

**String Quartet in F major Opus 18 No 1
(1770 - 1827)**

Beethoven

Allegro con brio

Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato

Scherzo. Allegro molto

Allegro

In 1798 a young Latvian theologian and violinist named Karl Amenda arrived in Vienna and found employment as reading tutor to Princess Karoline Lobkowitz. Amenda and Beethoven became inseparable, and were only parted when Amenda returned to Latvia in the autumn of 1799 to become a pastor. As a reminder of their friendship, Beethoven gave his friend a newly copied score of the String Quartet Opus 18 No 1, with a warm dedication inscribed on the first violin part.

Prior to Amenda's departure, Beethoven played him the second movement of the F major Quartet and asked him what image it evoked. "It pictured for me the parting of two lovers" said Amenda. "Good!" said Beethoven, "I thought of the scene in the burial vault in Romeo and Juliet."

The opening *Allegro con brio* is founded upon a sprightly rhythmic motif which dominates the entire movement. This brief turning figure is used in a myriad of ways: as a melody, as a rhythmic accompaniment, and for polyphonic passages.

After a hushed and atmospheric opening, with a soulful violin melody over sustained, almost organ-like sonorities in the lower voices, the *Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato* develops into a fragmented series of moods - passion, joy, fear, despair - mingling with the original theme to create a dramatic musical dialogue that is very evocative of the last moments of Shakespeare's play.

The *Scherzo* which follows is brief and brittle with cadences delayed almost to the point of absurdity and a rollicking Trio. The concluding *Allegro* is a broadly conceived rondo incorporating very different themes. It has an engagingly breathless quality as all four voices dart through lively figuration before ending with a triumphant flourish.

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***Moon, Tides and Shoreline* Gillian Whitehead (born 1941)**

Gillian Whitehead writes: "I began *Moon, Tides and Shoreline* while I was living by the sea at Paekakariki and was composer-in-residence at Victoria University in 1989. The low cello D, which initiated the piece and reappears in the fourth section, was the fundamental I heard underlying the pervasive sound of the sea.

"The piece is in one movement which falls into five sections. The first is basically active and explores various textural ideas with varying rates of harmonic change. The second uses slow, sustained chords surrounding a cello cadenza; the third, which begins slowly and increases in tempo, combines textural ideas contrapuntally, and concludes with a viola solo. The fourth section recalls the material of the first and the fifth, functioning as a coda, returns to the slower tempo at the beginning of the third".

Gillian Whitehead grew up in Whangarei, where she absorbed the natural world of sea, hills and trees about her, with their strong Maori associations. She was born into a musical family and began composing at an early age, always being attracted to themes with literary associations. After studying music at the University of Auckland, she graduated BMus (Hons) at Victoria University of Wellington.

In 1964 Gillian Whitehead went to the University of Sydney, studying with Peter Sculthorpe and graduating MMus in 1965. Her early *Missa Brevis* (1963) attracted wide attention. During this time she attended Peter Maxwell Davies' lectures on analysis and composition and subsequently studied with him in London, where several of her works were performed by *The Pierrot Players*, later *The Fires of London*. In 1981, she joined the staff of the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music, and was Head of Composition for four years before leaving to pursue a freelance career.

In 1999 her opera, *Outrageous Fortune*, won the SOUNZ Contemporary Award. In 2008 she became a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, one of New Zealand's highest honours, and she was granted the title 'Dame' in 2009. Gillian was artist-in-residence at the Henderson House in Alexandra, Central Otago, from March 2009 - March 2010. *Moon, Tides and Shoreline* was commissioned in 1989 by the then Music Federation of New Zealand for the New Zealand String Quartet.
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INTERVAL

String Quartet No 3 in E flat minor Opus 30 Tchaikovsky (1840 - 93)

"These last days my new quartet was played three times; the first time at the Conservatoire, for the Grand Duke, then twice in public. Everybody likes it. During the Andante many people (so I was told) cried. If it is true it means a serious success."

Letter to Modeste Tchaikovsky, 24 March 1876

Tchaikovsky's entire output of chamber music consists of a piano trio, a string sextet, and three string quartets. The first two quartets were premièred by the Russian Musical Society String Quartet, led by Tchaikovsky's colleague at the Moscow Conservatory, Ferdinand Laub. In March 1875 Laub died and Tchaikovsky was understandably upset. One year later, Tchaikovsky composed his last string quartet as a tribute to his friend.

Tchaikovsky began writing the String Quartet No 3 during January 1876, while travelling with his younger brother Modeste, and completed it within a few weeks of returning to Moscow. It was premièred on the 14th of March in that same year, during a soirée at the home of Nikolay Rubenstein.

Tchaikovsky was unhappy with the work. The next day he wrote to Modeste: "My quartet begun in Paris is finished and was played yesterday evening at Rubenstein's. It has been greatly praised but I am not entirely satisfied. It seems to me that I am repeating myself and cannot invent

anything new. Surely my song has not come to an end and will continue to go forward? If not it would be unfortunate.”

Two weeks later the quartet was played at a concert in honour of the Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich, and performed twice more within the next six days, suggesting that the work was well appreciated. Tchaikovsky subsequently changed his own opinion of it and the quartet was chosen as a tribute piece for memorial concerts in St Petersburg, Moscow and Kharkov after his death seventeen years later.

The dedication to Ferdinand Laub is reflected in the composition of the piece. The quartet has an elegiac mood about it and the first violin takes the lead in every movement. The first movement opens with a melancholy introduction, followed by two main themes which are introduced in the Allegro moderato section.

The second movement is light, yet at the same time seems anxious. Based on two themes presented in A-B-A form, this movement provides a moment's relief from the sombre atmosphere of the first and third movements.

The third movement, *Andante funebre a doloroso ma con moto*, reveals the extent of Tchaikovsky's grief. The sobbing opening chords lead to a dirge-like melody followed by an unusual chant-like bridge passage.

The finale once again eases tension, replacing the anguish of the third movement with an air of lightness. Just before the coda, the mood of the third movement returns briefly, before being swept away once again.

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Aroha String Quartet

Founded in 2004 by four Chinese professional musicians in their newly adopted country, this versatile ensemble is known for their passionate musicality, impressive technique, and multicultural innovations. Founding members Haihong Liu and Beiyi Xue (violins) and Zhongxian Jin (viola) were joined by well-known New Zealand cellist Robert Ibell in early 2009. Alongside their busy schedule with respective orchestral and teaching duties, Aroha is highly committed to presenting string quartet works from traditional Chinese folk music to western classical and avant-garde contemporary repertoire.