

barbican



Classical Music

Concert programme



**Dudok Quartet:
Abandoned Voices**

Thu 17 Oct 7.30pm

Milton Court Concert Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.20pm, with a 20-minute interval.



I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



Please ...

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



Please don't ...

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



Use a hearing aid?

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



Need a break?

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance, or during the interval.



Looking for refreshments?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels G, 1 and 2.



Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

Dudok Quartet: Abandoned Voices

Thu 17 Oct 7.30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

Dudok Quartet

Carlo Gesualdo (arr Dudok Quartet) 'Deh come invan sospiro' from *The Sixth Book of Madrigals*

Bushra El-Turk *Three Tributes* UK premiere

Olivier Messiaen (arr Dudok Quartet)
Oraison

Interval 20 minutes

Franz Schubert String Quartet No 14, *Death and the Maiden*

1 Allegro

2 Andante con moto

3 Scherzo: Allegro molto

4 Presto

Produced by the Barbican

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The Dudok Quartet Amsterdam tonight make their debut at Milton Court with a refreshingly unorthodox programme, one that reaches from 16th- century Italy right up to the present day.

The Dudok Quartet are a group that firmly believe in the philosophy that music shouldn't be seen as old or new, 'but always relevant and present'. This desire that, however deep the caverns of musical history they may be exploring, the performance remains fresh is aptly demonstrated in their opening piece: 'Deh come invan sospiro' from the *Sixth Book of Madrigals* by Carlo Gesualdo (1566–1613). Here, the Dudok carve out new ways of bringing to life the vocal work originally published in 1611, transforming its heightened lines and harmonies in a way that simultaneously honours with integrity of the original, while also offering it a new life fit for the 21st-century. 'Oh, how I sigh in vain,' we hear the strings translate; 'ah, how in vain I gaze at you, because, you make everyone rejoice and for me alone to die! My unfortunate fate, may life become death for me.' The text, which was penned by an anonymous writer, gave Gesualdo – and in turn, the quartet – a deep well of pathos from which to draw. And the composer's famously complex and inventive harmonies are heard in all their chromatic glory in this arrangement, meaning that the madrigal loses none of its emotional anguish when you remove the words. It is embedded deeply, like a wound, into the fabric of the music itself.

From here to the present day, with the UK premiere of *Three Tributes* for string quartet and tape, the new work by Bushra El-Turk (born 1982), commissioned for the Dudok Quartet by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam and

West Cork Chamber Music Festival. In it the composer paints portraits of Levantine female singers who lived and worked and sang during the Nahda period. This was a 'cultural and intellectual movement that flourished in many parts of the Middle East throughout the late 19th century to the early 20th century'; El-Turk discovered the singers via rare archival 78rpm recordings, and, inspired by their musical and historical stories, created *Three Tributes* to celebrate their tradition and memories. The inclusion of tape creates an interesting thread with the next piece, too Messiaen's *Oraison*.

Olivier Messiaen (1908–92) never wrote for string quartet – perhaps the closest he got was in his famous *Quartet for the End of Time* for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, composed for the instruments available to him while a prisoner of war in Stalag VIII-A in 1941. A few years prior, in 1937, Messiaen created *Oraison* for the early electronic instrument the ondes Martenot, an instrument whose unique colours fascinated him, and to which he returned most famously in his *Turangalila-Symphonie*. To listen to *Oraison* is a deeply otherworldly experience, at times seeming to possess the clarity of a single line, at others like an all-engulfing soundscape.

The Dudok Quartet set themselves quite a challenge in reworking *Oraison* for string instruments, particularly considering the work it takes to extract four voices from a composition meant for just one. There are, of course, the ondes Martenot's overtones and harmonics to exploit, but it is a singular ensemble that takes on such a

challenge. But this is typical of the Dudok Quartet, whose complex and carefully constructed programmes invariably yield things you have never heard before. That you've never thought to hear before. Their concerts are built like plays: with a narrative structure, but within that, an unselfconscious ambiguity, so you might walk away feeling entirely different from the person sitting next to you. What you take from *Oraison*: how you navigate its web of musical material is up to you.

We end with Schubert, and here there's another link back to the Gesualdo with which the concert began, for life, as Gesualdo surmised, does indeed become death. The despair of his madrigal is balanced by the equally devastating moods of Schubert's 14th String Quartet, *Death and the Maiden*. Conceived of and written in 1824, while the composer grappled with the syphilis that would lead to his own death four years later, the quartet's name comes from an earlier song in which a young girl begs Death not to take her, for she has more life to live. In the song, Death itself gets the final word: 'I am not cruel,' he declares 'you shall sleep gently in my arms.' Dealing with his own failing health, Schubert creates a quartet that is in turn moving, sombre, chaotic, faltering and calm. Those themes that we face in all our human lives – uncertainty, heartbreak, grief are stretched out, map-like – the quartet intrepid cartographers of emotion.

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Dudok Quartet

Judith Van Driel violin

Marleen Wester violin

Marie-Louise de Jong viola

David Faber cello

The Dudok Quartet Amsterdam is forging a reputation as one of the most creative and versatile quartets of its generation. Central to the quartet's belief is that chamber music is an act of friendship and one to be shared directly with audiences through the creation of unique and eclectic programmes that engage listeners in imaginative ways.

The players are constantly searching for and building new musical connections in repertoire ranging from Ligeti, Shostakovich and Bacewicz to Mendelssohn, Mozart and Beethoven, alongside their own arrangements of composers such as Gesualdo, Desprez, Shostakovich, Brahms and Messiaen. They are also committed to commissioning new works and have collaborated with composers including Joey Roukens, Peter Vigh and Theo Loevendie. Earlier this year they premiered a new piece by British-Lebanese composer Bushra El-Turk, co-commissioned for the Dudok by the String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam, West Cork Chamber Music Festival and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, which they reprise tonight. Another current repertoire highlight

is Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, for which the players have made their own new recording of the accompanying tape track.

Recent projects include the world premiere of Kaija Saariaho's opera *Only the Sound Remains* with Philippe Jaroussky and Dutch National Opera, and a collaboration with director Rosabel Huguet, reimagining Beethoven's Op 132 String Quartet for children – *Quartet! A card game with Beethoven* – part of the Dudok's commitment to education and outreach.

The group has performed at many of Europe's major venues and festivals, including the Vienna Konzerthaus, Wigmore Hall, Beethovenhaus Bonn, De Bijloke, Barcelona Auditori, De Doelen, BBC Proms, and the Canberra, Heidelberg, Mecklenburg and West Cork festivals, as well as appearing regularly at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Amsterdam Muziekgebouw.

Current and forthcoming highlights include appearances at Stockholm Concert Hall and Wigmore Hall and a performance of John Adams's *Absolute Jest* with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and Vasily Petrenko at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and November Music festival.

The Dudok Quartet's eclectic recording catalogue showcases its wide-ranging interests, from Shostakovich and Bacewicz through to Brahms, as well as their own arrangements. Since 2021 the group has recorded for Rubicon Classics, its most recent release being *What Remains*, which brings together works by Joey Roukens, Steve Reich and Messiaen. Plans include the completion of its Tchaikovsky quartet cycle and works by Saariaho, Shostakovich and Schubert.

The quartet first met as members of the Ricciotti Ensemble, a Dutch street symphony orchestra, and it takes its name from renowned Dutch architect and music lover Willem Marinus Dudok (1884–1974).

The quartet performs on instruments generously on loan from the Dutch Musical Instrument Foundation: violins by Francesco Goffriller and Vincenzo Panormo, viola by Jean Baptiste Lefèbvre and cello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume.

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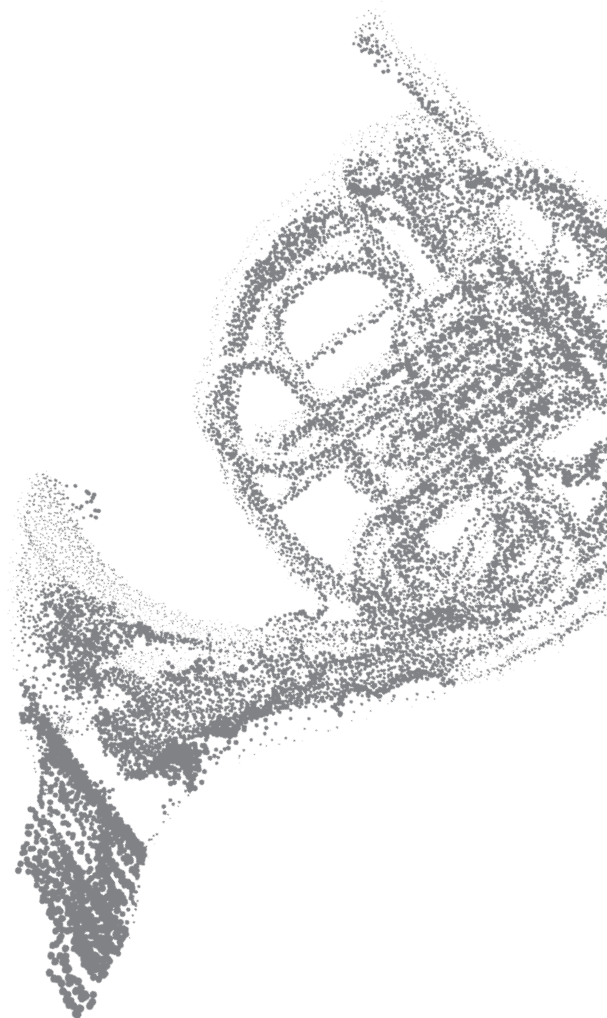
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