



## Festival Programme

**Friday 18th August, 9pm**  
**Poros**  
**Syggrou Amphitheatre**

### **String Quintet in C major, K. 515**

**W. A. Mozart**

- i) Allegro*
- ii) Minuetto: Allegretto*
- iii) Andante*
- iv) Allegro*

Jonathan Stone & Katharine Gowers, violins; Julia Joyce & Francis Kefford, violas; Julian Arp, cello

*~ Interval ~*

### **String Quintet in Bb major, Op. 87**

**F. Mendelssohn**

- i) Allegro vivace*
- ii) Andante scherzando*
- iii) Adagio e lento*
- iv) Allegro molto vivace*

Jonathan Stone & Katharine Gowers, violins; Francis Kefford & Julia Joyce, violas; Andrew Joyce, cello



## Festival Programme

**Sunday 20th August, 9pm**  
**Methana**  
**Amphitheatre of Kameni Chora**

### **Serenade in C major**

**E. Dohnányi**

- i) Marcia: Allegro*
- ii) Romanza: Adagio non troppo*
- iii) Scherzo: Vivace*
- iv) Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto*
- v) Rondo (Finale): Allegro vivace*

Katharine Gowers, violin; Francis Kefford, viola; Julian Arp, cello

*~ Interval ~*

### **String Quintet in Bb major, Op. 87**

**F. Mendelssohn**

- i) Allegro vivace*
- ii) Andante scherzando*
- iii) Adagio e lento*
- iv) Allegro molto vivace*

Jonathan Stone & Katharine Gowers, violins; Francis Kefford & Julia Joyce, violas; Andrew Joyce, cello



## Festival Programme

**Tuesday 22nd August, 9pm**  
**Hydra**  
**Bratsera Hotel**

### **Six Studies in Canon, Op. 56**

**R. Schumann**

- i) Nicht zu schnell*
- ii) Mit innigem Ausdruck*
- iii) Andantino*
- iv) Innig*
- v) Nicht zu schnell*
- vi) Adagio*

Noam Greenberg, piano; Jonathan Stone, violin; Andrew Joyce, cello

### **Piano Trio No. 3 in Bb major, K. 502**

**W. A. Mozart**

- i) Allegro*
- ii) Larghetto*
- iii) Allegretto*

Noam Greenberg, piano; Jannis Agraniotis violin; Andrew Joyce, cello

*~ Interval ~*

### **Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major, Op. 81**

**A. Dvořák**

- i) Allegro, ma non tanto*
- ii) Dumka: Andante con moto*
- iii) Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace*
- iv) Finale: Allegro*

Noam Greenberg, piano; Katharine Gowers & Jonathan Stone, violins;  
Francis Kefford, viola; Julian Arp, cello



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### **String Quintet in C, K. 515** **Wolfgang Mozart**

Mozart was not only the world's leading pianist of his day but also an accomplished performer on both violin and viola. He had benefited from the close tuition of his father, Leopold, who had written the most authoritative treatise of the century on violin technique. His favourite stringed instrument was the viola and he would frequently take the viola part in performances of his own string quartets and quintets. Perhaps it was the recognition of the beauty and potential of this inner voice that partially drew him to expand the established string quartet line-up, previously pioneered and mastered by his teacher and mentor, Joseph Haydn, by adding a second viola part. Although he didn't invent the string quintet, he greatly expanded its capability for polyphony, complexity and varied instrumental texture. In developing the string quintet, Mozart championed a genre that went on to inspire the composition of some of the finest chamber music, including that of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Dvorak and Brahms. This superb string quintet repertoire has formed a core part of most of the previous Saronic Chamber Music Festivals.

After a five week break following the completion of *The Marriage of Figaro* in April 1786, Mozart resumed composing with an outpouring of more than 20 extraordinary and novel masterpieces over the next ten months. Then, in the spring of 1787, when he was 31, after having abandoned the form for 13 years, he wrote two superb string quintets within seven weeks, K. 515 in C major and K. 516 in G minor. His motive is completely unknown. Mozart was one



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of the first freelance composers and he was compelled to write with an eye to the market – through public performance, commission or publishing. But these two string quintets fulfilled none of those functions. Although he offered them later to his patron, Michael Puchberg, as guarantee for a loan, we can only assume that at their inception they represented some of his most personal and heartfelt output.

Mozart was an intensely lyrical composer, and much of his music can best be understood by reference to the fusion of drama and music in his operas. His unique and unmatched ability to create ensemble in opera is again at the fore in his equally unmatched string quintets. In this unique dramatic form, each individual singer or player simultaneously expresses a unique and clearly perceived character and viewpoint in perfect harmony with those of multiple others. Forerunners in the string quintet genre, like Boccherini, gave prominence to the first violin and viola, while other parts simply accompanied with a musical result that is pleasant but bland and repetitive. Mozart, however, in the spirit of the age of emerging egalitarianism, gives equal prominence to each voice. The result is invigorating.

The entire material for the whole of the first movement, (Allegro), is contained in the opening five bars in a characteristic “question-answer” operatic duet between cello and violin, the roles of which are soon reversed. This seemingly simple thematic material is used with absolute mastery to create a mood of deceptive calm with an undercurrent of tension, using phrases of uneven length, endless variety in voicing and complex polyphony . The movement



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concludes with the reassuring balance of the classical restatement of the opening ideas, but not without some unexpected twists.

In the second movement, (Minuetto), a mellifluous melody is ingeniously contrasted with a fragment like a bird-call on just two notes. It's this two-note ditty that will stay in your head, and that makes the whole piece, just as the inspired two-note oboe solo in "I've got You Babe" made an otherwise dull tune into an all-time hit for Sonny and Cher. The third movement (Andante) features another operatic duet without words between violin and viola, which is the equivalent in limpid beauty and heart-breaking emotional intensity to that in the slow movement of the Sinfonia Concertante. Both pieces are at the pinnacle of musical composition.

There is a complete gear-shift in mood for the final movement (Allegro), a rollicking rondo. Again, the unpredictability and originality distinguishes Mozart's creativity from those of his numerous contemporaries. The mood is jocular, with humour and vitality that shows a debt to Haydn, one which Mozart freely acknowledged. Yet there are ripples on the pond. Nothing is settled. There are rhythmic jolts and unexpected dead stops, uneven phrase lengths, unexpected modulations. All this disturbs the comfort of the familiar returning theme, yet the solidity of the rondo construct never fails, everything is aurally comprehensible, and without warning, we're jolted into reality by the closing coda, and as with the last bars of *The Marriage of Figaro*, all is right in the world.



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### **String Quintet in B-flat major, Op. 87** **Felix Mendelssohn**

Mendelssohn wrote two "viola" quintets - a standard string quartet line-up of two violins, viola and cello with the addition of a second viola. The first was written when he was just 17, the same year in which he produced the vivacious Octet. Both these works were featured by the Leondari Ensemble in the Saronic Chamber Music Festival in 2014. In contrast, this, the second quintet, was completed in 1845, just two years before the composer's death at the sadly early age of 38. It ranks alongside Mozart's quintets as a pinnacle of the form, and as with Mozart, Keats, Schubert and Chopin, we can only wonder at what might have been, had Mendelssohn lived longer.

Why write a quintet? What characterises this particular collection of instruments? After the renaissance, a period of much musical invention and experimentation, four-part harmony emerged as the almost universally accepted supreme balance, enshrined eternally in Bach's 'Well Tempered Clavier' - the bible of four-part harmony. To this day, as in Mendelssohn's time, the string quartet is the most favoured string chamber music setup, which along with our orchestras and choirs is organised around four main parts: soprano, alto, tenor and bass. So why alter this and choose an odd number of instruments? It was Mozart's innovation, and among his collection of five string quintets are two of his greatest masterpieces. Mozart, like many composers after him, struggled to write fluently for the string quartet (the medium invented and mastered by Joseph Haydn). Mozart also loved the viola and always composed for the inner parts

with beautiful lines and rich writing. Adding a second viola gave him even greater scope in this direction and also allowed for operatic-like arguments between instruments (particularly duets), while still leaving enough instruments to fill out the harmony. The string quartet is much more restrictive in this way - Mozart throws off the shackles, allowing more space in which to express himself more freely and fluently. Mendelssohn would have played Mozart's quintets himself and been drawn to their ingenuity - he clearly relished the richness and scope of this ensemble, and he was never a personality for shackles of any kind.

Mendelssohn's music is widely associated with equanimity, joy and optimism, but his actual character was recorded as being aloof and mercurial: his outbursts of temper led him to be given the label of a "discontented Polish count". He was dismissive of most of his composer contemporaries, including Berlioz, Meyerbeer and Liszt. Liszt's compositions were, to Mendelssohn, just acrobatics. Mendelssohn married at 28 and had five children, though the love of his life was probably Jenny Lind, a Swedish soprano known as the "Swedish nightingale" whom he had met shortly before this work was written. She was the operatic sensation of her age. Queen Victoria was a fan, and the American promoter P.T Barnum made her exceedingly wealthy after a sell-out American tour. Upon Mendelssohn's death, Lind wrote that Mendelssohn was "the only person who brought fulfilment to my spirit".

The quintet begins with a dramatic and passionate Allegro vivace (lively and spirited) with a concerto-like solo role for the first violin. The second movement is a dance movement featuring





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Mendelssohn's superb skills in balancing multiple simultaneously moving parts ("contrapuntal" writing). The slow 3rd movement (Adagio) is the lodestone of the work - dramatic and passionate, echoing the great slow movements of Schubert and Mozart. The work concludes with a robust rondo-sonata, blending the composer's characteristic lyricism, outstanding contrapuntal technique and ever-present vivaciousness.

### **Serenade in C for String Trio, Op. 10 Ernö Dohnányi (1877-1960)**

Dohnányi was an outstanding pianist, composer and teacher and a pillar of 20th century music in Hungary. At his height in the 1930s he was director of the Budapest Academy, music director of Hungarian Radio, and chief conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic. His teachers had strong links to Brahms and Liszt, and he became a strong advocate and mentor of Kodály and Bartok, the latter just three years his junior. Criticised by some as pro-Nazi, he took many steps to resist Nazi antisemitic policy in Budapest and to protect Hungarian musicians against the Nazi Hungarian holocaust. His son, Hans, became a leader of the German anti-Nazi resistance for which he was executed. The controversy about the composer's relationship with Nazism might account for the demise of his popularity since World War Two.

The Serenade in C for String Trio was written in 1902, the same year as Mahler's Sixth Symphony and Puccini's Madama Butterfly. It is regarded as one of his very best works. There are five movements:

i) *Marcia: Allegro*. Here, Dohnányi tips his cap to Mozart and his contemporaries, for whom the Serenade was standard fare for court occasions, and the opening March signified the entrance of the aristocrat who had commissioned the music. But we're rapidly into the 20th century and away from pomp. The composer's debt to European folk music is now heard, the themes of which inform the material in all of the movements. The Magyar inflections, although present, are less overt than those later seen in the music of Kodaly and Bartok.

ii) *Romanza: Adagio non troppo*. An arresting opening viola solo heralds a later duet between violin and cello with an arpeggio accompaniment on viola.

iii) *Scherzo: Vivace*. The central movement shows strong links to the classical and romantic traditions with rapidly changing rhythms and exciting contrapuntal use of the three voices.

iv) *Theme and Variations: Andante con Moto*. A chorale-like theme derived from the opening March is used as the basis for five lyrical variations. Here the 24-year-old composer shows his mastery of polyphony and his elegant solving of the daunting problems of writing four-part harmony for three voices.

v) *Rondo: Allegro vivace*. The final movement brings the piece to a vivacious close, but with a hint of underlying sadness.

### **Six Studies in Canon, Op. 56** **Robert Schumann (Arr. Kirchner)**

Early in 1845, Schumann became preoccupied with counterpoint - the placing of voices against other voices, a musical art brought to its pinnacle a century earlier in the fugues of Bach. In order to



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facilitate his obsession with mastering it, he had a pedal piano installed. Almost unknown today, pedal pianos had a niche following among 18th and 19th century pianists and organists. They had an additional pedal keyboard like an organ to enable the bass line to be played with the feet. They were particularly popular with organists, who could use them to practice at home, away from the pain of unheated churches in winter. Schumann's was an upright version with an additional soundboard of 29 strings built into the back of the piano. He wrote a number of pieces specifically for the pedal piano, of which the Six Studies in Canon are the best known.

A canon is the simplest form of contrapuntal or fugal writing. In children's songs they are called "rounds". A repeating melody is designed to harmonise with itself when displaced by a regular interval of perhaps one, two, four or sometimes more bars. "Frère Jacques" is a classic example. The six pieces were much admired by Clara Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms, and their quality was recognised by Theodore Kirchner, a close friend of the Schumanns and a student of Robert's. Kirchner arranged them for piano trio and it is that version that we hear tonight. Many regard Kirchner's arrangement as almost superior to Schumann's original because of the transparency of the counterpoint made possible by the imaginative voicing on the three instruments. Arrangements of the work for other instrumental groupings were also made later by Bizet and Debussy.



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### **Piano Trio No 3 in Bb major, K. 502** **Wolfgang Mozart**

The combination of keyboard, violin and cello had been a popular ensemble for small chamber works for half a century before Haydn and Mozart transformed it, along with the piano concerto, into one of the foremost ensembles of the classical period and beyond. The reason was the evolution of the keyboard from harpsichord to piano, which reached a peak in Vienna at this time. Earlier keyboard trios needed the violin and cello to boost the treble and bass because of the acoustic limitations of the softer instrument. The new piano allowed for independence between the three instruments.

The supreme keyboard virtuoso of his time, Mozart embraced the new instrument in compositions that displayed both his technical prowess and inspired some of his greatest compositions. The Piano Trio K. 502 is universally regarded as one of these. It was completed in 1786. This was one of Mozart's most productive years, with the completion of *The Marriage of Figaro*, three of his best piano concertos, (K.488, K.491, K.503), and the two great piano quartets, which have both featured in previous Saronic Chamber Music Festivals.

The deceptively simple theme of the first movement, when added to an unusual new theme in the middle section, provides more than adequate material for a rich display of harmonic and contrapuntal development. The second movement is a larghetto of exquisite classical grace and lyricism in which the three instruments are perfectly balanced. Colourful, sparkling concerto-like passages for



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the piano feature in the third movement along with lively duet passages for violin and cello.

### **Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major** **Antonín Dvorák**

Dvorák's second piano quintet is ranked by many as among the most revered works in the chamber music repertoire. In this rarely chosen grouping, the percussive brilliance of the grand piano is added to the unbeatable sonority of the string quartet to create a universe of unique sound colour and texture. First performed in Prague in January, 1888, the piece dates from a period when the composer was rising in fame, having recently returned from a successful residency in London, soon to be offered leadership at the Prague Conservatory (1889) and thereafter to embark on his famous trip to America (1892-1895). The writing has every facet of the five instruments in mind. Each separate part has its own personality and temperament. Almost magically, these are combined to complement each other in balanced lyrical and rhythmic energy of supreme skill and mastery.

The cello opens the first movement to be countered by balancing viola and violin melodies of emphatic beauty. The second movement is derived from a pensive and sometimes melancholic Slavic folk dance, the Dumka, in which slow sections are balanced with frolicking dance rhythms. The opening piano theme is borrowed from one of his Op. 83 "Love Songs", and the lyrics of the song give a clue to the music's meaning:



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*I would happily die  
By the sweet power of your eyes,  
If your beautiful smile did not  
Revive me.  
I would always gladly choose that sweet fate  
With this passion in my heart:  
But only if I knew that your dear lips  
Would wake me from my sleep.*

A Scherzo 3rd movement is based on another lively Bohemian dance, the Furiant and places extreme demands on the agility of the pianist. The 4th movement is a tour de force drawing inspiration from the monumental piano quintets of Mendelssohn and Brahms.

Richard Kefford 2023

Artist biographies: [www.saronicfestival.com/artists](http://www.saronicfestival.com/artists)