

— SESSION ONE *Between the Shades of Light*

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732 – 1809)

String Quartet Op. 76, No. 4 'Sunrise' (1797/98)

I. Allegro con spirito

II. Adagio

III. Menuetto. Allegro

IV. Finale. Allegro, ma non troppo

»» [WATCH: NZSQ Insights](#) Helene introduces the life and music of Franz Josef Haydn.

Commonly known as the father of the symphony, Franz Joseph Haydn's contribution to the string quartet genre is equally impressive. He composed around seventy works in the genre, so it's no wonder a number of them have been affectionately nicknamed (or some might say burdened!) with titles of great variety. *The Frog*, "How Do You Do?", *The Donkey*, and *The Joke* being some of the more memorable names bestowed, often by music enthusiasts rather than the composer himself.

The name 'Sunrise' - which characterises the opening theme - may have been given simply to distinguish it from other quartets written in the same key. It should be noted that this particular sun rises six times in the space of one short movement, as well as upside down (in inversion) twice!

The 'Sunrise' quartet is one of a set of six written while Haydn was employed at the court of Prince Nicolaus Esterházy II, and was composed around the same time as *The Creation*. Perhaps the subtle influence of *The Creation* is why the Op. 76 quartets are among some of Haydn's most ambitious chamber works, deviating from their 60 or so predecessors in structure, harmonic exploration and thematic development. The critics seemed to agree, with acclaimed theorist at the time writing to Haydn with a glowing review: "I have never received more pleasure from instrumental music: they [Op. 76] are full of invention, fire, good taste and new effects..."

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DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

String Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 122 (1966)

I. Introduction -- II. Scherzo -- III. Recitative -- IV. Étude --

V. Humoresque -- VI. Elegy -- VII. Finale

»» [WATCH: NZSQ Insights](#) Rolf introduces the life and music of Dmitri Shostakovich.

Dmitri Shostakovich wrote as many string quartets as symphonies – fifteen of each. His symphonies present emotional rawness and power on an immense scale, yet his quartets show he used the voicing and connection between each of the string instruments as a vehicle for more intimate utterances few

symphonies could adequately capture. Born into a musical family in pre-revolutionary Russia, Shostakovich encountered political intrusion from the communist regime throughout his career that led to both setbacks and opportunities. Shostakovich's artistic relationship with the Soviet Union was frequently uneasy - hardly surprising for a composer who lived through the 1917 Revolution, two world wars, and a succession of repressive state controls. A number of his quartets appeared at key points in European history. The Fourth, exhibited "Jewish" themes at a time of widespread anti-Semitism; the Eighth, written during a visit to the badly bombed city of Dresden, was dedicated "to the memory of the victims of facism and war".

String Quartet No. 11 was one of three string quartets (No.s 9 - 11) written in the aftermath of his Symphony No. 13, a sombre work based on five poems by the Russian Poet Yvtushenko. Quartet No. 11 inhabits this same world of suffering and desolation: its spare textures and melodies arranged over multiple accompaniments, seem to recall the pared down orchestration of his thirteenth "Babi Yar" symphony.

String Quartet No. 11 is in the form of seven short interlinked movements, played without a break. Each movement is built on one of two themes first heard in the Interlude and Scherzo. The fleeting shifts in mood and tempo produce a fragmentary effect which underlines the work's cryptic nature. The longest movement, Elegy, commemorates Vassily Shirinsky, a member of the Beethoven Quartet which had given the first performances of most of Shostakovich's works in this genre.

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— SESSION TWO *This memory of earth*

LOUISE WEBSTER

this memory of earth (2019)

»» [WATCH: NZSQ Insights](#) Gillian introduces the life and music of Louise Webster.

Our earliest memories of the land shape who we are, who we become. Early experiences are stored as implicit memory, formed before conscious recollection is possible, but remembered by our bodies, our senses, our emotional responses as we move through life. At a time when our world is under such threat, these threads of memory nudge us, reminding us of what we must hold, treasure, reclaim, rebuild; the smell of rain, the coolness of shadow beneath trees, the pull of the sea, the cry of a bird in the night.

This quartet too is built of recurring snatches of melody, rhythmic fragments, overlapping textures and abrupt interruptions, interwoven and accumulating throughout the course of the work. Slow-moving duos segue into dancing figures that are tossed from one instrument to another, passages in which textural elements predominate are punctuated by strident outbursts, and the brief but insistent melodic figures that open the work, return at the close. The words of the title come from 'Fields in Midsummer' by New Zealand poet, Ruth Dallas.

This memory of earth was commissioned by the New Zealand String Quartet and had its first performance in May 2020.

© Louise Webster

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

String Quartet No. 10, Op. 51 (1879)

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Dumka: Andante con moto – Vivace
- III. Romanza: Andante con moto
- IV. Finale: Allegro assai

»» [WATCH: NZSQ Insights](#) Monique introduces the life and music of Antonin Dvořák.

Antonin Dvořák, along with Leoš Janáček and Bedřich Smetana, is considered a principal composer of the nationalist movement in the region that would eventually become the Czech Republic. Dvořák's music has had an enduring effect on synthesising traditional Czech folk traditions (and folk traditions Dvořák heard elsewhere) with western symphonic genres. He is most famous for his Ninth Symphony ('From the New World'), composed during his three years in New York directing the National Conservatory of Music. After a thorough musical upbringing and study at the Prague Organ School, Dvořák spent nine years as an orchestral violist, mostly under Smetana's directorship. In 1875, Dvořák received the Austrian National Prize a second time, which led to several commissions - among them a violin concerto for the virtuoso Joseph Joachim, Brahms' close friend, whose quartet would eventually premiere String Quartet No. 10.

Dvořák wrote his tenth quartet at the request of Jean Becker, the leader of the Florentine Quartet - who specifically asked for a "Slavonic Quartet" evoking feelings of Bohemia, in the wake of Dvořák's Slavonic Dances and Rhapsodies for orchestra. The Slavonic character of String Quartet No. 10 derives from the folk-like melodies and traditional Czech dances which can be heard throughout. The playful polka in the first movement perfectly contrasts with the dark and melancholic 'Dumka' (elegy) in movement two, setting up a jubilant and sunny 'Skočná' (quick dance) finale to send the listener on their merry way.

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