

Chaos String Quartet

Pittville Pump Room

Friday 12 July

Henry Purcell	Chacony in G minor, Z730	6'
Henriëtte Bosmans	String Quartet	12'
Edvard Grieg	String Quartet No.1 in G minor, Op. 27	33'

About the Programme

Henry Purcell Chacony in G minor, Z730

Purcell's Chacony in G minor takes us to the London theatres that reopened after the return of Charles II to England in 1660. Restoration theatre music was 'incidental': auxiliary to the actual play, music was performed before the main event began and during the interval. By and large, a suite of theatre music comprised eight pieces—an overture and a sequence of dances—that were very often subsequently used as concert works. As the Purcell scholar Peter Holman explains, much Restoration theatre music only survives in concert versions, and it is therefore often problematic to decide which music was written for which play. This is certainly the case with Purcell's Chacony in G minor, which was probably composed around 1680—that is, while Purcell was employed by Charles, and nearly a decade before he turned his attention almost exclusively to the theatre, after the accession of William III (who notoriously disliked music) and Queen Mary in 1689.

Despite being in a minor key, the Chacony was probably written as a lively dance. Charles had picked up the French habit of listening to music while standing and tapping his foot, and he emphatically preferred music that gratified his partiality. The piece is based on a descending tetrachord—four consecutive notes of a minor scale, leading from tonic to dominant—which became associated with the lament, a decisive instance being Dido's lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689). As was usual in England, in the case of the Chacony, the chaconne of the title is used indeterminately, and the word might equally suggest a passacaglia or simply a ground.

Henriëtte Bosmans (1895-1952) String Quartet

Allegro molto moderato

Lento

Allegro molto

Considered one of the most important Dutch composers of the first half of the 20th century, Henriëtte Bosmans was the daughter of Henri Bosmans, principal cellist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the pianist Sarah Benedicts, piano teacher at the Amsterdam Conservatory. She studied piano with her mother and made her concert debut at the age of 17, when she also became a piano teacher. Her early compositions are in the German-Romantic style, after that her work became less romantic and more colourful. Her only string quartet dates from 1927 and strong influences of Debussy and Ravel can be heard. It is dedicated to Willem Pijer, her composition teacher at the time.

Edvard Grieg String Quartet No.1 in G minor Op. 27

Un poco Andante – Allegro molto ed agitato

Romanze: Andantino – Allegro agitato

Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato – Piu vivo e scherzando

Finale: Lento – Presto al Saltarello.

Grieg admitted that there was an autobiographical element in his first surviving and only complete string quartet, the Quartet in G minor, Op. 27. It was written in 1877-78 in the work-hut he had built for himself at Lofthus, during a period when he was not accompanied to his country retreat by his wife, with whom his relationship had not always been easy. Aware of its unconventional nature, he told his publishers, "It is true that it is not written in conformity with the requirements of the Leipzig school, but it is wrong to say that it's unsuited to strings or that it is really keyboard music."

The quartet makes use of a setting of words by Ibsen that reflect the thoughts of a musician separated from his beloved, meditating, as he walks on a summer evening by a stream, on the possibility of some water spirit bringing his beloved to him again. The melody of the song provides the characteristic motto theme that is first heard in the slow introduction to the first movement, and then, later, transformed as the second theme in an Allegro molto. This Grieg motif, familiar from the opening of his Piano Concerto, recurs throughout the quartet, ensuring an element of cyclic unity. The tranquil second movement Romanze is interrupted by this motif and the third movement Intermezzo starts with it and continues in the same vein, relaxing into a central trio section in what is, in fact, a scherzo. The last movement opens with a slow introduction, where the motto theme is heard again, before the final rapid dance, which ends with optimism in G major.

Artist Biography

Chaos String Quartet

Recently selected as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist 2023-2025, the Chaos String Quartet is rapidly establishing itself on the international music scene. The Quartet has been awarded at the most prestigious international competitions such as Bad Tölz (2023), ARD (2022), Bordeaux (2022), and Haydn (2023). Additional successes include winning the 2nd Prize at the 2023 Heidelberg competition, the 2nd Prize and numerous Special Prizes at the 2021 Bartók World Competition, and the International Premio V. E. Rimbotti in Italy in 2020.

The Chaos String Quartet was invited to music festivals such as the Schwetzingen SWR Festival, the Schwarzwald Musikfestival, the Mozartfest Würzburg, the Davos Festival, the Ravenna Festival, Lockenhaus, the Gent Festival van Vlaanderen, the Festival Academy Budapest, and the Heidelberger Streichquartettfest, among others. In the season 2023/24, the ensemble made its debut in the Musikverein Wien, Wigmore Hall London and the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.

Mentored by Prof. Johannes Meissl in Vienna through the ECMaster program, the quartet additionally completed a postgraduate course at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole with the Cuarteto Casals. The ensemble received further musical impulses from artists such as Eberhard Feltz, András Keller and Oliver Wille.

The quartet is a member of the Merita Project and has been selected for the promotional program "New Austrian Sound of Music". Bas Jongen plays a cello by Hendrick Jacobs (Amsterdam, 1696), kindly loaned to him by the Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation (NMF).