

25th January 2026 – Heath Quartet with Ben Goldscheider – Programme notes

Mozart (1756— 1791)

String Quartet in G KV. 80

Adagio

Allegro

Menuetto

Rondo: Allegro

While on his first tour of Italy in 1770 aged 14(!), Mozart wrote the first three movements of this quartet on the evening of March 15th in Lodi, Lombardy. He added the fourth movement in Vienna in 1773.

In a letter of March 24th 1778, he refers to 'the quartet | wrote one evening at the inn at Lodi' and retained a special fondness for the piece, organising it to be printed.

The opening Adagio is lyrical and serene, followed by a lively, vigorous Allegro. The minuet, with its striking accented chords in its central trio, in turn leads to the final Rondo: Allegro which features strong contrasts and more rhythmically interesting music and has a delightful and surprising ending!

Eleanor Alberga (b. 1949)

Shining Gate of Morpheus

Alberga was born in Kingston, Jamaica. She studied music at the Jamaica School of Music, and then in 1970 went on to study piano and singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London under the Royal Schools of Music Scholarship for the West Indies.

After her studies, she performed as a concert pianist, but in 2001 took up a full career in composition.

She married the violinist Thomas Bowes in 1992 who premiered her two violin concertos in 2001 and 2019.

She was awarded an OBE in 2021 for her services to music.

Her works include two operas, many pieces for orchestra, a wide range of chamber music, pieces for solo piano and several vocal and choral works.

Shining Gate of Morpheus was written in 2012 and inspired by words spoken by Penelope in Homer's The Odyssey. Alberga has written 'I have always been drawn to Greek mythology and the world of fantasy that it embodies. This work came from the idea of Morpheus, the god best known to govern sleep and dreams. It is said that false dreams enter through gates of ivory and true dreams through gates of shining horn'.

Mozart

Horn Quintet in E flat K 407

Allegro

Andante

Rondo - Allegro

Mozart wrote both this quintet and his horn concertos for Joseph Leutgeb who was formerly a horn player in the Salzburg Court Orchestra, who subsequently moved at around the same time to Vienna as Mozart in 1777. Leutgeb supplemented his income by opening a cheese shop who Leopold, Mozart's father, helped set up.

He was described as a brilliant musician and a simple man, and Wolfgang, who had known him since childhood, littered the manuscripts with jokey comments which Joseph apparently took in good faith!

The Horn Quintet, for Horn, Violin, 2 Violas and Cello was written in 1782, a few months after Mozart's marriage and overall breaths an air of serene joy, though like a lot of his music there are fleeting moments of sadness.

Originally written for a natural horn (the valved horn wasn't invented until early in the 19th century), the player had to produce different pitches by varying lip pressure and changing hand position in the bell. Considering the difficulty of the piece, Leutgeb must certainly have been a superb musician.

Most players now use the valved horn for the classical, romantic and modern repertoire.

The first movement, as throughout the piece, has a real sense of dialogue between the horn and strings, and there are some brief silences showing Mozart's playful sense of humour.

The second movement is serene in mood, though the harmony occasionally takes some dark turns.

The last movement has one of those supremely catchy tunes Mozart excelled in and is full of a sense of joyous energy.

York Bowen (1884— 1961)

Horn Quintet in C minor Op.85.

Moderato serio

Andante espressivo

Finale. Allegro molto e ritmico

Bowen studied composition and piano at the Royal Academy of Music from 1898— 1905. He developed a successful career as a concert pianist and gave the first performances of all of his four piano concertos. He also took part in the first British performance of Mozart's Concerto for three pianos K242, gave the premiere of Walton's Sinfonia concertante for piano and orchestra, and was apparently the first pianist to record Beethoven's 4th Piano concerto!

Many of his orchestral works were performed by conductors such as Hans Richter and Henry Wood, and instrumental works by such distinguished musicians as Fritz Kreisler and Joseph Szigeti.

As well as performing and composing, he published editions of works by other composers, including a three-volume edition of Mozart's piano works.

After the First World War, his conservative style became unfashionable, competing with composers such as Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Berg, and his music suffered considerable neglect.

His many compositions include four symphonies, the four piano concertos, concertos for both viola and violin, and numerous chamber works and pieces for solo piano.

The first movement opens with the solo horn playing a motif identical to the first theme of Vaughan Williams' 5th Symphony, though this was written ten years later 1937— 43! Vaughan Williams may have heard York Bowen's piece and unconsciously echoed it, or it might be one of those strange musical coincidences. The music undergoes an intense and passionate development leading to a more calm, serene episode. After a return of the opening motif on the viola and of the calm episode, a short pause leads into a fast-closing section.

The second movement opens with a similar motif as at the beginning, though now harmonised. The music builds to two intense climaxes, followed by a serene coda.

The final movement opens vigorously and with a touch of Mendelssohn in the delicate string figuration. A gentler central section leads with a fugato back into the faster music and the lively closing section recalls the opening of the whole piece.

Written by Guy Richardson