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Classical Music

Concert programme



**Carducci Quartet:
Shostakovich
Quartets, Part 3**

Thu 27 Mar 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?

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Looking for the toilets?

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Carrying bags and coats?

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Shostakovich Quartets: Intimate Portraits, Part 3

A series with the Carducci Quartet

Quartet

Thu 27 Mar 7.30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

Carducci Quartet Kyan Quartet

Dmitri Shostakovich String Quartet No 14 (Carducci Quartet)

- 1 Allegretto
- 2 Adagio –
- 3 Allegretto

String Quartet No 11 (Kyan Quartet)

- 1 Introduction: Andantino –
- 2 Scherzo: Allegretto –
- 3 Recitative: Adagio –
- 4 Etude: Allegro –
- 5 Humoresque: Allegro –
- 6 Elegy: Adagio –
- 7 Conclusion: Moderato

Interval 20 minutes

Sofia Guibaidulina String Quartet No 2 (Kyan Quartet)

Dmitri Shostakovich String Quartet No 2 (Carducci Quartet)

- 1 Overture: Moderato con moto.
- 2 Recitative and Romance: Adagio
- 3 Waltz: Allegro
- 4 Theme and Variations: Adagio; Moderato con moto; Allegretto; Allegro non troppo; Allegro; Adagio

Produced by the Barbican

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The Carducci Quartet continues its exploration of the quartets of Shostakovich in this anniversary celebration. Tonight it's joined by the up-and-coming Kyan Quartet in a programme that includes the Second Quartet of Sofia Gubaidulina – whose death was announced earlier this month.

Among several recurring preoccupations in Shostakovich's 15 string quartets is the topic of coming back to life. His First Quartet (1938) is already of this kind; it followed on from his painful rehabilitation after *Pravda's* notorious denunciation of his opera *The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and its deceptive simplicity conveys the feeling of a hoped-for musical rebirth. In their various ways, the Sixth, Ninth and 12th Quartets all seem determined to reassert the life-force after their darker predecessors. So too, with reservations, does the 14th.

The opening bars stride and skip along as if happiness might still be possible and as if multiple infirmities and the death of friends and colleagues could be banished from the composer's mind. In fact, the quartet's composition did coincide with a resurgence of creativity in March and April 1973, following radiation treatment for the lung cancer that would eventually cause his death. What nevertheless disconcerts and fascinates about the first movement is its continual reversion to painful reality, as it constantly loses its grip on attempted cheeriness.

The central Adagio movement starts from a Tristanesque yearning motif – one of several late-Shostakovich fingerprints – and it seems set to become yet another of his sorrowful, long-drawn passacaglias. But it too 'fails' and instead takes refuge in what Shostakovich himself called an 'Italianate' passage, with its almost palpable yearning for emotional warmth. Initially a gentle

song on the cello, joined by the first violin, against pizzicato accompaniment, this music will recur at the slow conclusion to the finale, which begins as another would-be passacaglia on the opening violin pizzicato theme, but once again fails to hold on to that notion, as angular two-note, then three-note and four-note figures are hurled between all four instruments. All in all, the 14th is one of the subtlest, most emotionally elusive of Shostakovich's quartets. Constantly seeking consolation, yet at the same time painfully aware of its unattainability, it is a true late-period masterpiece.

Composed rapidly in January 1966, the seven continuous movements of the 11th Quartet constitute a unique structure for Shostakovich (he seems to have taken a decision after No 8 that each succeeding quartet would have a different number of movements). Each movement presents a cryptic character-snapshot, tenuously unified by the motif first heard at the cello's initial entry and then again in a quasi-chorale midway through the Introduction, as the first movement is styled.

This motif supplies the melodic outline for the succeeding wiry Scherzo, and it resurfaces periodically in the rest of the work. It provides a brief moment of spiritual consolation in the third movement, which is otherwise a convulsive affair that puts a sardonic spin on the title, *Recitative*. The following *Etude* uses the chorale texture to offset one of the most characteristic textures of Shostakovich's later works: a frantic perpetual motion, suggestive, perhaps, of the brain racing while the body is crippled.

The 11th Quartet is dedicated to the memory of the second violinist of the Beethoven Quartet, Vasily Petrovich Shirinsky, who had died the previous summer. And it pays him a sly tribute. Having given practically all the thematic interest in the first four movements to the first violin, Shostakovich finally spotlights the second violin in a Stravinskian *Humoresque*, casting him in the role of a mechanical cuckoo. The following *Elegy* makes partial amends by twice letting the second violin take the *espressivo* lamenting theme, before returning him

to his conventional filling-in role in the Conclusion, which poignantly reviews themes from the Introduction and Scherzo.

By the mid-1980s, Sofia Gubaidulina and her fellow 'unofficial' composers had won a degree of recognition, both in the Soviet Union and abroad, that brought them from the margins towards the centre of art-music creativity. Her String Quartet No 2 was a commission from the Sibelius Quartet for performance at the 1987 Kuhmo Festival in Finland. Its single 10-minute movement is typical of her preoccupation with, on the one hand, the properties of the single note (in this case G), and on the other, timbral effects that symbolise spiritual states or, more concretely, in the composer's words, 'angels and birds'.

In 1944 Shostakovich composed his Second Piano Trio and Second String Quartet with the Beethoven Quartet in mind. His relationship with the Beethovens endured another 30 years, and they premiered all but the last of his subsequent quartets.

Despite its innocent-seeming movement titles, the Second Quartet is an ambitious work on a large, dramatic scale. Indeed, quite why Shostakovich should have given his opening movement the modest title '*Overture*' is something of a mystery, for this is a fully worked-out sonata-form movement, complete with exposition repeat and a tone of wiry contention. At the beginning of the central section the tension relaxes briefly. But blink and you could miss it, because we are soon plunged back into the maelstrom.

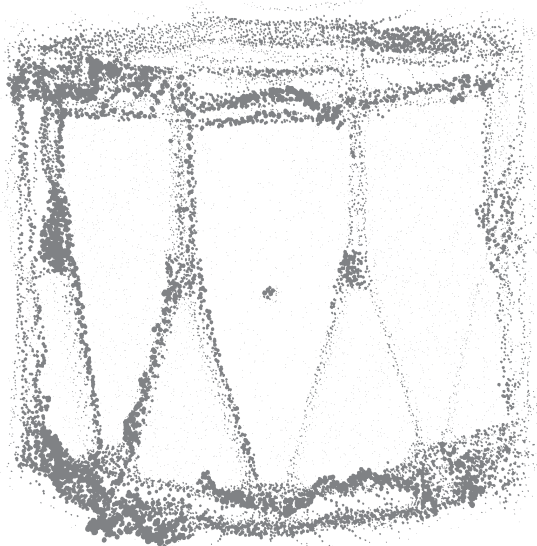
The '*Recitative and Romance*' second movement poured from the composer's imagination in a single day. Perhaps its passionate laments are no more (or less) than an attempt to emulate the eloquence of late Beethoven. Or perhaps they are a tribute to the Beethoven Quartet's leader, Dmitri Tsiganov, who certainly claimed that the movement was composed with his playing in mind.

Every one of Shostakovich's quartets has a muted movement, redolent sometimes of consoling yet out-of-reach experiences, but sometimes, as in this instance, of anxiety and frustration. The shadowy opening is a

waltz faster than any that could comfortably be danced. Ever more intense fortissimos run up against the constraints of the muted sonority, provoking a state of near-paranoia.

The theme for the finale's variations is heard on the viola and marked *semplice*. But simplicity in Shostakovich is almost always a remembered or longed-for state of being, hardly ever in the 'present tense'. As the variations accelerate towards *allegro*, they seem driven by unspecified demons. In the end the best that can be hoped for, it seems, is to out-stare them, which Shostakovich does in a coda of stoical defiance.

© David Fanning



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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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 last month. Tonight is the first of three concerts with the Carducci Quartet in their Barbican Shostakovich cycle project. Other forthcoming 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



© Benjamin Ealovega

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.

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Shostakovich Quartets: Intimate Portraits A series with the Carducci Quartet

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Tue 29 Apr, Milton Court

Part 5

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