

The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet

This Companion offers a concise and authoritative survey of the string quartet by eleven chamber music specialists. Its fifteen carefully structured chapters provide coverage of a stimulating range of perspectives previously unavailable in one volume. It focuses on four main areas: the social and musical background to the quartet's development; the most celebrated ensembles; string quartet playing, including aspects of contemporary and historical performing practice; and the mainstream repertory, including significant 'mixed ensemble' compositions involving string quartet. Various musical and pictorial illustrations complete this indispensable guide. Written for all string quartet enthusiasts, this Companion will enrich readers' understanding of the history of the genre, the context and significance of quartets as cultural phenomena, and the musical, technical and interpretative problems of chamber music performance. It will also enhance their experience of listening to quartets in performance and on recordings.

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The Cambridge Companion to

THE STRING QUARTET

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EDITED BY
Robin Stowell



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521801942

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First published 2003
Reprinted 2005

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

The Cambridge Companion to the string quartet / edited by Robin Stowell.

p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to music)

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 0 521 80194 X (hardback) – ISBN 0 521 00042 4 (paperback)

1. String quartet. I. Stowell, Robin. II. Series.

ML1160.C36 2003

785.7'194 – dc21 2003043508

ISBN 978-0-521-80194-2 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-00042-0 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2008

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Kenneth Gloag is a Lecturer in Music at Cardiff University. His research interests include twentieth-century British music, the music of Stravinsky, popular music, and general critical and theoretical issues. His principal publications include a Cambridge Music Handbook on Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) and contributions to *Tippett Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) and *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky*. He has recently completed an essay on popular music and historical periodisation for the interdisciplinary journal *Rethinking History* and is currently writing a book on the music of Peter Maxwell Davies.

Stephen E. Hefling, Professor of Music at Case Western Reserve University, has also taught at Stanford, Yale and the Oberlin College Conservatory. He is the author of *Gustav Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), and edited the autograph piano version of that work for the Mahler Kritische Gesamtausgabe (1989). He is also editor of *Mahler Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1997) and *Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music* (1998), and has contributed articles and chapters to *19th Century Music*, *Journal of Musicology*, *Journal of Music Theory*, *Performance Practice Review*, the revised *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (1997), *The Mahler Companion* (1999), etc. Also a specialist in baroque performance practice, Hefling has performed extensively with early music ensembles in the northeastern US, and his book *Rhythmic Alteration in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Music* (1994) is widely regarded as the standard reference on that topic.

David Wyn Jones is a Reader in the Department of Music, Cardiff University and has written extensively on music of the Viennese Classical period. His publications include the *Oxford Composer Companion: Haydn* (2002), *The Life of Beethoven* (Cambridge University Press 1998), *Music in Eighteenth-Century Austria* (editor, Cambridge University Press, 1996) and *Beethoven: Pastoral Symphony* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). He is currently engaged on a research project supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Board, 'The symphony in Beethoven's Vienna'.

Colin Lawson has an international profile as a period clarinettist, notably as a member of the English Concert, the Hanover Band and the London Classical Players, with which he has recorded extensively and toured worldwide. He has appeared

as concerto soloist at many international venues, including Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center, New York. His solo discography includes concertos by Fasch, Hook, Mahon, Mozart, Spohr, Telemann, Vivaldi and Weber, as well as a considerable variety of chamber music. He is editor of *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), author of two Cambridge Music Handbooks (1996, 1998) and co-author of *The Historical Performance of Music: an Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 1999). He has also written a book on playing the early clarinet and is editor of *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). He taught at the Universities of Aberdeen, Sheffield and London prior to his current appointment as Pro Vice-Chancellor at Thames Valley University.

Tully Potter was born in Edinburgh in 1942 but spent his formative years in South Africa, where he grew to appreciate music. The human voice was his first interest and he studied singing in Johannesburg with Leah Williams; but he came to the conclusion that his place in music was as a listener. He has been collecting records seriously since he was twelve and has made a special study of performing practice as revealed in historic recordings. He has contributed to many international musical journals, notably *The Strad*, and since 1997 he has edited *Classic Record Collector*. His biography of Adolf Busch is due to be published soon and he is preparing a book on the great string quartet ensembles.

Jan Smaczny was educated at the University of Oxford and the Charles University, Prague. Well known as a writer, critic and broadcaster, he has written extensively on many aspects of the Czech repertoire, in particular opera and the life and works of Dvořák; his most recent book is a study of Dvořák's B minor cello concerto. Since 1996 he has been the Hamilton Harty Professor of Music at Queen's University Belfast.

Simon Standage read music at the University of Cambridge and studied the violin with Ivan Galamian in New York. After a period as a freelance violinist, which included four years as sub-leader of the English Chamber Orchestra, he became interested in the Baroque violin and he has been active in the field of historical performance, both as a violinist and director, since the early 1970s. Initially with the English Concert and the Academy of Ancient Music, and since 1982 and 1990 with the Salomon String Quartet and Collegium Musicum 90 respectively, he has made numerous recordings and played concerts worldwide. He currently plays as soloist, director and chamber musician in Britain and abroad. He has taught Baroque violin at the Royal Academy of Music since 1983 and at the Dresdner Akademie für Alte Musik since 1992.

Robin Stowell was educated at the University of Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music, London, and is currently Professor and Head of Music at Cardiff University. Much of his career as a musicologist (author and editor) is reflected in his work as a performer (violinist/Baroque violinist). His first major book *Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge University Press, 1985) was a pioneering work in its field, and he has since published numerous chapters and articles in a wide range of books, dictionaries and journals. His most recent major publications include a Cambridge Handbook on *Beethoven's Violin Concerto* (Cambridge University Press, 1998),

The Early Violin and Viola: a Practical Guide (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and a co-authored volume (with Colin Lawson) entitled *The Historical Performance of Music: an Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), these last two publications forming part of a series of 'Cambridge Handbooks to the Historical Performance of Music', of which he is co-editor. He is music consultant for and chief contributor to *The Violin Book* (1999) and editor of and principal contributor to *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), *Performing Beethoven* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), and *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

W. Dean Sutcliffe is University Lecturer at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St Catharine's College. He edited the volume *Haydn Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) and is editor of the journal *Eighteenth-Century Music*, the first issue of which will appear in 2004. His book *The Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti and Eighteenth-Century Musical Style* has recently been published by Cambridge University Press.

David Waterman studied philosophy at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was a Research Scholar and was awarded an MA and Ph.D. Simultaneously, he studied cello privately with Martin Lovett, William Pleeth and Jane Cowan. In 1979 he became a founder member of the Endellion String Quartet, which has played all over the world, broadcast countless times on BBC Radio and TV, and recorded for EMI, Virgin Classics, ASV, and Pearl. The Endellions are currently Quartet in Residence at Cambridge University, were given honorary degrees by MIT after residencies there, and in 1996 were given the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Best Chamber Ensemble.

Waterman has also performed chamber music with many other musicians, including members of the former Amadeus Quartet, Joshua Bell, the Chilingirian, Vellinger, Stamic and Belcea Quartets, Michael Collins, Imogen Cooper, Ivry Gitlis, Lukacs Hagen, Erich Hobarth, Steven Isserlis, Daniel Phillips, Gábor Takács-Nagy, Mitsuko Uchida, Sándor Végh, Radovan Vlatkovic and Tabea Zimmerman.

Preface

From tentative beginnings, the string quartet has evolved for over 240 years, serving as a medium for some of the most profound and personal musical expression. At first it was a medium that allowed four gentlemen amateurs to converse musically, an aspect of its function that has retained its significance throughout the years. But this aspect has long been interconnected with a view of the genre as one that is appropriate for music of the deepest personal expression, as well as sophisticated humour and wit.

Sir George Dyson once remarked that probably the most ideal situation in which a musician can find himself is to be of equal gifts in a gifted string quartet. Sir Yehudi Menuhin, too, was of little doubt that string quartet playing constitutes the highest form of music making. ‘The quality of listening, the quality of “teamwork”, of adjusting to one another, of recognising the main voice wherever it may be, of reconciling the different accents and inflections, and the purity of the intonation’, he claimed, ‘is unequalled by any other ensemble, except perhaps human voices themselves.’¹ Certainly, some of the most musically rewarding periods of my life have been spent playing string quartets (whether as a professional violinist, as a student or in domestic music making), listening to them either as a critic or a devotee and writing about the medium which Edwin Evans described as ‘the most perfect, concise, and self-contained combination in all music.’²

The principal aim of this volume is to provide a broad readership with a compact, authoritative survey of the string quartet in all its aspects. In so doing, it focuses on selected topics in the kind of depth that will interest and enlighten a more specialist student and scholarly audience. The carefully structured series of essays concentrates on four main areas: the social and cultural contexts which influenced developments in the string quartet, both as a genre and as a family of instruments; the most distinguished ensembles and their personnel, careers and significance; string quartet playing, including an inside view of the musical and interpretative priorities of a professional string quartet as well as perspectives on contemporary and historical performing practice; discussion of the string quartet repertory from its origins in the middle of the eighteenth century to the present, and consideration of ‘mixed ensemble’ works underpinned by the string quartet ensemble.

The task of covering such an extensive corpus of material within the limited space available naturally poses particular challenges for an editor and his contributors. Authors have thus been required to be selective in

their essays; for example, the more detailed consideration has largely been reserved for what may be described as the ‘cornerstones’ of the repertory, while less significant works are introduced on a more *ad hoc* basis and in more general terms. Various works, composers, ensembles and other details have had to be omitted or summarised in what to some might seem to be a perfunctory manner. However, scholars who have devoted their lives to a single aspect of the genre and find that it gets only brief mention here should be reassured that thorough investigation of that aspect was necessary before even that brief mention could be properly contextualised. The writers’ and editor’s judgement on what is important is, of course, open to review, so no claim will be made for this volume as the definitive compendium on the string quartet. It is simply one attempt at making as comprehensive a survey as possible within the confines of this ever-expanding series of Companions. The outcome, I hope, will be considered as an indispensable guide for all serious chamber music lovers, amateur and professional, and one that will enhance our understanding of the performers’ roles and objectives and enrich our experience of listening to quartets in live performance or on recordings.

The initial impetus for this book came from Penny Souster at Cambridge University Press, who envisaged yet another type of volume that might be embraced by the Cambridge Companion series. It would not have been possible for me to assemble a manual of such breadth without the help of a large number of people. Among these I wish especially to record my gratitude to the contributors, all of whom have stuck to their task and produced with varying degrees of promptitude commissioned chapters that fit with my original outline. Some contributors have requested that due acknowledgement be recorded elsewhere for the help and advice given by others in the compilation of their chapters. Thanks are due, too, to my good friend Dr Ian Cheverton for preparing the music examples, to Tully Potter for the loan of a number of rare photographs from his collection, and to Penny Souster, who has given support to this project beyond the call of duty. I am also indebted to my copy-editor, Lucy Carolan, for managing the typescript smoothly and efficiently through the publication process.

Robin Stowell

Acknowledgements

Some contributors wish to acknowledge the advice and assistance given by friends and colleagues in the preparation of their chapters.

Christina Bashford wishes to record her thanks to Cyril Ehrlich for reading an early draft of Chapter 1 and for much stimulating discussion.

Tully Potter is indebted to Richard Turner's comments on the drafts of Chapters 3 and 4.

David Waterman is extremely grateful for the wise and penetrating feedback on the draft of Chapter 5 from Steven Isserlis, Ruth Waterman, Jonathan Del Mar and Sara Fanelli, who are in no way responsible for any of its shortcomings. Above all, he records his indebtedness to his superb colleagues in the Endellion String Quartet, and also to his students and many other chamber music collaborators for sharing countless hours of illuminating and joyous music making.

Pitch

The Helmholtz system is employed throughout to indicate pitch. In this system middle C is indicated as c^1 . Under this scheme the notes to which the instruments of the string quartet are normally tuned are represented as follows:

violin: $g-d^1-a^1-e^2$

viola: $c-g-d^1-a^1$

cello: $C-G-d-a$

