

# DANTE QUARTET

## Review: the Dante Quartet at Sidmouth Parish Church

Inviting artists back to perform a second time carries a slight risk that it might not live up to expectations.

For their third appearance in the Sidmouth Music series of concerts in the Parish Church on Saturday, March 23, the Dante Quartet produced musicianship of the very highest order, dispelling any such doubts with a programme of Haydn, Howells and Beethoven.

From the opening note of Haydn's Maiden quartet, the players' total integration was evident, giving the music a precision to be marvelled at. The song-like second movement had a delicious yearning feel, the third was a jolly scherzo, and the finale suave and urbane right up to its energetic conclusion.

The Dante Quartet recently completed acclaimed recordings of the works of Stanford, but has now turned its attention to Herbert Howells, a pupil of Stanford, and next performed his third quartet, *In Gloucestershire*.

Much of Howell's output is in the English pastoral style of Vaughan Williams and others, but this quartet is no bucolic journey through the countryside; instead developing intense emotional power, perhaps a reflection of the early death of Howell's son.

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Through a brisk second movement, a passionate and elegiac third and the rhythmic and emotional finale, the players gave this music everything it needed, earning rousing applause from the audience to close the first half.

The second half was given over to a single work, the second of Beethoven's *Razumovsky Quartets*.

Crisp and precise from the very start, they were stately and serene in the second movement, and animated in the intricate third, with the audience held rapt in silence. They were jaunty and sprightly in the finale, their passing of the music from instrument to instrument a delight.

Cheers and applause from the audience brought the players back for a sublime encore; the andante from Tchaikovsky's first quartet where again they held the audience enthralled in the beauty of their music-making.

**Stephen Huyshe-Shires**

**Dante Quartet – review – The Guardian**

**Wigmore Hall, London**

Kodály's big gestures and sharp contrasts were delivered with incisive lyricism and eloquence by the Dantes

The centrepiece of the [Dante Quartet](#)'s latest [Wigmore Hall](#) concert was the

Second Quartet by [Zoltán Kodály](#). We hear less of his music these days than we used to, though his quartets are undergoing something of a reappraisal, thanks to the Dantes' unstinting efforts. The Second, completed in 1918, is a striking work, centred around an operatic Andante – a noble recitative and aria without words that soothes the closely wrought tensions of the opening Allegro and prepares us for the exultation of the Finale.

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*Dante Quartet – review – The Guardian*

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It suits the Dantes' high-voltage style uncommonly well. Kodály trades in big gestures and sharp contrasts of mood, to which they responded with a heightened sense of drama and a compellingly incisive lyricism. The central dialogue between leader Krysia Osostowicz and cellist Richard Jenkinson was wonderfully eloquent and grand. The breathtaking moment near the work's midpoint, when the dark textures clear to allow the second violinist (Oscar Perks) to play a quiet, folk-inflected melody of extraordinary poignancy, was beautifully done.

[Haydn](#)'s String Quartet in F, op 50 no 5, The Dream, and Schubert's great D Minor Quartet [Death and the Maiden](#) formed the rest of the programme. The Haydn took a while to settle, and was at times too fierce, though the serenity of the slow movement was nicely captured and Osostowicz had fun with the portamentos in the bucolic Finale. The Schubert, done on a massive scale, was startling. The quartet launched the first movement at such a high emotional pitch that you feared they might not sustain it; in fact they did so to often frightening effect. Their way with the variations, moodily contrasted rather than consolatory, wouldn't, I suspect, be to everyone's taste, but the unflinching integrity of their interpretation and the excitement of their playing were consistently superb.