

Total performance time: approximately 60', with no interval

## Chaos String Quartet II

**Susanne Schäffer** violin  
**Eszter Kruchió** violin  
**Sara Marzadori** viola  
**Bas Jongen** cello

<b>Joseph Haydn</b> (1732–1809) The Representation of Chaos, from <i>The Creation</i> (1797–8)	8'	The <b>Chaos String Quartet</b> is a Britten Pears Young Artist for 2023–24 and a participant on Chamber Music in Residence at Snape Maltings.
<b>György Ligeti</b> (1923–2006) String Quartet No.2 (1968) <i>i. Allegro nervoso</i> <i>ii. Sostenuto, molto calmo</i>	12'	Founded in 2019 on the interdisciplinary concept of chaos, the Chaos String Quartet combines a highly refined ensemble culture and a fiery vitality with a passion for exploring experimental and improvisational approaches. With their affinity for embracing unpredictability and risk-taking, the ensemble's members bring a unique dynamism and vibrancy to their playing.
<b>Jean-Philippe Rameau</b> (1683–1764) Overture (Chaos), from <i>Zaïs</i> (1748)	6'	Recently selected as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist for 2023–25, the quartet is rapidly establishing itself on the international music scene. It has recently been awarded prizes at the most prestigious international competitions, including ARD, Bordeaux, Haydn and Bad Tölz. In 2023, the ensemble made its debut at the Musikverein in Vienna and the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.
<b>Ligeti</b> String Quartet No.2 (1968) <i>iv. Presto furioso, brutale, tumultuoso</i> <i>v. Allegro con delicatezza</i>	6'	
<b>Johann Sebastian Bach</b> (1685–1750) Contrapunctus No.1, from <i>The Art of Fugue</i> , BWV 1080 (1740s)	5'	
<b>Alfred Schnittke</b> (1934–1998) Andante (first movement), from String Quartet No.3 (1983)	7'	The ensemble has been mentored by Johannes Meissl in Vienna through the ECMaster programme, and has completed a postgraduate course at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole with the Cuarteto Casals.
<b>Ludwig van Beethoven</b> (1770–1827) String Quartet No.17 in B flat, Op.133 'Grosse Fuge' (1827)	15'	

The Chaos String Quartet presents its 'Ordered Chaos' programme – a varied and inventive exploration of chaos as the 'archetype of everything creative'.

*The Quartet writes: 'In Greek mythology, Khaos is a rather primeval, unstructured potential from which anything can arise. Music is a form of creation in which sounds and tones are arranged in a certain structure to create a harmonious composition. Without khaos, the chaotic state from which everything arises, there would be no way to shape and transform these sounds and tones into a musical creation. To follow its very own and fundamentally sincere path, a path that wants to overcome supposed boundaries– that is the motto of the Chaos String Quartet. The four quartet members see chaos as the "archetype of everything creative", whereby art, science and philosophy can be combined into a total work of art, and they share the desire to be present as a risk-taking, multinational voice on the chamber music stages of the world.'*

### **Haydn: The Representation of Chaos, from The Creation**

According to Book of Genesis, until God embarked on Creation, the earth was 'without form, and void'. Accordingly, Haydn opens his great oratorio with a single, unison C – the infinite cosmic space that preceded even chaos. From here, however, he achieves chaos by abandoning a swathe of established musical conventions: phrases lack cadences, harmonies are unresolved and key changes follow no recognisable pattern. The result shocked the music world for decades, his contemporaries calling it a 'total muddle' and Berlioz claiming that it made him want to murder someone.

### **Ligeti: String Quartet No.2**

The juxtaposition of chaos and order is at the heart of this quartet, which opens with a ten-second silence – the void before Creation – shattered by the sudden emergence of the elements. When he wrote it in 1968, Ligeti had yet to encounter chaos theory as such, but was already applying its concepts to his music, namely the belief that even within the most seemingly disordered system, a form of order is discernible. He explained that, although the structure of the quartet remains inaudible, we can discern an impenetrable texture 'like a densely woven cobweb', which Ligeti described as 'micropolyphony'. 'Such a beautiful word,' he said.

### **Rameau: Overture (Chaos), from Zaïs**

*Zaïs* was a 'pastorale heroique' preceded, like 'Les éléments', by a radical overture depicting the limitless, black universe and its four primordial elements arising out of chaos. Each is summoned by a solo drum-beat and launched into the cosmos, where the

four initially aimless paths gradually merge in harmony. Rameau's approach was far ahead of its time; perhaps not surprising from a composer who – as a renowned music theorist – was also known as 'the Isaac Newton of music'.

### **Bach: The Art of Fugue: Contrapunctus No.1**

The fugue – its melodies interwoven in myriad forms to create a coherent musical whole – might arguably be defined as the embodiment of ordered chaos, and Bach as its finest exponent. *The Art of Fugue* was the culmination of a lifetime's experimentation with fugal structure and Bach was still working on it when he died. Some believe that a closing section has been lost although, given the infinite possibilities offered by the fugue, it could be argued that, even if he had lived, completion would have been impossible.

### **Schnittke: Andante, from String Quartet No.3**

Schnittke regarded past composers as a vital point of reference. Theirs, he said, was a world of 'ever-present ghosts' that, from the very start, haunt his third quartet. Snatches of the Stabat Mater by Lassus, Beethoven's Grosse Fuge and Shostakovich's famous D-S-C-H signature motif appear in seemingly chaotic juxtaposition and many contradictory styles, illustrating Schnittke's trademark 'polystylism'.

### **Beethoven: Grosse Fuge, Op.133**

This monumentally complex double fugue originally appeared as the last movement of Beethoven's Quartet Op.130, which had a successful premiere but the finale proved so challenging for audience and performers alike that Beethoven had to replace it. Even when published separately, it was called 'incomprehensible' and 'a confusion of Babel'. More recently, it has been aptly described as 'one of the great artistic testaments to the human capacity for meaning in the face of the threat of chaos'.

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