

# 2025 East Neuk Festival

BEETHOVEN LATE QUARTETS 3  
7pm, Crail Church

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791): Quartet in D, K.499 "Hoffmeister"

Allegretto  
Menuetto  
Adagio  
Allegro

INTERVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827): Quartet in C#m, Op.131

Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo  
Allegro molto vivace  
Allegro moderato (recitative)  
Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile  
Presto  
Adagio quasi un poco andante  
Allegro

Belcea Quartet

Corina Belcea, violin  
Suyeon Kang, violin  
Krzysztof Chorzelski, viola  
Antoine Lederlin, cello

Approx. 95 mins including interval

THOUGHTS ON THE MUSIC

Mozart composed ten mature quartets in all: six written in the early 1780s (the so called 'Haydn' quartets) and 3 from 1789 dedicated to a Prussian king (and called the 'Prussian' quartets). Between them comes K.499 which stands alone in 1785/6 and is dedicated to a man you probably would never have heard of had he not been a friend of Mozart: Franz Hoffmeister. Composer and supporter of Mozart – though not a disinterested one - he was also a publisher. If he fancied himself to have an entrepreneurial eye, he got his fingers burnt with Mozart. He commissioned three piano quartets. The first (G Minor, K 478) was published.... but it simply failed to sell: Hoffmeister was quite forthright: *"Write more popularly, or else I can neither print nor*

*pay for Anything of yours!”*. His bark was worse than his bite: to his credit, he continued to publish his difficult friend and was rewarded with a work as marvelous as this quartet, which has come to be named after him. Hoffmeister’s own promotional screed for this quartet survives: according to him it was written *‘with that fire of the imagination and that correctness which long since won for Herr M. the reputation of one of the best composers in Germany’*. He alludes to the sophistication of Mozart’s music, noting that even the dance movement; the *Minuet* was *‘composed with an ingenuity... not infrequently found wanting in other such compositions’*. A great modern authority of music of this time, H. C. Robbins Landon, goes further – he calls the Minuet *“one of the most original minuets in all eighteenth-century music.”* Another Mozart authority, Alfred Einstein, describes this piece as *“despairing under a mask of gaiety.”*

Hearing K.499 is a wonderful preparation for turning to Op.131. For all its wonderful qualities it is very much a quartet of its time, similar in form and language to many other quartets of the 1780s. While holding it in mind, here are just a few things that make Op.131, of all Beethoven’s late quartets, the most extraordinary. The key: rarely used by anyone before this, and not by Beethoven in 30+ years. The structure: seven movements played without interruption; never done before. Opening with a slow movement: very rare in Beethoven’s work – another notable example is his other famous piece in C# minor, the ‘Moonlight’ Sonata. It and Op.131 both pay homage to J.S. Bach. Then, it was the Bach of exquisite harmonic fantasy; here it is the master of the fugue. This morning you may have heard Beethoven’s Op.130 which ends with a ‘Great Fugue’ that is as trenchant and explosive as Op.131’s opening is introspective and reflective. It sets the scene for a musical narrative that has – as Schumann said – *‘grandeur ... which no words can express’*. I will not try, except to share the lovely juxtaposition of what Beethoven supposedly said of it (*‘..thank God, less lack of imagination than before’*) with what Schubert reputedly said after hearing it: *‘After this, what is left for us to write?’*

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Belcea Quartet couples passion, precision, expressivity and pure emotion in its performances. With the Romanian violinist Corina Belcea, the Korean-Australian Suyeon Kang on second violin, the Polish violist Krzysztof Chorzelski and the French cellist Antoine Lederlin, four different artistic provenances meet and unite to create unique excellence. The ensemble’s repertoire spans Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven to Bartok, Janacek to Szymanowski, and onward to new commissions. In addition to the complete recordings of the string quartets by Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms (Diapason d’Or 2016) and Britten, the quartet’s wide-ranging discography includes works by Berg, Dutilleux, Mozart, Schoenberg, Schubert, Shostakovich, Janáček and Ligeti (among others). In spring 2022, Alpha Classics released the two string sextets by Brahms performed with Tabea Zimmermann and Jean-Guihen Queyras. This season, the Belcea Quartet will be making guest appearances at the three prominent European string quartet biennials in Paris, Lisbon and Amsterdam. In addition, they will be performing at various esteemed venues including Carnegie Hall New York City, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Flagey Brussels, National Concert Hall Dublin, Tonhalle Zurich and Toppan Hall Tokyo.