

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 20th October 2019 at 3.00 pm

Divertimenti Ensemble

Paul Barritt, Rachel Isserlis *Violins*
Jonathan Barritt *Viola*
Josephine Horder, Sebastian Comberti *Cellos*

Joined for today's concert by:

Maeve Jenkinson, Kate Comberti *Violins*
Sally Beamish *Viola*

Divertimenti has become widely acclaimed as one of the most exciting and innovative British chamber groups of our generation. Four of the players in the ensemble were founder members at its inception in 1978. All five are top ranking players, with a wealth of worldwide concert experience as soloists and orchestral principals as well as chamber music players.

Touring throughout the UK and Ireland, Divertimenti have performed for music societies and major festivals such as Aldeburgh, Bath, King's Lynn and Lichfield. They have also given concerts in National Trust and other stately homes as well as in Italy, France, Germany and Greece. Highlights include the second ever performance of Arnold Bax's Quintet No 1, together with Dame Ethel Smyth's Quintet, at the Lichfield Festival, both enthusiastically received.

The ensemble's recording activities have included numerous programmes for BBC Radio 3. Among many recordings, two on the Hyperion label – Howells and Dyson quartets, and Mendelssohn and Bargiel octets – received unanimous praise from the critics, the latter being singled out for recommendation by BBC Radio 3's Record Review and by International Record Review.

Maeve Jenkinson has many years' experience as a professional musician, having worked with world-class ensembles including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, I Solisti Veneti and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. As a student, Maeve was a foundation scholar at the Royal College of Music, where she studied with Jaroslav Vanacek. She won many prizes and scholarships, and studied in the USA with Josef Gingold. She has a busy schedule combining teaching with performing, and lives in Seaford.

Kate Comberti is a violinist, amateur and researcher into music and young children. She has performed with numerous orchestras and ensembles from the Toronto Symphony to the London Sinfonietta, as well as music theatre in London's West End and as part of the International Music Programme in Banff, Canada. She is currently a consultant on the early years Band Time programme at Junior Trinity, delivering a child-led music education programme centred around improvisation.

Sally Beamish was born in London. She began her career as a viola player with the Raphael Ensemble, Divertimenti Ensemble and London Sinfonietta, before moving to Scotland in 1990 to focus on composition. Her catalogue of over 200 works embraces choral, symphonic and chamber music as well as opera and ballet. In 2018 she returned to England with the viola made for her by her daughter Stephanie Irvine, and is once again combining performance with composition. She is currently composer-in-residence with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields.



Seaford Music Society gratefully acknowledges the support of Newberry Tully Estate Agents.

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Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Fantasia in F minor, K.608

Allegro – Andante – Allegro

This *F minor Fantasia* is one of three pieces commissioned by Count Josef Deym von Stritzetz for the Müllersche Gallery in Vienna, in which were exhibited many mechanical curiosities. Intended to be played on a mechanical organ incorporated in a clock, the piece dates from March 1791.

In a letter to his wife, Mozart commented that he disliked the instrument, but he needed money, and any commission was welcome. He could have written charming but inconsequential melodies, but what he wrote went far beyond the limitations of the clock and the requirements of the commission, and he produced a miniature masterpiece of extraordinary emotional significance, typical of his late style.

In three sections, the work opens with an Allegro in F minor and concludes with a second F minor Allegro which develops the material of the first in a skillful, weighty, contrapuntal fugato. A tender and dignified Andante in A flat major divides the two.

Arnold BAX (1883-1953)

Lyrical Interlude

Arnold Bax was born in London to a family of independent means. While studying piano and composition at the Royal Academy of Music the nineteen-year old Bax discovered the poetry of W. B. Yeats, and, as a result, made a visit to Ireland. This visit was to him like a great religious conversion — a deep spiritual experience which turned his musical leanings away from Wagner and Strauss, towards writing in a limpid, transparent, leisurely, decorative Celtic idiom. It is this Irish element in him which is perhaps the principal characteristic of his music.

The Lyrical Interlude for string quintet is actually the slow movement of a String Quintet written before the First World War, and at one time presumed lost. The work was rediscovered and brought to life in a new edition recorded by Divertimenti in 2003. Bax himself published the Interlude on its own in 1922, in an arrangement for quintet with 2 violas, and dedicated to Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Sally BEAMISH (b.1956)

Divertimenti for string quintet

Stramash
First Light
Lullaby
Waltz
Reel

This work was commissioned by Divertimenti, and first performed by them at Kimmeridge Hall, Bournemouth University, on 31st March 2019.

Sally Beamish writes:

In 2018 I wrote a series of chamber pieces expressing my sadness at leaving Scotland, where I had spent nearly half my life and raised a family. The pieces also represent the anticipation of new beginnings and a new phase in my life.

I was a founder member of Divertimenti, and enjoyed years of happy music making with them as a viola player. To receive a commission from them for their 40th anniversary season was a great pleasure and also a timely reminder of the friends and musicians I left behind when I moved north in 1990.

The brief was to write a companion piece to the great Schubert Quintet – to be an approachable work that would not be too daunting for groups to prepare, thus making it more likely to enter the repertoire. To this end, I decided on a set of very short 'divertimenti' or diversions. This seemed an apt title for obvious reasons, but also because composing the piece represented a diversion from my forthcoming move south. Each is based on a fragment from Burns's beautiful "Farewell, Ae Fond Kiss".

The piece is framed by two Scottish-inspired dances, the first entitled Stramash - which means a kind of exuberant chaos - and the last, a Reel. At the centre of the piece is a Lullaby. My three children regard themselves as Scottish, and Scotland will remain an intrinsic part of us all, however far away we may travel. The soloist is the viola.

Preceding the Lullaby is a gentle duet for two violins, inspired by dawn overlooking the summer isles where we had two family holidays. After the Lullaby comes a quirky Waltz for two cellos, reflecting the faerie lore that surrounds our former home near Aberfoyle.

INTERVAL 25 MINUTES

Tea and coffee at £1 per cup can be purchased from the Church Lane Tea Room, two doors down the road at 18 Church Street, just past the Old Plough Inn. Specialist teas and coffees are also available at standard prices. Please bring your drinks back to the church, to make space in the Tea Room for others.

Public toilets are in Place Lane, on the north side of the churchyard.

If you are not already a member of Seaford Music Society and would like to join, please see our Treasurer at the table at the back of the church. The cost of your ticket today will be credited towards your annual membership subscription.

Witold Roman LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913-1994)

Four Silesian Melodies for Four Violins

In a long career that saw the composer experiment with the avant-garde and new ideas of form and notation, it was folk music – in particular that of his native Poland – that pervaded Lutosławski's musical output throughout his life.

Dating from 1947, during a period when Soviet-bloc composers were strongly encouraged to write music in a style that would be acceptable to the masses, Lutosławski was possibly influenced by the works in this idiom by Béla Bartók. In this original and unusual scoring for four violins, the four melodies are:

1. Flirting
2. The Grove
3. A Gander
4. Schoolmaster

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Octet in E Flat major, Op.20

- I *Allegro moderato ma con fuoco*
- II *Andante*
- III *Scherzo: Allegro leggierissimo*
- IV *Presto*

This piece was written in 1825, when Mendelssohn was just 16 years old. By the age of 16, Mozart, Schubert, Rossini and several other composers had written music showing remarkable competence, but none surpassed Felix Mendelssohn at the same age. His *Octet* is undoubtedly the most outstanding major composition of one so young. It transcends the work of a precocious prodigy and takes its place amongst the finest pieces of chamber music as a consummate work of art. He had already written a number of quartets and symphonies for strings, and in the following year he was to write his *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*, echoing the same fairyland mood found in the *Scherzo* of the *Octet*.

Mendelssohn had the advantage of being brought up in the lavish home of a banking family, the setting for weekly informal recitals by the most distinguished musicians of the day. It is thought that the *Octet* was written for one of these occasions and the composer, who was said to be an accomplished viola player – although his teacher complained that he never practised – probably played the instrument in the first performance of the work. Mendelssohn dedicated it to his string teacher Eduard Rietz.

The work opens with a wide, exuberant and imaginative sweep, and a rhythmic lilt in the principal theme. New contrapuntal detail prevents the sedate second theme from becoming incongruous, and as the movement is developed interesting variants of previous themes appear. After an abruptly quiet passage the music builds to a fiery coda.

The elegiac *Andante*, in the rhythm of a *siciliano*, has fewer memorable tunes, and the sonorous music depends more upon tone colour and the complex polyphonic interweaving of its lines. The *Scherzo* is one of the most perfect things Mendelssohn ever wrote and it proved to be a pattern for much that followed. It has exquisite delicacy and lightness of touch, and, in a well known reference to the work, Mendelssohn's sister Fanny said that all must be played "staccato and pianissimo, with shivering tremolos and lightning flashes of trills". His inspiration was the *Walpurgisnacht* scene from Goethe's *Faust*. Two themes, one rapid and fugal, opening with the cello, and the other with tramping unison notes, are the basis of the humour of the final *Presto*. There is another tantalizing glimpse of the *Scherzo* theme, and then there is a long, slow buildup to a brilliant conclusion.

Our next concert:

Sunday 24th November 2019, 3.00 pm, at St Leonard's Church, Seaford

Capriccio Ensemble, playing quintets by Mozart, Brahms and Kenneth V Jones, **plus** the opportunity to *Meet the Composer*, Kenneth Jones, who is a local Seaford resident. If you are not a member of Seaford Music Society, you can purchase your ticket in advance from Newberry Tully Estate Agents, or from our Treasurer, Paul Moore. Details are on the leaflet on the desk at the entrance to the church.

We look forward to seeing you here!

Additional benefit for members of Seaford Music Society

We are delighted to announce that we have come to a reciprocal agreement with Uckfield Music Club. During the summer months, when we take a break, you can attend the chamber concerts of the Uckfield club, for just £12 a concert instead of the usual cost of £15. Details of the Uckfield concerts will eventually be found on their website, www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk. Just present your Seaford Music Society membership card at the door to claim your discount.