

Melrose Music Society

SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC005891

Sunday, 21st September 2025, 3pm

The Telyn Quartet



James Dillon: *String Quartet No.7*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *String Quartet No. 21 in D-Major, K. 575*

Interval


Elizabeth Maconchy: *String Quartet No 4*

Maurice Ravel: *String Quartet in F major*


James Dillon (born 1950) – *String Quartet No. 7*

As Scotland's greatest composer prepares to celebrate his 75th birthday, we continue our survey of his work with the shortest of his nine string quartets, all but one of which were premiered by the Arditti Quartet. Dedicated to Irving Arditti as a 60th birthday present, the seventh was premiered in Strasbourg in September 2013. As Tom Service puts it, "Dillon's music is fearlessly, relentlessly explorative. To hear it is to confront a volcanic imagination that makes listening an act of thrilling, vertiginous unpredictability." This single flowing movement, in which drones, pulsing chords and scattered fragments interact, explores kinesis and stasis: how energy can be generated or consumed by stillness and compounded or dissipated by activity. It builds, relentlessly, from a haunting opening in which the cello's low drone contrasts with the violins' high-pitched motifs as they build a single chord. Following a flurry of rapidly shifting rhythmic and melodic permutations, the music reaches its first climax based on the low open C string of the viola before subsiding into hesitant, irregular pizzicato patterns. The remarkable concluding section recalls the beginning and that first climax as the open low C string of the cello tolls relentlessly, creating a sound world reminiscent of late 1960s rock bands such as Pink Floyd and King Crimson. Not surprisingly, Dillon's next major composition *Tanz/haus* featured an electric guitar.

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W. A. Mozart (1756 – 1791) - *String Quartet No. 21 in D-Major, K. 575*

I. *Allegretto*

II. *Andante*

III. *Menuetto: Allegretto*

IV. *Allegretto*

In June of 1789, Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia, a keen amateur cellist, commissioned a set of six quartets from Mozart. Ravaged by illnesses, downcast by financial worries and labouring on *Così fan Tutte*, he managed to complete only three, which he hastily sold to a publisher to raise some funds to cover his debts. After the dazzling counterpoint and harmonic innovation of the quartets dedicated to Haydn, these “Prussian” quartets are less dramatic, more meditative and seek solace in the serenity of pure musical invention, harking back to the genial elegance of Telemann and Couperin.

The first movement - surprisingly rather akin to Dillon's - develops organically from contrasting initial motivic seeds: a radiant, singing melody on the first violin juxtaposed with the other three instruments' carefree, flippant response. Their falling five-note scale in octaves is transformed into a bold, rising scale just before the recapitulation, and then repeated as a *coda*. The calm *Andante* in A major, based on “The Violet,” a song Mozart had written four years earlier, opens like a hymn with all the parts in unison. They then, in a homage to baroque counterpoint, become concertante soloists interweaving and interacting to embellish the melody, before coalescing again. A brief *coda* featuring rapid rising runs on violin and cello prepares for the graceful, courtly *minuet*. The contrasting *trio* in G major features the cello singing passionately in its high register, in deference to Friedrich Wilhelm. The cello takes the lead, too, in the final movement, an ebullient rondo weaving ingenious variations on its opening six notes, which are themselves derived from the main theme of the opening movement.



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Elizabeth Maconchy (1907-1994) - *String Quartet No 4*

I. *Allegro - Lento appassionato – Allegro*

II. *Allegro molto*

III. *Lento, molto espressivo*

IV. *Presto*

Maconchy was, notoriously, the victim of explicit sexism in 1929 when Sir Hugh Allen vetoed her receipt of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, telling her, “you will only get married and never write another note”. Well, he was half right: she married the following year. Her thirteen string quartets are her greatest achievement. She herself explained, “I have found the string quartet above all best suited to the expression of the kind of music I want to write — music as an impassioned argument ... Dramatic and emotional tension is created by means of counterpoint in much the same way as happens in a play. The characters are established as individuals, each with his own differentiated characteristics: the drama then grows from the interplay of these characters — the clash of their ideas and the way in which they react upon each other. Thus, in a string quartet one has the perfect vehicle for dramatic expression of this sort: four characters engaged in statement and comment, passionate argument, digression, restatement, perhaps final agreement — the solution of the problem.”

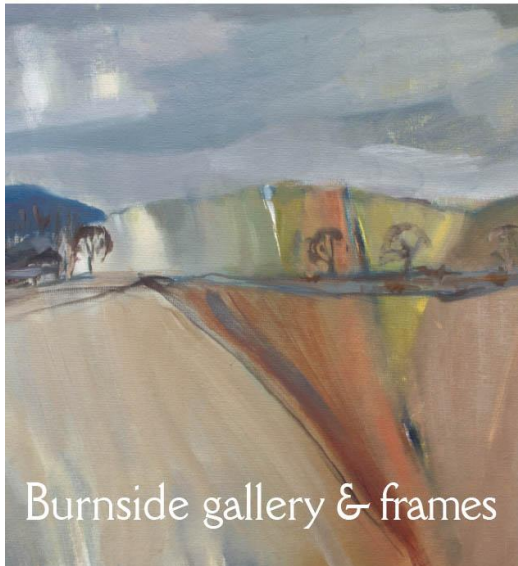
Born in Hertfordshire of Irish parents, she enrolled at the Royal College of Music in London in 1923, where she was taught, befriended and championed by Vaughan Williams, despite their vastly different musical approaches and styles. While the elaborate, intricate counterpoint of his early *Tallis Fantasia* may have been an inspiration, she was obviously more excited and influenced by eastern European modernism, deciding to complete her studies in Prague with Karel Jirák, who conducted the premiere of her piano concerto there in 1930.

Rather like Mozart’s K575, her fourth quartet is a triumph of musical invention over harrowing circumstances. In 1942, she, her husband and young son, having been evacuated from their home in Kent, were isolated in rural Shropshire. The war raged; many of her Czech friends had been slaughtered; both her younger sister and mother were terminally ill in Switzerland. Nevertheless, as well as tending a vegetable garden to supplement their meagre rations, she devoted a few hours each day to the consolation and affirmation of composing this work, filled with swirling, exuberant folk-dance rhythms. While Bartók was the main influence on her previous quartets, Janáček is clearly the model here; the opening *pizzicato* cello recalls his first quartet, the tenderly passionate third movement his second, and – at least to my ears - the mysterious, haunting second movement his magical opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, in which tiny motifs characterise frogs, birds, and insects. I sense Maconchy celebrating the restorative power of nature, the calm cycle of the seasons, amid the human chaos and pain.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) - *String Quartet in F major*

I. *Moderato très doux* II. *Assez vif-Très rythmé* III. *Très lent* IV. *Vif et agité*

We conclude our celebrations of 150th anniversary of Ravel's birth with his first masterpiece, composed in 1903. Although dedicated to his teacher, Gabriel Fauré, the main influence here is clearly Debussy, whose quartet of a decade earlier, is structurally similar, with the *scherzo* placed second and material from the first movement recycled throughout. That lyrical first movement, in sonata form, begins with the cello and second violin playing a simple rising scale an octave and a third apart, while another rising figure on the viola fills out the harmonies to the first violin's simple tune. The soaring, haunting second theme is played by the first violin and viola paralleling one another two octaves apart. The second and shortest movement is reminiscent, in its plucking, strumming and vibrant cross-rhythms, of Iberian folk music, perhaps in honour of Ravel's Basque mother. In the slower, middle section, the first violin's fragile rising lines are offset by an eerie *pizzicato* accompaniment, before the manic stomping returns. In sharp contrast, after the dance, the trance: a static, mysterious nocturne-like third movement, which uses material from the first, each instrument given its chance to present and modify the melody, gliding above shifting clouds of suspended *tremolo*. The whirling, dynamic final movement, in an unstable 5/8 meter, is in sonata form like the first, but starts dramatically and unsettlingly in the wrong key, a technique pioneered by Beethoven. The second theme is a playful, fleet reworking of the sultry and languorous melody from the first movement, while the euphoric, nimble coda abbreviates the theme to its first two notes.



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The **Telyn Quartet** was formed three years ago through ‘MusicWorks Sundays’ at King’s Place London. In 2023, they take part in the Wye Valley Chamber Music Festival’s Summer Residency and recently joined the professional mentorship scheme ChamberStudio UK, which has given them invaluable performance and public masterclass opportunities. They have received coaching from Krystia Osostowicz (Brodsky Quartet), Robin Ireland (Lindsay Quartet), Donald Grant (Elias Quartet), David Waterman (Endellion Quartet), members of the London Haydn Quartet, and Robert Max, Tim Horton, Daniel Tong and Robin Michael. This summer they were invited by the Tunnell Trust to attend the Music Coll course, and appeared at the Southwell Festival as their String Apprentices; they have also performed at venues including the Holywell Music Room (Oxford), West Road Concert Hall (Cambridge) and the Lit & Phil in Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Dutch-British violinist **Alma Vink** is currently studying with Arisa Fujita at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. During her English undergraduate degree at the University of Cambridge (2021-2024), she studied with David Takeno in London, with whom she continues to have lessons. Recent professional engagements include being invited by the Esbjerg Ensemble in Denmark to play in the Den Ny Opera summer production of “The Magic Flute”, and leading second violins in the Storioni Festival String Soloists. Alma is looking forward to performing Saint-Saëns’ 3rd violin concerto with the London Phoenix Orchestra at Sinfonia Smith Square this October. **Tabitha Appel** is in her final year at St John’s College, Cambridge, reading music, whilst studying violin with David Takeno. This summer she attended Stage de Musique Promenois where she studied with Anna Gebert. She has performed numerous concerti with local orchestras in Oxford and in 2021 she joint-led the National Youth Orchestra. Violist **Isobel Neary-Adams** studies with David Takeno at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama supported by the Munster trust and Albert Cooper trust, and has performed with Oxford Philharmonic, City of Cardiff and Oxford University orchestras as a soloist. Cellist **Seth Collin** is currently completing a Master’s degree at the Guildhall School with Louise Hopkins, supported by awards from the Munster Trust, Help Musicians, and Wayne Sleep Foundation. He was recently a prize-winner at the Schoenfeld International String Competition with Trio Havisham, attended masterclasses at IMS Prussia Cove, and is artistic director of the Pudding Chare Music Festival in Newcastle.

Our Next Concert

Friday, October 10th 7:30pm, Mathilde Milwidsky, violin, & Richard Uttley, piano
More Dillon and Mozart from the “exceptionally talented” (according to Maxim Vengerov) violinist and the equally acclaimed pianist. Ranging across four centuries, their fascinating programme includes the baroque beauty of one of the oldest surviving works for solo violin, Brahms’ poignant third sonata, delightful pieces by two neglected geniuses of melodious modernism, and Lutoslawski’s virtuosic valediction to the instrument he loved.

Nikos Skalkottas:	<i>Sonatina No.2</i>
Grażyna Bacewicz:	<i>Stained glass window, Polish Caprice</i>
Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber:	<i>Passacaglia for solo violin</i>
James Dillon:	<i>Traumwerk Book III (no 2&4)</i>
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart:	<i>Sonata in A Major, K. 305</i>
Witold Lutoslawski:	<i>Subito</i>
Johannes Brahms:	<i>Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Opus 108</i>



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Even More Marvelous Melodious Mozart

Sunday, April 26th 3pm - Alina Horvath, Piano

In celebration of György Kurtág's 100th birthday, his compatriot will juxtapose the Hungarian composer's homages and extrapolations with the classics that inspired them. This recital, therefore, presents an enchantingly varied sample of beautiful and thrilling masterpieces and scintillating miniatures.

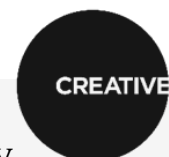
Domenico Scarlatti:	<i>Sonata in D major K. 119</i>
György Kurtág:	<i>Hommage à Domenico Scarlatti, Eight Piano Pieces, Op. 3</i>
W.A. Mozart:	<i>Sonata in G major KV 283. No. 5</i>
György Kurtág:	<i>Szálkák, Op. 6d</i>
Franz Liszt:	<i>Hungarian Rhapsody No. 16 in A minor</i>
György Kurtág:	<i>...feuilles mortes ...</i>
Joseph Haydn:	<i>Sonata in E minor Hob.XVI:34</i>
György Kurtág:	<i>Perpetuum mobile (objet trouvé)</i>
Claude Debussy:	<i>Pour le Piano</i>
György Kurtág:	<i>couple égyptien en route vers l'inconnu</i>

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