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Programme
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The Rubio Quartet

in a programme of works by

Haydn

Shostakovich

Borodin

at the Manoel Theatre

Friday 18 May 2001

at 7.30p.m.



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 Tickets to be collected within 48 hours
Payments: Accepted by cash, cheques and major credit cards
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Booking: Booking opens ten days before the first performance.
 On the day of the performance, tickets can be purchased
 from 5.00p.m. up to 30 minutes after commencement.

Performances start at 7.30p.m. Mondays to Saturdays, and 6.30p.m. Sundays. Latecomers have to wait for a suitable pause in the programme before being ushered to their seats. The Verdi Room in the foyer includes a close-circuit television where one may view the performance. The management reserves the right to alter the programme and the performance time of any production.

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The programme provides an in-depth analysis of the major events and episodes leading to this important chapter in Maltese history.
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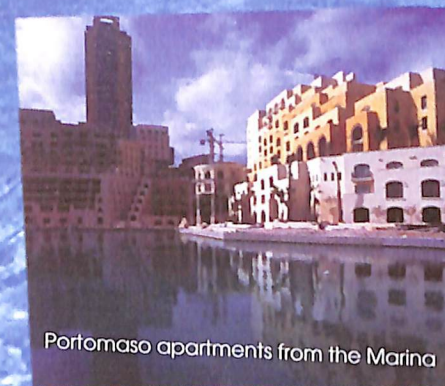
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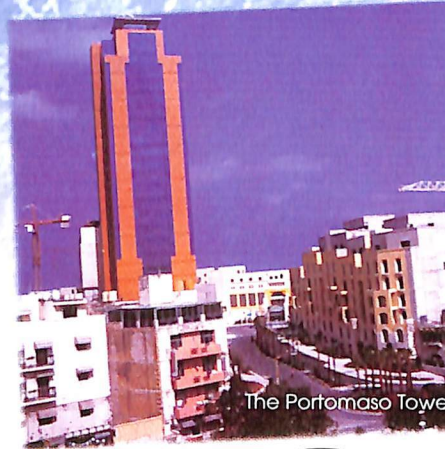
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Rubio Quartet

Since their formation in 1991, The Rubio Quartet has won international recognition for innovative programming and strong performances of the 20th century repertoire. The Quartet play instruments by the late world famous violin maker David Rubio, from whom it takes its name.

After hearing the Quartet perform at the memorial service for David Rubio in Cambridge in January 2001, his widow offered the 'Hale-Bopp' violin made for her 60th birthday on permanent loan to Dirk Van de Velde. In 1993 the Quartet was first laureate in 'Orpheus', the international contest for contemporary chamber music held in Antwerp. The honour was won with an exciting creation of a string quartet by Frits Célis.

The Rubio Quartet has made a speciality of the works of Shostakovich and is completing a complete cycle of recordings of his quartets for the Dutch record label Globe this year. *The Strad* rated the Quartet's recording of the Eighth Quartet as one of "the most riveting Shostakovich performances on disc", while *The New York Concert Review* praised them for "a first rate performance" of the Second Quartet at Merkin Hall, Lincoln Centre. In September 2000 The Festival of Flanders invited the Quartet to perform the complete Shostakovich String Quartets.

The highlight of the Rubio's Flemish repertoire was the world premiere of *Tijdkrans 1 & 2* by Frits Célis in 1999, one example of a series of multi-media programmes which have been developed by the Quartet. In 2001 they are presenting Haydn's *Seven Last Words* together with well known writers in Belgium and Holland and are taking chamber music to the youngest audiences with their own transcription of Tchaikovsky's *Youth Album* for string quartet and actor.

The Rubio Quartet regularly plays with Anne Boeykens (clarinet), Ellen Versney (harp), Paul Komen (piano), Levente Kende (piano), Flanders Recorder Quartet 'Vier opin Rij', Wim Brioen (guitar), Tilmann Hopstock (guitar), Sylvie de Pauw (soprano) and Luc van Marcke (horn). A very successful collaboration was with the Japanese Sho soloist Mayumi Miyata for a performance in Amsterdam of *Landscape V* by T. Hosokawa.

The Rubio Quartet's debuts in the United States (1996) and Japan (1997) met with great success, resulting in immediate invitations to return. The Quartet now performs every year in different American concert halls and has made three concert tours of Japan.

As a cultural representative of Flanders, the Rubio Quartet has performed in Shanghai (China), New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles and Pittsburgh (USA) and Osaka, Kobe, Nara and Nagoya (Japan). On 12 September the Quartet will make their London debut at the Wigmore Hall giving, with Japanese pianist Yoshiko Endo, the world premiere of a piano quintet by the renowned British composer John McCabe, specially commissioned for the occasion. In December the Quartet returns to the US for concerts in Los Angeles with the Brazilian guitar player Paul Galbraith, who also plays a Rubio guitar.



THE RUBIO QUARTET

Dirk Van de Velde and Dirk Van den Hauwe (violins),
Marc Sonnaert (viola) and Peter Devos (cello)



h e p r o g r a m m e

JOSEPH HAYDN

String Quartet Op.33 no.3

Allegro moderato
Scherzo allegretto
Adagio ma non troppo
Rondo presto

DIMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH

String Quartet no.4

Allegretto
Andantino
Allegretto
Allegretto

Interval

ALEXANDER BORODIN

String Quartet No.2

Allegro moderato
Scherzo allegro
Nocturne, andante
Finale



programme notes

Haydn: String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3

When Haydn wrote his Op. 33 set of quartets, he did not have public quartet performances in mind. Rather, the works - commissioned by Count Joseph Erdödy and also named after him - were written to be enjoyed in private by the distinguished. The Count kept them for his own exclusive use for two years before the works were even published.

It is a small stroke of irony, then, that these quartets have become one of the most basic staples of the quartet repertoire. The most popular quartet of these six would probably be this one in C major, the third in the set. In fact, this piece could easily be said to be one of the most famous of Haydn's early string quartets.

Perhaps Haydn was aware of the fact that chamber music was becoming an increasingly public phenomenon. As public chamber concerts began to appear, Haydn's quartet writing style also began to take on a more "public" voice. So even though the opus 33 was written for the enjoyment of a select few, Haydn's creative voice had grown so that anyone could listen to and enjoy it.

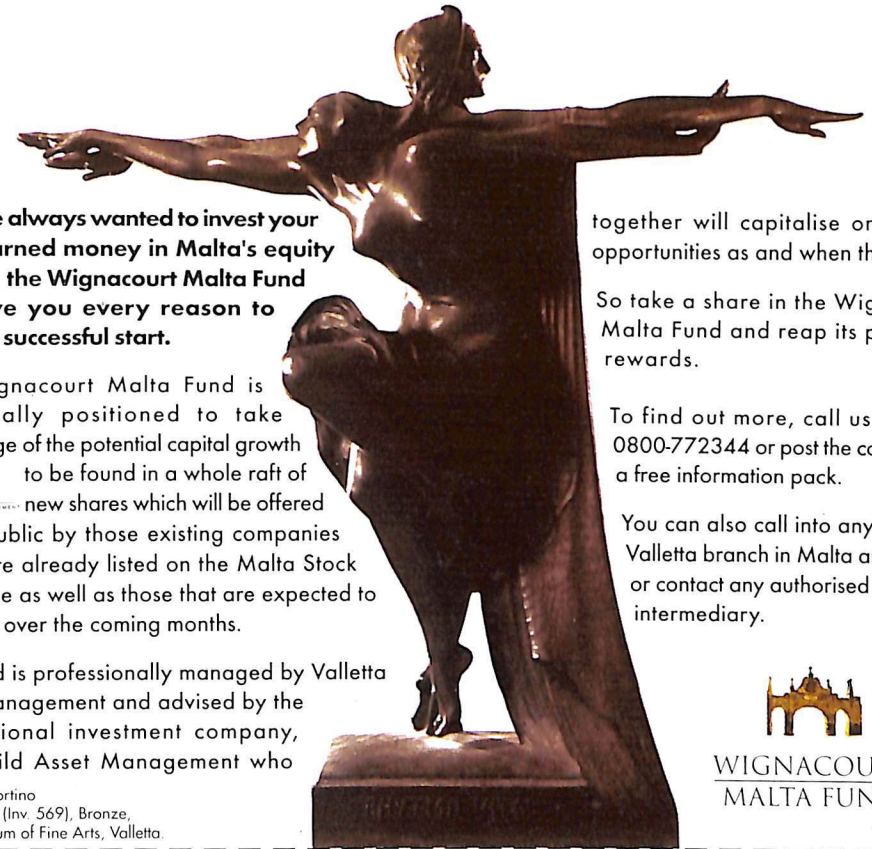
Shostakovich: String Quartet No 4 in D major Op 83

Shostakovich's initial response to the infamous Zhdanov decree, so far as his public concert music was concerned, was the populist oratorio *The Song of the Forests, Op 81*, which was written in Komarovo on the Gulf of Finland in 1949. The composition of the Fourth Quartet overlapped that of the oratorio, and the first movement's opening folk-like theme suggests Sibelius or Nielsen, as if we were in the open fields in Scandinavian mid-summer.

This theme is given to the first violin, with gentle counterpoint on the second over an immense pedal D on viola and cello sustained for more than sixty bars. The theme meanders through D major and minor modes, expanding gloriously in a superb developmental restatement before the pulse changes to 3/4 and the key to B minor for a new theme - not unrelated to the first - now developed over another long pedal, this time on E. As this ends, the tonality falls, little by little, until the D pedal is reached again; but the music seems unable to regain its original freshness, and the movement is over.

The second movement, 'Andantino', sustains the folk-like atmosphere with a theme in F minor on first violin, accompanied by second violin and viola. This trio texture is sustained for over thirty bars, so when at last the cello enters, restating the theme, F minor is firmly established, and in this rich key the music flowers impressively, the melodic development coming at precisely the right psychological moment.

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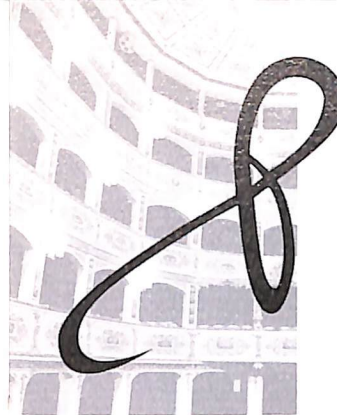
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programme notes

The return of the elegiac first theme, *con sordino*, is particularly beautiful, the restoration of the trio-texture being notably apt. The long coda reveals fresh aspects of the theme, with all instruments muted, and cross-thematically quoting from the first movement.

The third movement, 'Allegretto', a delicate scherzando, is subtly related to the preceding movements in timbre - the mutes remain throughout - and in tonal inflexion, for the cello theme in C minor leans to D, the supertonic, the now distant region from which the work originally began. First violin tries to restore C minor by repeating the theme a seventh higher, but the cello's fluctuations veer the key towards A major by way of a typical Shostakovich dactylic figure. The cello restores both theme and C minor - in a shape recalled in the finale of the *Tenth Symphony* - with which the dactylic figure is combined, before the music peters out, the viola taking centre stage to usher in the finale.

Up to now, on the surface the Quartet has behaved in a relatively straightforward manner, but behind the facade have been a number of factors - the uncertain mode of the 'home' tonality, a textural ebb and flow, recessed timbres, and a fluid thematicism - which, one by one, are now brought literally into play in the finale and which, implying more extended and wide-ranging treatment than hitherto, place the emphasis of the Quartet on to the finale.

Shostakovich's resolution of these factors is particularly artful and logical, but achieved in such a manner that the work's character is unchanged - the music speaks directly to us, with clarity, until finally the folk elements, over deep pedal points, bring this original and fascinatingly subtle work to its miraculous conclusion.

Borodin: String Quartet No. 2

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887) was primarily an academic chemist and this career left him little time to devote to composition, something that affected his other colleagues in the so-called 'Mighty Handful' of Russian nationalist composers who were all, essentially, composers only in their spare time. Thus Borodin's output is comparatively small, though highly distinctive. One of his best-known works is his *Second String Quartet* of 1881, and in particular its slow movement - a richly romantic Notturmo, or Nocturne, supposedly an evocation of the first meeting in Heidelberg of Borodin and his future wife Ekatarina, twenty-seven years earlier.

Programme notes: Gerald Fenech
Programme editor: Victor Fenech

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