



**Howard
Assembly
Room**

Distilled: Clarinet Quintet

Sunday 8 March
3.00pm

Programme

Bernard Herrmann
(1911-75)

Clarinet Quintet: *Souvenirs de voyage*
First movement

Johannes Brahms
(1833-97)

Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Op. 115
I Allegro
II Adagio – Più lento
III Andantino – Presto non assai, ma con sentimento
IV Con moto

Artists

Andrew Mason Clarinet
Claire Osborne Violin
Catherine Landen Violin
Anne Trygstad Viola
Daniel Bull Cello

Brief notes

Herrmann *Souvenirs de voyage* – first movement

Having composed the scores for *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest* and *Psycho* among others, Bernard Herrmann's working relationship with Alfred Hitchcock foundered when Herrmann's score for the 1966 film *Torn Curtain* was rejected. While several scores for other directors were to follow before Herrmann's death in 1975, his immediate response to the rift with Hitchcock was to compose music for the concert hall for the first time in many years. A String Quartet, *Echoes* (1966) was followed by the Clarinet Quintet *Souvenirs de voyage*, written in January 1967. By this time Herrmann was living in England and it was English poetry that inspired the first movement of the Quintet: A E Housman's 'On Wenlock Edge'. The angry wind evoked by Housman ('The gale, it plies the saplings double') is clearly felt in the turbulent passages which disturb the mood of wistful calm established at the beginning of the work.

Brief notes (continued)

Brahms Clarinet Quintet

With his Second String Quintet in 1890 the 57-year-old Brahms had seemed to bring his compositional career to a close. But in March 1891 he visited the German town of Meiningen to hear the famous Court Orchestra under its new conductor Fritz Steinbach. This orchestra – one of the oldest in Europe – was special to Brahms and had given the premiere of his Fourth Symphony in 1885 with the composer conducting. During his visit Brahms was particularly struck by the playing of the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld – not only his technique, but also his expressiveness. The encounter reignited Brahms's creativity, and he went on to compose four works for Mühlfeld between 1891 and 1894, the most expansive of which is the Clarinet Quintet.

The work was given its first, private, performance in Meiningen in November 1891 with the great Joseph Joachim – for whom Brahms had composed his Violin Concerto – on first violin. In the Quintet Brahms combines an almost symphonic richness and scale with intimacy and directness. The composer who had worn his heart on his sleeve in stormy early works such as the First Piano Concerto shows that the experience of later middle age could produce work of as great, and perhaps even more profound, emotional depth as that inspired by youthful passion.

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Notes by **Stuart Leeks**

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