

The image shows a concert hall with a Steinway & Sons piano in the foreground. The piano is dark wood with a light-colored keyboard. The background features rows of grey seats and a curved wall with vertical wooden slats. The text "kings place" is in the top right corner.

kings place

Sunday 1 Feb

London Chamber Music Series

Sacconi Quartet

Presented in partnership with
the London Chamber Music Society

London Chamber Music Series

Sacconi Quartet Hall One, 6.30pm

Ben Hancock	violin
Hannah Dawson	violin
Robin Ashwell	viola
Cara Berridge	cello

Joaquin Turina (1882-1949)
La Oracion del Torero *Op 34* (1925)

Robin Holloway (born 1943)
String Quartet No 2 London Premiere

INTERVAL (20 minutes)

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)
String Quartet in C Sharp Minor *Op 131* (1825-26)

Sacconi Quartet

One of the most outstanding Quartets of their generation, over the last year the Sacconi Quartet has given debut concerts in Lucerne, Geneva, Vienna, Barcelona and Madrid. Formed in 2001 at the Royal College of Music, the Sacconi Quartet has won 2nd prize at the 2006 London International String Quartet Competition and 1st prize at the 2005 Trondheim International String Quartet Competition, and various other prizes. In May 2006 the Quartet was selected for representation by YCAT. Engagements last season included debut concerts in the Wigmore Hall series, Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, and in Vienna, Madrid and Barcelona. The Quartet gave the first public concert at the new Kings Place concert hall in London and performed at some of the UK's major festivals. It has collaborated with many of today's leading chamber musicians in quintet, sextet and octet concerts and will tour the UK with the Navarra Quartet on Music in the Round's *Around the Country* series.

Future engagements include return visits to Wigmore Hall, concerts in Germany and a debut concert in Brussels. The inaugural Sacconi Chamber Music Festival took place in May 2008 and the Quartet's Music in May Festival in St. Ives, continues to build audiences for chamber music in West Cornwall. The first releases on the Sacconi record label, launched in 2008, will be the Haydn Opus 54 quartets and a live recording from Wigmore Hall of the Brahms Sextet in G and the Mendelssohn Octet with the Navarra Quartet. The Sacconi Quartet is a member of the Royal College of Music's New Generation Scheme, it pursues a keen interest in education work making regular visits to schools, hospitals and community venues. The name *Sacconi* comes from the outstanding twentieth-century Italian violin maker and restorer Simone Sacconi, whose book *The Secrets of Stradivari* is considered an indispensable reference book

The Sacconi Quartet would like to thank the Radcliffe Trust for its kind sponsorship towards Robin Holloway's 2nd Quartet.

Joaquin Turina - *La Oracion del Torero* ('Prayer of the Bullfighter'), Op. 34

In the lineage of twentieth-century Spanish composers - Albeniz, Falla, Granados, Mompou - Turina is perhaps the least well known. Yet, he was only one to devote himself to any great extent to chamber music, and his aspiration to write music of a central European standard in the conventional forms was arguably the greatest. Turina followed a well-worn path when in 1905 he left Madrid to study in Paris (with d'Indy), where the influence of Debussy and Ravel was inescapable. Turina's friendship with Falla also nurtured ideas on the proper character of Spanish music and this is evident in *Le oracion del torero*, an unusual, popular piece originally written in 1925 for four lutes, but more often performed in later versions for string quartet or string orchestra. (Heifetz also made an arrangement for violin and piano). Cast as a tone poem in which the toreador envisions his forthcoming conflict, the single-movement work is as rhapsodic as we might expect. Solo instruments randomly emerge from the hive-like texture in the introduction before its distinctively Spanish undertones are replaced by French mannerisms detectable most clearly in the harmonies - the lush parallel ninths of Debussy, for example - and ensemble-writing. Turina's impulsive rhythms soon reappear, in contrast with an expansive melody that comes to dominate. The most significant ideas are reprised towards the end, and the same melody brings the piece to a gentle close.

Robin Holloway - *String Quartet No. 2* (London premiere)

The composer writes: "This second quartet was inspired most directly by the experience of writing No. 1 and having it rehearsed and performed by its part-dedictees the Endellions. Such delightful stimulus was irresistible, making me eager for more of the same but different, as soon as possible! But its origins go far further back. The last movement of the five was written in 1994 as a self-sufficient memorial to a cherished representation of Boosey & Hawkes New York, David Huntley, who died that year. This first version was garnished with quotations from Debussy, Strauss, Schumann, Beethoven, Copland, Mahler, Brahms, Schubert, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, and more, amongst the may we both loved (many others, more recent and some still living, would have involved my tribute in copyright problems!). All these have been dropped from what is now the finale of String Quartet No.2; but its salient feature is retained, since it is built entirely around the DH (aka B) of its dedicatee's initials.

The other movements grew, much later, out of this nucleus: I *Prelude* - clearly foreshadowing the finale, "rhyming" with it in the overall shape. But here the *serioso corale*-material encloses a demure little *valse* marked "wistful and tender". II. *Capriccio* - an extended paraphrase/fantasia upon an ultimate-favourite Schubert song, *Anflosung*. III *Lento* - This movement has also been heard in an earlier form, as one of the many tributes solicited by Michael Berkeley for his final season as Director of the Cheltenham Festival. They were supposed to be 3' each, but my 3' is (of course!) more like 9. For I was by now thinking of a wider context, and the DH interval is a prominent landmark throughout this *corale* enclosing a lyric, that makes a more extended "rhyme" with I and hence with V. IV *Scherzo* - also DH-based, a bubbly chattering movement with two Trios and plentiful other episodes. V *Epilogue* - the *corale*-finale, here shorn of most of its quotes. They are replaced by new original material of some intensity; the re-introduction of *Anflosung* is also new. David Huntley is celebrated here as before: the preceding 4 movements portray and are dedicated to four friends made in America who are all very much alive."

Ludwig van Beethoven - String Quartet No. 14 in C sharp Minor, Op. 131

- I. Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo
- II. Allegro molto vivace
- III. Allegro moderato
- IV. Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile
- V. Presto
- VI. Adagio quasi un poco andante
- VII. Allegro

After a thirteen-year hiatus, Beethoven returned to the string quartet medium to pen a remarkable series of works that have been revered ever since their composition in 1823-26. The first three quartets, Opp. 127, 130 and 132 (Op. 131 came later), were commissioned by Prince Nikolai Balitzin. After completing the Ninth Symphony in 1824, Beethoven finished the three works the following year. The important exception to this chronology is that after completing the final Op. 135 quartet in 1826, Beethoven was persuaded by his publisher to compose a new finale to Op. 130 - the new *Allegro* movement replaced the enigmatic, introspective *Grosse Fuge* [*Great Fugue*], which was published separately as Op. 133. Taken together, Beethoven's 'Late Quartets', as they are known collectively, push the structural implications of the sonata principle to new limits. The sheer proliferation of movements, beyond the conventional four, exhibits an unrelenting, ambitious impulse, yet with something of the effect of 'character pieces' in a Baroque suite. Coupled with the exploratory and often remote harmonies that distinguish each work, the quartets would soon transform the way in which the string quartet as a genre was understood.

Written between November 1825 and July 1826, Op. 131 was published only after Beethoven's death. We should set aside his self-deprecating annotation of the original score - *zusammengestohlen von verschniedenen diesem und jenem* (put together from stolen this and that) - except to behold the quartet's seven linked movements and their myriad styles. The slowly unwinding fugue which introduces the quartet gives way to a scherzo-like *Allegro molto vivace*. The third movement is just eleven bars long and despite its marking progresses towards a slow passage) cast almost as a recitative. The A major fourth movement, a theme and variations, demonstrates Beethoven's mastery of contrapuntal and harmonic resources completely, while the rapid E major fifth movement is full of surprises, including a conclusion played sul ponticello, on the bridge of the instruments. The fleeting sixth movement - 28 bars long - is a sombre G-sharp minor *Adagio* juxtaposed by the C-sharp minor finale, which resolves, in symmetrical fashion, by referring back to the quartet's fugal first subject.