Seaford Music Society

Sunday 15th November 2026 at 3.00 pm

The Elmore Quartet : Unfurling

Xander Croft	*Violin*
Miles Ames	*Violin*
Inis Oírr Asano	*Viola*
Gabriel Francis-Dehqani	*Cello*

Winners of the 74th Royal Over-Seas League International Music Competition, the Elmore Quartet are quickly gaining recognition as one of the leading British Quartets of their generation. Over the past two years they have recorded multiple times for BBC Radio 3, and performed at esteemed venues throughout the United Kingdom and Europe, including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, Brighton Dome and Bridgewater Hall. In 2024 they were awarded Third Prize at the 13th Edition of the Premio Paolo Borciani International String Quartet Competition in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Their successes include awards from the Tunnell Trust and the Kirckman Concert Society, opportunities which brought the Quartet to audiences across the United Kingdom, including the Scottish Highlands.

In 2024 the Elmores were selected as Penzance MusicAbility Foundation's first Resident String Quartet, in partnership with the Frost Trust. This three-year position allows the Quartet to integrate themselves into West Cornwall's unique community by performing regularly as part of the Concerts Penzance concert series, working with local schools and utilising their passion for sharing classical music with new audiences.

In 2025 they joined the prestigious network of Italy's Le Dimore del Quartetto upon invitation, and in 2026 were invited to join the roster of Philip and Dorothy Green Young Artists, in addition to being appointed Chamber Studio Fellows.

In August 2026 the Elmores embarked on their first intercontinental trip, to Montreal, having accepted a place in the McGill String Quartet Academy. Additional forthcoming plans include their debut album release with Rubicon Classics in Autumn 2026 and further album projects with Heritage Records over the next few years.

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Leo GEYER (b.1992)

Unfurling

The young London-born composer and conductor Leo Geyer has an impressive catalogue of dramatic, orchestral and chamber compositions to his name already, but *Unfurling* is his first string quartet, commissioned by the Elmore Quartet in 2022. Geyer's preference is not to provide detailed analytical notes about his music, but to create prefaces instead, and for *Unfurling*, he writes:

> Before the fern, there is the earth.
> With rays of warm sun, a green arm reaches.
> A stalk stands alone, curled as the cold still bites.
> Leaf, bound like a violin's scroll, continues its journey to the sky.
> With a last effort the fiddlehead unfurls its lifeline – a single leaf,
> to soak in the golden light until days shorten, and green slowly falls.
> After the fern, there is the earth.

The circular quality of this text, and the slow, organic imagery of Geyer's words, give us a hint of the kind of musical world that *Unfurling* inhabits. The beginning of the score is marked 'pure', and we hear at first from just the violins and viola, rocking back and forth across their open strings. When the cello eventually joins them, it seems that we will continue in a similar vein, but the cello's lower strings have been retuned, the familiar lower pair of G and C (which match the pitches of the viola) pushed down a tone to F and B-flat. As the music progresses, we creep gradually outwards and away from the ringing sound of these open strings towards new colours and harmonies. The music turns from 'cold', with players asked to play without vibrato, to 'intense', and eventually the object becomes the active avoidance of those ringing, open sounds. Only in the final few bars of the piece do we return to the open fifths of violin and second violin – the return to earth, from which the opening notes grew.

Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

String Quartet in C major, Op.74, No.1

I *Allegro moderato*
II *Andantino grazioso*
III *Menuetto: allegro*
IV *Finale: vivace*

Haydn's two visits to London in the early 1790s confirmed and increased his international fame, and transformed him from a provincial court musician into a truly 'public' figure. The ear-catching qualities of the London symphonies – sonorous instrumentation, hummable tunes, surprises both in dynamics and in modulations, and sudden bouts of virtuosity – are also exhibited in the six quartets comprising Opp.71 and 74, dated 1793 (between the two London visits); indeed, they have sometimes been called the "English quartets".

An initial surprise in this quartet is the "introduction", consisting of an Amen-like full stop. The main, and almost only, theme in the first movement is a serene one designed to be thrown into relief by much faster music in which the first violin takes a prominent lead. There is a unity in such diversity: for instance, the first subject can be expressed in tonic-sol-fa thus: d r t d, and its subsidiary thus: d t r d. The development explores distant keys and is far from over at the exposition, which suddenly explores close imitation of the main theme.

Grazioso is the leading characteristic of the second, not particularly slow, movement, which hides its taut construction behind many charming details. Some of the richest, most euphonious music is to be found in the trio section of the minuet, which is in a very distant key, but which also turns out to be derived from the main minuet music, though perhaps not in a way that is obvious on first hearing.

The finale of this quartet is one of those Haydn movements that are really fast, not just in physical speed but also in an exhilarating quick-wittedness. The balancing ends of the exposition and of the whole movement are marked by bagpipe dronings on the lower strings.

INTERVAL 15 MINUTES

There are toilets in the lobby at the back of the church and also downstairs, via the stairs beside the stage or, **on request**, via the lift next to the entrance foyer.
Refreshments will not be served during the interval, but we invite you to join us downstairs for tea, coffee and biscuits after the concert ends.

Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941)

An Irish Melody, H86

Frank Bridge was better known during his lifetime as a chamber-music musician and conductor than as a composer. Born in Brighton, he studied at the Royal College of Music in London from 1899 to 1903, under Charles Villiers Stanford and others. He played the viola in a number of string quartets, most notably the English String Quartet, and conducted, sometimes deputising for Henry Wood, before devoting himself to composition.

A generation after his death, Bridge's importance as a composer came to be recognised thanks to the efforts of his student, Benjamin Britten, who sponsored performances of Bridge's music at Britten's Aldeburgh Festival.

In 1908, Bridge made this arrangement of the familiar *Londonderry Air* under the title *An Irish Melody*. While the song is known today as "Danny Boy", it goes back at least to the early 19th century, and has been known variously as "Would God I Were the Tender Apple Blossom", "Farewell to Cucullain" and the hymn "O Strength and Stay." In Bridge's inventive arrangement, he fragments the melody and then develops the fragments before revealing the entire melody at the end.

Maurice RAVEL (1875-1937)

String Quartet in F major

I *Allegro moderato*
II *Assez vif*
III *Très lent*
IV *Vif et agité*

Ravel wrote his quartet in 1902–3, when he was 27 and still a student in the Paris Conservatoire, and it was first performed at the Société Nationale in March 1904. It clearly shows the general influence of Fauré, the *cher maître* to whom it was dedicated, but Ravel was more particularly influenced by Debussy's *Quartet*, written nearly ten years earlier. Although it was in no way revolutionary, Ravel's work proved to be too unorthodox to gain the approval of his elders, and was actually counted against him when he applied for the Prix de Rome. Even Fauré criticized the last movement on the grounds that it was badly balanced. Debussy, on the other hand, was full of praise for his disciple and urged him "not to change a note of your quartet".

Like Debussy, Ravel adopted the cyclic form as established by César Franck, in which each movement takes up a new transformation of a germinal theme. The first movement is in traditional sonata form, but with the shift of emphasis in terms of tonality: in keeping with the modal character of the music, Ravel virtually

abandons any progression towards the dominant key of C, in favour of the closely-related keys of D minor and A minor. He extends this idea to the subsequent movements as well, and throughout the work it is the note A which has the greatest prominence, acting as a pivot between the major and minor modes.

The second movement is marked *très rythmé* (like the Debussy Quartet) and makes its effect by flying pizzicato figures and a strong rhythmic conflict between 6/8 and 3/4 meters.

In the rhapsodic slow movement the note A pivots one step further: by becoming A-sharp and then switching harmonically to B-flat, it leads to G-flat minor, which is then resolved into a rich G-flat major for most of the movement. The finale, however, swiftly re-establishes the tonal centre on A, around which Ravel creates another rhythmic mosaic, this time juxtaposing quintuple and triple meters, and sweeps the music back towards F major for its exhilarating conclusion.

We warmly invite you to join us downstairs after the concert for a cup of tea or coffee

Step-free access is available via the car park

Our next concert

Sunday 7th February 2027, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road, Seaford
We warmly welcome back our friends the **London Mozart Players**, with pianist **Howard Shelley**, playing quintets by Brahms and Dvořák.

Membership of the Society grants you free entry to this concert and to all the remaining concerts this season, without additional charge. A limited number of children and young adults (under 26) may also attend without charge (children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult). If you are not a member and would like to join, see our Treasurer, Paul Moore, at the desk in the entrance foyer. The cost of your ticket for today's concert will be credited towards your membership subscription.

For non-members, single-concert tickets cost £21, and can be purchased in advance from **Newberry Tully Estate Agents** in Church Street, Seaford; **Seaford, Newhaven** and **Lewes Tourist Information Centres**; online through **TicketSource**; or from **our Treasurer, Paul Moore**.

Additional benefits for members of Seaford Music Society

Members may bring one guest to any of the concerts in our 2026-27 season of concerts, at a reduction of £3 off the single-ticket price, subject to the concert not having sold out.

On presentation of their current membership card, members also enjoy the following benefits:

- A reduced price of £14 at any Haywards Heath Music Society concert in their 2026-27 season
- A reduced price of £17 at any Nicholas Yonge Society concert in their 2026-27 season
- A discount of £3 off the price of any Uckfield Music Club concert in their 2027 season (to be confirmed)

Tickets at these reduced prices are available at the door, on concert days only. Details of the concerts can be found on each organisation's website:

Haywards Heath Music Society:	www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk
Nicholas Yonge Society:	www.nyslewes.org.uk
Uckfield Music Club:	www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk