangour. Firm establishment. Fast foundations. March of myriads. Confusion and chaos trod to earth.

~ *The String Quartet*

Ludwig van Beethoven – String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Op. 135



Engraved from painting by Hermann Junker

This string quartet is Beethoven's last complete opus, written in October 1826, just five months before his death. His previous four 'late' quartets were distinctly modernist and consequently poorly received by his contemporaries. This final quartet is less exploratory than its predecessors and acts like an epilogue for Beethoven's catalogue of works.

Beethoven knew Op. 135 was to be his last quartet. He sent the manuscript to his publisher with the following note enclosed:

Here, my dear friend, is my last quartet. It will be the last; and indeed it has given me much trouble. For I could not bring myself to compose the last movement. But as your letters were reminding me of it, in the end I decided to compose it. And that is the reason why I have written the motto: 'The difficult decision – Must it be? – It must be, it must be!' (Melvin Berger)

The quartet opens with a whimsical *Allegretto* that alternates homophonic passages with contrapuntal writing, all the while adhering to Classical sonata form. The following *Vivace* is a robust scherzo in which the violins are paired against the lower strings. Its jovial theme is frequently interrupted by a single pitch Eb which is passed round the strings before they resume their game. The *Lento assai* is a hymn-like cantata with a tragic middle section. The opening *Grave* section of the final movement (*Der schwer gefasste Entschluss/The difficult decision*) presents a three-note motif which poses the question 'Muss es sein?/Must it be?' The *Allegro* answers with a joyfully determined inversion of the three-note motif and the text 'Es muss sein!/It must be!'

Woolf's writing is profoundly indebted to Beethoven's work, apparent in her numerous allusions to the composer in her fiction, in her recollection that the decision to end *The Waves* with Bernard's long monologue came whilst listening to the late quartets and in her statement that '*Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world'. Woolf heard the London String Quartet play the complete quartets in 1921 and the Woolfs owned several recordings of Op. 135, including those by the Hollywood Quartet and the first recording of the complete quartets (by the Léner Quartet for Columbia in the 1930s). Op. 135 juxtaposes despair and affirmation ('sorrow and joy', as 'The String Quartet' puts it), and itself explores the parallels between writing and music via the ingenious repetition and inversion of words and notes.

Kreutzer Quartet

The Kreutzer Quartet are the dedicatees of hundreds of new works: this year alone they will present new works by composers including Robert Saxton, Laurie Bamon, Elliott Schwartz, Peter Dickinson, Roger Redgate, Robin Holloway, Jeremy Dale Roberts, Gary Carpenter, David Matthews, Paul Pella, Rosalind Page and Jeremy Thurlow, to name just a few. They have just returned from a tour in China, playing many of the works written for them. The Kreutzers have an extensive and critically acclaimed discography, on Toccata Classics, Metier, Naxos, Chandos, Guild and other labels. The quartet are resident ensemble at Wilton's Music Hall, London.



Kreutzer Quartet with Michael Finnissy

Acknowledgements:

We would like to warmly thank Susan Sellers and Jeremy Thurlow for their assistance in the organisation and publicity of today's concert.

We are most grateful to the generous sponsors of this concert: the AHRC; Robinson College, Cambridge; and the University of St Andrews.

Quotations from 'The String Quartet' are taken from '*The Mark on the Wall and Other Short Fiction*', ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford University Press, 2001).

The quotation from *Orlando* is a slightly edited passage from chapter 2 of *Orlando*, ed Brenda Lyons (Penguin, 1993).

Berger, Melvin. Quoted in 'Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): String Quartet No. 16 in F major, Op. 135'. Earsense.

<http://earsense.org/chamberbase/works/detail/?pkey=570> (accessed 20/10/16)

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