

# barbican



## Classical Music

### Concert programme

**Carducci Quartet:  
Shostakovich  
Quartets, Part 4**

Tue 29 Apr 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 9.30pm, 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.

# Shostakovich Quartets: Intimate Portraits, Part 4

## A series with the Carducci Quartet

Tue 29 Apr 7.30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

**Carducci Quartet**  
**Elmore Quartet**  
**Kyan Quartet**  
**Oculus Quartet**  
**Chris West** double bass

**Dmitri Shostakovich** String Quartet No 4  
(Carducci Quartet)

- 1 Allegretto
- 2 Andantino
- 3 Allegretto –
- 4 Allegretto

**String Quartet No 13 (Elmore Quartet)**  
Adagio – Doppio movimento – Tempo primo

*Interval 20 minutes*

**Elena Firsova** Quartet No 4, *Amoroso*  
(Elmore Quartet)

**Dmitri Shostakovich (arr Barshai)** Quartet  
No 8 (all players)

- 1 Largo –
- 2 Allegro molto –
- 3 Allegretto –
- 4 Largo –
- 5 Largo

Produced by the Barbican

Programme produced by Harriet Smith  
All information correct at time of printing  
Printed by APS Group on Edixion Offset  
FSC Mix Credit



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**The Carducci Quartet reaches the penultimate concert in its exploration of the quartets of Shostakovich in this anniversary celebration. Tonight's programme culminates in Rudolf Barshai's chamber orchestra arrangement of the searing Eighth Quartet, for which it's joined by three young quartets plus bassist Chris West.**

Shostakovich's first three string quartets show a steady broadening of artistic range and ambition. In the Fourth Quartet of 1949 he adds to his portfolio a strongly ethnic tone in the shape of Jewish klezmer, as if in sardonic response to the 'anti-formalism' affair that had kicked off the previous year. In that notorious campaign, composers were exhorted to write Music for the People, preferably arising from folk sources. For Shostakovich, fulfilling this requirement on his own ambivalent terms was a stimulus to his artistic development. But it was also an ethical issue, because choosing Jewish culture as his source could easily be read as an expression of solidarity with an oppressed people in the Soviet Union, where, almost simultaneously with anti-formalism, Stalin had just instigated a vicious 'anti-cosmopolitanism' movement, principally directed against Jews.

Folklorism of a more general kind is evident from the start of the quartet. Above a drone-like accompaniment, a sinuous theme grows ever more passionately, as if struggling to shake itself free. Striving and constraint are now established as fundamentals of the musical drama. The first movement reaches an early climax, which is followed by a prolonged, disappointed aftermath, producing a

structural-psychological imbalance that will gradually be 'corrected' as the rest of the work unfolds. The slow movement follows a similar plan in its more melancholy, still unfulfilled urgings. A nagging quasi-scherzo paves the way for the finale by virtue of its obsessional drive. And Shostakovich makes a bridge to the finale itself with a recitative-like introduction that will return at the highpoint, whose more or less conventional placing feels fresh and summatory precisely because it finally corrects the previous imbalance.

The Fourth Quartet was first heard in a private performance at the end of 1949 but not in public until four years later, nine months into the so-called Thaw following the death of Stalin.

Composed in the summer of 1970, in between two lengthy periods of hospital treatment for a muscular condition that would later be diagnosed as motor neurone disease, Shostakovich's 13th Quartet is dedicated to Vadim Borisovsky, the violist who had retired from the Beethoven Quartet six years previously. The predominant character, at least in the framing outer sections, is that of a funeral oration led by the viola, whose material is carried over from the 'Lamentations' in Shostakovich's recently completed film score to *King Lear*.

Throughout his career, Shostakovich addresses the topic of death in tones of passionate protest and black humour, and just so in the 13th Quartet. Its 20-minute single movement is cast in five clearly defined sections, arranged in an arch form – ABCBA – with the outer, viola-dominated A sections initially brooding but by the end fiercely intense. The B sections are a kind of paradoxical frozen scherzo, with stabbing repeated-note motifs accompanied by icy held chords. Most remarkably, the central C section is a *danse macabre*, featuring ghostly taps of the bow on the body of the instruments, a device Shostakovich would have known from the 1952 Violin Sonata of his pupil and one-time muse, Galina Ustvolskaya. When

the viola eventually resumes its funereal monologue, the ghostly tappings return on the second violin. The only gesture more chilling than that is the piercing shriek of protest with which the quartet ends.

In 1979, four years after Shostakovich's death, Elena Firsova was one of seven composers castigated by Composers' Union secretary Tikhon Khrennikov for unapproved participation in festivals of Soviet music abroad, thereby firmly establishing her credentials as a progressively minded artist. In 1991, as the Soviet Union was crumbling, she moved to the UK, settling in St Albans in 1998. Prominent among her compositions, which number more than 100, are works for voice and chamber ensembles, 13 concertos and 12 string quartets. Most of the quartets carry short titles, as with No 4, *Amoroso*.

*Amoroso* was composed for the Lydian Quartet in gratitude for its performance of Firsova's previous quartet, *Misterioso*. It was premiered by the Arditti Quartet in Cremona, in 1989. The single 15-minute movement partly uses material from her chamber cantata *Forest Walk*, one of many of her works setting, or inspired by, the poetry of Osip Mandelstam. The tempo fluctuates around the initial Andante, contrasting agitated and languorous moods in a musical language indebted to the Second Viennese School by way of her mentors Edison Denisov and Philip Gershkovich (himself a former pupil of Berg and Webern).

Shostakovich's Eighth Quartet (which tonight we hear in Rudolf Barshai's arrangement for string orchestra) was composed in the space of three days during July 1960, in the East German town of Gohrisch. What he should have been doing there was working on a score to the film *Five Days, Five Nights*, commemorating the wartime devastation of nearby Dresden. At the quartet's first performance in October, it bore the dedication 'In Memory of the Victims of Fascism and War'.

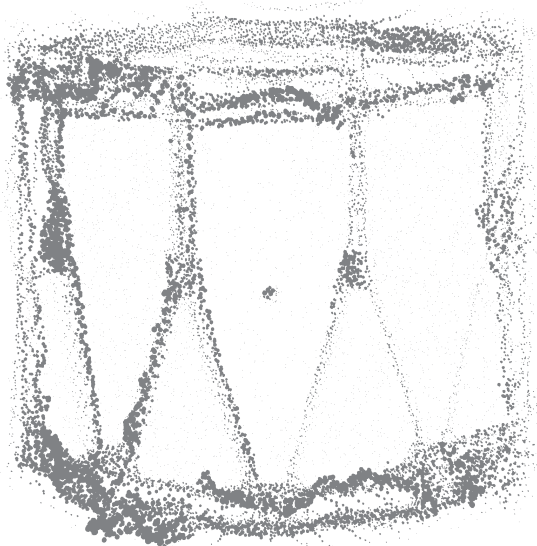
That year also saw another kind of trauma for Shostakovich. In June the process of

his induction into the Communist Party began, causing him agonies, not least because he knew that his acquiescence would be taken by his fellow-composers and fellow-citizens as a sell-out. The Eighth Quartet is in significant part a creative reflection of those agonies.

That there was an autobiographical element was immediately clear. Each of the five movements, which play without a break, features the DSCH monogram already famous from Shostakovich's 10th Symphony of 1953. In addition, all five are woven from a tissue of self-quotation and allusion, featuring at least half a dozen of his works, heard in roughly chronological order by composition and registering as flashbacks over a damaged life.

The first movement begins as if to construct a fugue from the DSCH motto. But the counterpoint soon peters out into the first of the self-quotations (from the opening of Shostakovich's First Symphony). The non-completion of the fugue leaves a sense of unfulfillment hanging in the air, which is at length redressed in the last movement. There the fugue is at last fully (and masterfully) composed, transcending the self-quotations, the sad recitatives and the manic bitterness of the three central movements.

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### **Carducci Quartet**

**Matthew Denton, Michelle Fleming** violin  
**Eoin Schmidt-Martin** viola  
**Emma Denton** cello

The award-winning Carducci Quartet is internationally acclaimed as one of the most accomplished and versatile ensembles of today. In addition to mastering the core repertoire, each season the quartet presents a selection of new works and diversifies further with programmes of film music, pop, folk and rock, as well as concerts of music and spoken word. The group was founded in 1997 and was a prize winner at numerous international competitions, including the Concert Artists Guild International Competition and Finland's Kuhmo International Chamber Music Competition.

The Carducci Quartet regularly appears at prestigious venues across the world, including the Barbican, Cadogan Hall, Southbank Centre, Royal Albert Hall and Wigmore Hall; National Concert Hall, Dublin; Tivoli Concert Hall, Copenhagen; the Frick Collection and Carnegie Hall, New York; Library of Congress and John F Kennedy Center, Washington DC;

St Lawrence Center for the Arts, Toronto; Muziekcentrum De Bijloke, Ghent; and Amsterdam Concertgebouw. The quartet has also held residencies at the Cheltenham, Ryedale, Aldeburgh, Lichfield, Presteigne, Kilkenny, Canterbury and West Cork festivals.

The music of Shostakovich has always been a particular point of focus for the quartet. In 2016 it won a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for its project, *Shostakovich15*, performing Shostakovich's quartets across the UK and North and South America, including a marathon one-day cycle hosted by Shakespeare's Globe here in London. The project was accompanied by recordings of the Fourth, Eighth and 11th Quartets, with subsequent releases of the First, Second and Seventh Quartets (2019) and Ninth and 15th Quartets (2024). Recent projects have included 'Shostakovich's Letters' with actor Anton Lesser – a programme based around translations of texts from the composer himself alongside his music.

In 2015 the quartet curated projects around Philip Glass and Steve Reich as part of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award-winning 'Minimalism Unwrapped' at Kings Place. Its recording of the Philip Glass quartets, for Naxos, has reached over 21 million plays on Spotify. The quartet will be marking both composers' 90th birthdays with a major project during the 2026/27 season.

Highlights of this season include the current 'Intimate Portraits' series, returns to the Two Moors and Leicester festivals, and Wigmore Hall and collaborations with Charles Owen, Emma Johnson, Julian Bliss, Guy Johnston, and Jacqui Dankworth.

Education work is an important element of the Carducci Quartet's work, earning it a place on the Royal Philharmonic Society Award shortlist for its family concert 'Getting the Quartet Bug!'. The Carducci Music Trust was set up to support the group's work in schools and with young musicians. It also performs a number of school concerts each year supported by the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust.



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### **Elmore Quartet**

**Xander Croft, Miles Ames** violin

**Inis Oírr Asano** viola

**Felix Hughes** cello

Founded in the industrial city of Manchester, the Elmore Quartet is an award-winning British quartet based in London, where it is currently Hans Keller Chamber Fellow at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

From the musicians' first sight-reading session at the start of their studies in 2017, they were bitten by the chamber-music bug and have been making music together for audiences across the world ever since.

Over the past two years, the Elmore Quartet has recorded multiple times for BBC Radio 3 and performed at leading venues throughout the UK and Europe, including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, Bridgewater Hall and Oxford's Holywell Music Room.

Last year it was awarded third prize at the Premio Paolo Borciani International String Quartet Competition in Reggio Emilia. The same year it was also selected as Penzance MusicAbility Foundation's first resident string quartet, a three-year position that allows the Elmore to integrate itself into West Cornwall's unique community by performing regularly as part of the Concerts Penzance concert series, working with local schools and sharing its passion for classical music with new audiences.

In addition to its performance and outreach work, the quartet launched the Elmore Chamber Music Festival in 2020. Its aim was to provide a platform for fellow young musicians, and has since grown into an annual event held every August in the picturesque village of Elmore, Gloucestershire, bringing high-level chamber music to a rural community.





© Jessica Hu

## **Kyan Quartet**

**Naomi Warburton, Sydney Mariano** violin  
**Wanshu Qiu** viola  
**Simon Guémy** cello

Prizewinners of the 2024 Royal Over-Seas League competition and 2025 City Music Foundation artists, the award-winning Kyan Quartet consists of four exceptional musicians from the UK, US, China and France. The quartet was formed in 2020 and has since built a busy international career, having performed across Europe and Asia in venues including Wigmore Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Beethoven-Haus Chamber Music Hall, Shanghai Opera House and Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra Hall.

As Tunnell Trust award holders, the quartet toured across Scotland in February. Tonight is the second of three concerts with the Carducci Quartet in their Barbican Shostakovich cycle project. Other current highlights include debuts at St John's Smith Square, Barnes Music Society and Canterbury Music Club. The quartet also continues its ongoing collaboration with Ahmed Dickinson, returning to Conway

Hall this November for a programme of guitar quintets. The quartet is grateful to be supported by Le Dimore del Quartetto.

The Kyan Quartet has held residencies with the Britten Pears Young Artist Programme and the South Downs Summer Music International Festival, and attended prestigious courses, including the International Beethoven Masterclass in Bonn, Jeunesses Musicales Deutschland's 68th International Chamber Music Campus and Chamber Studio's inaugural Hans Keller Forum. Through these it has received coaching from all members of the Belcea Quartet, Heime Müller, John Myerscough, Jana Kuss, Alasdair Beatson and Péter Nagy. The quartet has also been coached by members of the Carducci, Doric, Heath, Jerusalem and Pavel Haas quartets. It is currently mentored at the Mozarteum University by Cibrán Sierra Vazquez, Rainer Schmidt and William Coleman.

Widening musical participation and access is central to the quartet's artistic mission. It is a Live Music Now artist, sharing its love of participatory music-making in care homes and SEND schools. The quartet also gives masterclasses and works with young composers at the Junior Royal Academy of Music. As the 2022/23 fellows of the Open Academy/Wigmore Hall Learning Programme, it appeared regularly on the Wigmore Hall stage and in community settings, sharing music with families, young children and those living with dementia. A particular highlight was leading workshops across six primary schools in Tower Hamlets, in partnership with Spitalfields Music.

The Kyan Quartet is also a keen champion of new music. It has given Wigmore premieres of commissioned pieces by Florence Anna Maunders and Zhenyan Li, and performed *Symphony for String Quartet and Forest* by Jacob Fitzgerald at the 2022 Timber Festival, featuring 200 school children singing alongside the quartet. It collaborated with Cem Güven to record his 2023 quartet *Atmospheric Manipulations*, and will feature on Ben Nobuto's forthcoming debut album.



**Oculus Quartet**  
**George Richardson-Jones,**  
**Conor Simpson** violin  
**Aisling Massaccesi** viola  
**Anna Leary** cello

The Oculus Quartet is a new group formed of current undergraduates at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. It has received coaching over the past year from both the Carducci and Fibonacci Quartets (supported by the Frost Music Trust and the Colwinston Charitable Trust) and, as a result of this coaching, has given its first concert series around South Wales, performing at notable venues such as the National Museum, Llandaff Cathedral and the RWCMD Weston Gallery.

The Oculus is excited to be joining its coaches, the Carducci Quartet, to play Shostakovich's *Chamber Symphony*. Individually, Anna Leary receives a Helen Rachael Mackaness Scholarship and all members are grateful to have been supported by RWCMD scholarships during their studies.



**Chris West**

Chris West was appointed Solo Bass of the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra after stepping in to perform Bottesini's *Gran Duo Concertante* at less than four hours' notice in 2024. He appears frequently as guest principal with major orchestras such as the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and was formerly co-principal of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. With his wife, the clarinettist Emma Johnson, he founded the Orchestra for the Environment, a chamber orchestra dedicated to raising awareness of conservation issues.

He has played on iconic soundtracks such as those for *Downton Abbey*, *Doctor Who* and two *Harry Potter* films and has recorded chamber music for labels including Naxos, Somm, Hyperion and BMG/RCA.

Chris West is professor of Double Bass at Trinity Laban Conservatoire. His books include *Reaching The Heights: Thumb Position on the Double Bass* and *The Paganini of the Double Bass*, a biography of the legendary Giovanni Bottesini.

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**Part 5**  
Thu 29 May, Milton Court



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