

# Lammermuir Festival

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14 September 2021, 2:30pm | Dunbar Parish Church

## Maxwell Quartet

Colin Scobie violin I • George Smith violin II  
Elliott Perks viola • Duncan Strachan cello

Joseph Haydn String Quartet in F Major, Op. 74, No. 2

Sergei Prokofiev String Quartet No. 1 in B Minor, Op. 50

Ludwig van Beethoven String Quartet No. 12 in B-flat Major, Op. 127



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# Lammermuir Festival 2021

Welcome to the 12th Lammermuir Festival — we're so glad to be back!

Two years ago, when we celebrated the landmark of our 10th festival we (perhaps fortunately!) had no inkling of what would unfold only a few months later. Then last year we mounted a small online festival and were grateful for the enthusiastic support, not only of our regular audience, but of many new Lammermuir followers around the world.

This year feels like both a celebration and a rebirth — not quite 'business as usual', but very much a festival that we have yearned, through many bleak months, to bring back to this beautiful part of Scotland and to share with you.

We have made a virtue of the new reality of international travel restrictions by inviting many old friends among our distinguished artists, but there are new faces too — headed by our Artist in Residence, the American pianist Jeremy Denk, and by vocal ensemble The Gesualdo Six. We explore a rich variety of repertoire and offer unique projects such as Hugo Wolf's *Italian Songbook*, an anniversary tribute to Dennis Brain, an intriguing afternoon chez the Wagners and a recital dedicated to a great British piano duo. We are delighted to welcome Scottish Opera back and look forward to BBC Radio 3's series of live vocal recitals.

For Covid-safety reasons we have concentrated many of our events in the larger venues in order to retain social distancing of one metre in our audience seating.

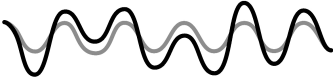
We are most grateful to Creative Scotland for their continuing support and to EventScotland for generously supporting our online streaming programme which will add a new and, we hope, permanent dimension to the festival.

We are fortunate indeed to have a number of generous individual donors, trusts and sponsors who, along with the support of our Friends of the Lammermuir Festival, make the festival possible. We thank each and every supporter most warmly, for without them we simply would not exist.

**Hugh Macdonald and James Waters**  
Joint Artistic Directors

Next year's Lammermuir Festival dates:

**9-19 September 2022**



## Lammermuir Festival

### Become part of the Lammermuir Festival Family

Our valued supporters are at the very heart of our festival, helping it flourish, prosper and reach out so that as many people as possible can enjoy it every year.

To ensure that we can continue to bring people together in celebration of beautiful music in beautiful places, we need your support and invite you to become a Lammermuir Festival Friend.

To learn more about the benefits of becoming a Festival Friend and to sign up, please visit [www.lammermuirfestival.co.uk/friends](http://www.lammermuirfestival.co.uk/friends).

#### Welcome to Dunbar Parish Church

Dunbar Parish Church, Gillespie Graham's grand red sandstone gothic church of 1821 stands proudly looking out to sea.

Damaged by fire in 1987, its spacious interior was restored with a colourful mix of ancient and modern features including an elaborate early 17th Century monument to the Earl of Dunbar and some fine 1990 stained glass by Shona McInnes and Douglas Hogg.

*Lammermuir Festival is grateful to the Minister and Kirk Session of Dunbar Parish Church for making the church available for this concert.*

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## Programme notes

**Joseph Haydn** String Quartet in F Major, Op. 74, No. 2  
I. Allegro spiritoso • II. Andante grazioso • III. Menuetto–Trio • IV. Presto

Haydn's first experience of international stardom was his sojourn ('residency', we would now call it) in London in 1791-2. Promoted by the impresario JP Salomon, the magnificent season of concerts of Haydn's music was the talk of the town, and he was fêted by admirers. One of the things that must have surprised him was that chamber music in London was not just a private, domestic affair for friends or a wealthy patron as it was in Vienna. The English liked to perform it in public, to large groups of people, and the paying public expected to be thrilled. In this context what really worked was music with a certain flamboyance — it had to make an impact.

So, on his return visit in 1794, he brought with him two sets of newly composed quartets: Opp. 71 and 74, paid for with a commission from one of Vienna's leading arts patrons, Count Anton Apponyi. The extrovert brilliance and originality of these six pieces was clearly intended to impress Salomon's discerning and demanding patrons. Salomon, who was a considerable virtuoso on the violin, would lead the performances himself and Haydn was careful to give him plenty of opportunities to show off his excellent technique.

The London critics were constantly astonished by the originality of Haydn's music. One, writing in the *Morning Chronicle* about three new symphonies that Haydn had just introduced (though he could as easily have been discussing the quartets), confessed that he had thought Haydn would surely start to repeat himself. On the contrary 'we are every time mistaken. Nothing can be more original than the subject of the first movement; and having found a happy subject, no man knows like Haydn how to produce incessant variety, without once departing from it.'

Which is exactly what happens in the first movement of Op. 74, No. 2, though the fanfare-like opening, a unison call to arms designed to make the audience sit up and pay attention, is not much more than a simple arpeggio on an F major chord. Haydn then proceeds to spin the whole movement from it, using sudden key shifts, pregnant pauses and unexpected harmonies to take the listener on a delightful voyage of discovery. In this, the lightest quartet of the set, a delectable set of variations forms the second movement (the word *grazioso* meaning 'graceful' or 'agreeable'). The playfully rhythmic Minuet shifts from F major to the darker-tinted and quite remote key of D flat major for its trio, but the change of flavour is piquant rather than unsettling. Masterly but unobtrusive contrapuntal delights drive the utterly fresh finale to its conclusion. Salomon's audience must have leapt to their feet.

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**Sergei Prokofiev** String Quartet No. 1 in B Minor, Op. 50  
I. Allegro • II. Andante molto • III. Andante

Prokofiev lived in exile, mostly in Paris, for about 20 years after leaving the nascent Soviet Union in 1918 not long after the revolution. His credentials as a musical revolutionary had already been established by such iconoclastic scores as the first piano concerto, first violin concerto, the ballet *Chout* and the outlier that signified his willingness to challenge his own orthodoxies, the back-to-Haydn 'Classical' Symphony.

Although his first port of call was the United States, a year or two of mixed fortunes there was enough to convince him that the hotbed of artistic radicalism that was Paris would be more congenial to a confident, ambitious young composer so he moved there in 1920. Hooking up with Diaghilev and his *Ballets Russes* was certainly a sensible career move, though it also brought a row with Diaghilev's resident Russian composer-prodigy Igor Stravinsky that almost ended in fisticuffs.

For the next few years, much of Prokofiev's energy went into such long-term projects as the operas *The Fiery Angel* and *The Love for Three Oranges*. But they yielded little in the way of income so he had to follow a parallel career as a pianist, making concert tours of Europe, the U.S. and eventually (in 1928) the Soviet Union. It was in 1930, on one of his American tours, that he was approached by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation at the Library of Congress with a commission to write a string quartet.

By this time he had moved away from the violent expressionism of his early 1920s music towards a more approachable style which he (misleadingly, perhaps) called 'new simplicity'. Chamber music had never been a priority for Prokofiev but he set about this commission with a will, preparing himself by making an intensive study of the Beethoven quartets. That accounted, he said, for the 'rather classical language' of the first movement. The opening is familiarly Prokofiev-like, with its wide-ranging, bright-toned violin theme over a motoric accompaniment, but the overall mood of the first movement is much more reflective than that would lead one to expect. Complex contrapuntal development of the main themes and, especially towards the end, uncompromising harmonies signal the seriousness of his approach to the (for him) unfamiliar territory of the string quartet.

The slow, expansive opening of the second movement is misleading; it soon turns into a brilliant scherzo, again highly contrapuntal. The final Andante is the emotional heart of the quartet and perhaps brings something of the nostalgia of an expatriate Russian for his homeland, with a note of real anguish in the desolate final pages.

**Ludwig van Beethoven** String Quartet No. 12 in B-flat Major, Op. 127  
I. Maestoso • II. Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile  
III. Scherzando vivace • IV. Allegro

Beethoven's Op 127 string quartet was given its premiere, rather under-rehearsed it must be said, on 6 March, 1825, by Ignaz Schuppanzigh's quartet. Both audience and critics were disappointed and mystified by the new quartet which, according to a critic from Leipzig, 'was understood by very few, and made a bewildering impression.' Beethoven and

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Schuppanzigh were lifelong friends but as far as Beethoven was concerned it was Schuppanzigh's lack of understanding of his intentions that had let the side down — and the long-suffering but always loyal violinist had to endure a typical Beethovenian dressing-down.

This was the first of Beethoven's so-called 'late' quartets. It represented another advance on his already complex middle-period quartets. Even his devoted patron, Prince Nikolai Galitzin who had commissioned it, had found it difficult to follow, at least at first: 'The poetic idea was hidden beneath phrases of seeming angularity and only revealed, even to the discerning, after long imaginative searches into the mind of the composer through the medium of perfect technical performance. Nevertheless, I was not discouraged... I was the object of ironical reproaches for [my] mania for Beethoven but I was undeterred... from my effort to make known... the last works of a genius several decades ahead of his generation.'

Once Schuppanzigh and his players had got this difficult new music under their fingers, it was better received and was played quite frequently in the years following. It is indeed the most benign, the most lyrical, in many ways the most accessible of the late quartets. Conventional, however, it is not. Although we usually think of E-flat as Beethoven's 'heroic' key, this is not a piece about struggle and ultimate triumph. The *maestoso* (majestic) opening is certainly arresting but it is hardly long enough, at six bars, to set the mood for the whole of the first movement. Nonetheless it's a hugely impressive, rich-harmonied gesture and it comes back at key moments to play its role in the drama. The lovely first subject that emerges from it via a trill launches the easily-flowing Allegro and in many different guises provides much of the movement's material. At the close the music settles back into its home key and the glowing beauty of the coda.

The second movement is a mesmerising set of variations on a gently rising and falling theme of disarming simplicity. The endlessly long arcs of sound make it as songful an instrumental piece as Beethoven ever wrote, leading the listener through an endlessly changing emotional landscape to a place of heavenly serenity.

Complete contrast comes with the Scherzo, whose spiky dotted rhythms, stop-start playfulness and sudden key shifts are all the sort of thing we expect in a Beethoven scherzo. The trio, though, is a surprise — a sudden speeding-up, scurrying through some startling key changes — and the return of the scherzo leads to a jokey, trick ending that outdoes even Haydn in ingenuity.

The finale shares something of the ethereal lightness of the first movement, with long passages where all the instruments play high, often in pairs, leavened by moments of earthly stomping folk dance. There is something intensely moving about the sheer joy of this music, and the extraordinary coda, suddenly in a new tempo and almost dream-like in its gossamer-light texture, sets the seal on a truly wondrous masterpiece.

Hugh Macdonald

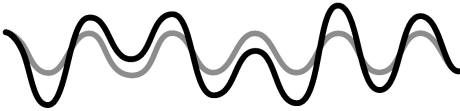
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The **Maxwell Quartet** has been praised as 'brilliantly fresh, unexpected and exhilarating' by *The Herald*, and for its 'superb storytelling by four great communicators' by *The Strad* Magazine. Having won first prize and the audience prize at the 9th Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition in 2017, the Maxwell Quartet is now firmly regarded as one of Britain's finest young string quartets, with a strong connection to their folk music heritage and a commitment to bringing together wide-ranging projects and programmes to expand the string quartet repertoire.

The quartet performs regularly across the UK and abroad, at venues including London's Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, and St Martin-in-the-Fields, with performances through the Park Lane Young Artist Programme, the Tunnell Trust Awards Scheme, and the Kirckman Concert Society programme. After their success at Trondheim in 2017, the quartet has toured widely across Europe, including performances in the Tivoli Concert Hall Series, the Amsterdam String Quartet Biennale, Stavanger Festival, Trondheim Chamber Music Festival, Schiermonnikoog and Wonderfeel Festivals in the Netherlands, Lammermuir Festival and Music at Paxton in Scotland, and more. Its debut tour of the USA in January 2019 garnered critical acclaim from the *New York Times* ('eloquent performers who bring the same sense of charisma and sense of adventure to their programming'), and performing to sold out venues in New York, Florida, California and Washington. Collaborations have included working with the Danish String Quartet to perform Scottish and Danish folk music, and working on a new commission for clarinet quintet with composer/clarinettist Mark Simpson. The Quartet's debut CD on Linn Records, featuring string quartets by Haydn alongside the quartet's own compositions based on Scottish traditional folk music, received glowing reviews from international press.

The Quartet is formed of four close friends, who grew up playing folk and classical music together in youth orchestras and music schools across Scotland. The group officially began in 2010 at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where its founding members met as postgraduate students. In 2011, the Maxwell Quartet was named as Residency Artists for Enterprise Music Scotland 2011-2013, which saw several acclaimed concert tours over their two-year tenure. Performing widely across Scotland, the quartet established a reputation for delighting audiences with their 'unaffected enthusiasm' (*North Highland Times*) and their 'panache and conviction' (*Strathearn Herald*). The quartet has since held residencies at Oxford University, Perth Concert Hall and many chamber music festivals across the UK, including their own festival Loch Shiel in the west highlands of Scotland, and a new self-curated concert series at Guardswell Farm in Perthshire. The quartet currently holds the position of Associate Artist at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow, and at Music at Paxton Festival in the Scottish Borders.

Passionate about collaborating with musicians and other artforms, the quartet has worked with a global roster of artists and institutions including Cryptic Theatre, Wintour's Leap, Royal Ballet School, Lunir, cinematographer Herman Kolgen and many more. The quartet has also worked with some of the UK's most dynamic composers including commissions by Anna Meredith, Tom Harrold, Mark Simpson and Colin Broom. In addition to a busy concert diary, the quartet regularly feature in broadcasts for BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio Scotland, as well as regularly giving schools workshops and concerts for children.



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