

# AWAKEN

## Music Online for Spring

**Sunday 28 March 2021** 3.00 pm

NCEM, St Margaret's Church, Walmgate, York

### CONSONE QUARTET

**Agata Daraškaite, Magdalena Loth-Hill** *violins*

**Elitsa Bogdanova** *viola*

**George Ross** *cello*

*with*

**Alex Rolton** *cello*

### STRING QUINTET IN C MAJOR, D956

**Franz Schubert** 1797–1828

*Allegro ma non troppo*

*Adagio*

*Scherzo*

*Allegretto*

*This concert is dedicated to the memory of A.H. Thornton MBE, the founder of the Mayfield Valley Arts Trust. A long-time Patron of the NCEM, Tony dedicated his retirement years to the support of musicians across Yorkshire and the UK, and would, I believe, be thrilled to hear this extraordinary piece by Schubert just one more time.*

*Delma Tomlin, Director, NCEM*

Less than two months after completing his String Quintet in C major, Schubert died, aged just 31. Generally regarded as one of the greatest pieces of chamber music ever written, Schubert's Quintet is a work of extreme and haunting contrast – from moments of light, peace and finesse to darkness, drama and symphonic power.

Throughout his short life, Schubert notoriously struggled to be taken seriously as a chamber music composer. When he sent the manuscript of the Quintet to Heinrich Albert Probst, the publisher instead requested more popular piano music and song compositions. Thus, the Quintet lay forgotten until its first public performance in 1850 by the Hellmesberger Quartet, followed by its eventual publication three years later.

It has been suggested that the key of C major is significant as a nod to two composers whose chamber writing Schubert admired – Mozart and Beethoven, who both wrote viola quintets in this key. However, Schubert's decision to add a second cello rather than an additional viola allowed him to make the most of the deep and warm sonorities of the combined cello texture, as well as to explore the inner string trio texture in the middle of the ensemble.

As in much of his chamber music, Schubert's writing for the strings is symphonic. His father's surviving quartet arrangements of Mozart symphonies, and Franz's involvement in the orchestra at the Stadtkonvikt during his studies, would suggest that this orchestral sound was at the forefront of his mind while composing. Schubert revolutionised the art of writing for the small string ensemble by developing new and richer sounds for this instrumentation.

In the Consone Quartet we choose to play on period instruments, using gut strings and transitional bows in order to come closer to the sound world of the time. The gut strings offer a wider and more interesting gamut of sounds and colours. The transitional bows, being weighted differently to their modern counterparts, allow us to find more of the light, dancing strokes that Schubert would have known. Our approach to this repertoire also involves our research into German romantic performance traditions and this, teamed with our adoption of nineteenth-century performing techniques, brings with it the possibility of finding fresh insights into this wonderful music.

© Magdalena Loth-Hill

*With thanks to Alistair Ross for a surprise gift that will be revealed at the end of the concert.*