

NAXOS

Frank
BRIDGE

String Quartets Nos. 2 and 4
Phantasy Piano Quartet

Maggini Quartet
Martin Roscoe, Piano



Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

String Quartet No. 2 • Phantasy Quartet • String Quartet No. 4

Frank Bridge studied violin and composition at the Royal College of Music where he was a pupil of Stanford from 1899 to 1903. Apart from composition, his career embraced performance (he was the violist in several quartets, most notably the English String Quartet), conducting (he frequently deputised for Sir Henry Wood), and teaching (Britten being his best-known pupil). Perhaps no other British composer of the first half of the century reveals such a stylistic journey in his music. His early works, such as the *First String Quartet* (1906), the *Phantasy Piano Trio* (1907) and the orchestral suite *The Sea* (1910-11), follow in the late-Romantic tradition bearing a kinship with Fauré; subsequently, in the orchestral tone poem *Summer* (1914-5), for instance, Bridge comes close to the orbit of Delius. After the First World War, however, his music became intense and chromatic as in the Scriabinesque *Piano Sonata* (1921-4). The radical language of the sonata was pursued in his chamber works of the 1920s, so that in the *Third String Quartet* (1926) Bridge rubs shoulders with the early works of the Second Viennese School. Also to this decade belong two orchestral masterpieces, *Enter Spring* (1927) and *Oration* (1930). Finding little favour with public or critics his late work, for example the *Fourth String Quartet* (1934-8), languished, and despite Britten's advocacy it was not until the 1970s that Bridge's remarkable legacy received the attention it deserved.

At the outset of his career Bridge established his name through a series of chamber works in which he demonstrated impeccable craftsmanship and a wholly idiomatic understanding of string instruments, with the viola, his own main instrument, frequently having prominence. A further influence on the form of these works was the prizes instituted by Walter Wilson Cobbett, an amateur musician whose interests were chamber music and the period of the Elizabethan and Jacobean composers. In particular Cobbett was

interested in the instrumental 'fantasy' or 'phantasy' form of that time in which several unrelated but varied sections formed the basis for an extended work. In 1905 he established a prize for chamber compositions in one movement and Bridge submitted several works for Cobbett's competitions, winning first prize in 1907 and 1915. What was significant though was that Bridge adapted aspects of the phantasy form within subsequent compositions, so that thematic unity within a work of one or several movements became a hallmark of his compositions.

The *Second String Quartet* was composed in 1914-15 in response to Cobbett's fourth competition for the best string quartet in either sonata form, suite or phantasy form. Entries were finally divided into those who wrote sonatas and those who wrote phantasies, with Bridge's quartet winning the former. The London String Quartet gave the première in 1915 and the quartet may be heard as a transitional work between Bridge's early and later styles; there is a clear advance in its harmonic language with an increased use of chromaticism and motivic elements within the textures to bind the work together. It is undoubtedly Bridge's first chamber masterpiece.

Without any preamble the first violin launches into the main theme of the opening movement which dips and rises in a lyrical contour and features triplets. Bursts of rhythmic energy follow, but these give way to a nostalgic expansive second principal theme given initially to the viola to reveal its expressive range over oscillating triplets. A slow coda of pensive beauty based on both main themes concludes the movement.

The degree to which phantasy form affected Bridge's structural thinking is apparent in the scherzo where an extended slow middle section is incorporated rather than a conventional trio. Thematic integration is also evident with triplets once again dominating the landscape of the breezy, airy scherzo and spawning new

ideas which in turn become the main melody of the *Andante con moto*. This theme is also related to material from Bridge's tone poem *Summer* which he interrupted composing in order to write the quartet. The finale is an arch structure, opening with a slow section in which the first movement's second theme is transformed. Similarly the main themes of the *Allegro vivace* can both be related to previous ideas. The pattering figure like dappled light also bears similarity to the opening of *Summer* and overall the music becomes more optimistic until in a master-stroke Bridge weaves in both themes from the first movement.

The *Phantasy* for piano quartet was Bridge's third work cast in phantasy form, and was one of eleven works for differing chamber forces commissioned by Cobbett. Composed during 1909-10, it was dedicated to Cobbett and given its première by the Henkel Piano Quartet in 1911. In terms of Bridge's career it comes towards the end the early period when he was not venturing out of a late nineteenth-century harmonic language. It is also one of the finest works that arose out of Cobbett's initiative, partly because its symmetrical arch structure brings a strong cohesive logic to its sequence of introduction and slow movement; scherzo, trio, scherzo; slow movement and coda.

The quartet opens with a passionate introductory gesture for the whole ensemble before the piano plays a lyrical, undulating theme shot through with sadness which forms the main idea of the opening section. It is taken up by the cello and leads to a warmer second theme that is constantly aspiring upwards and culminates in a quasi Brahmsian harmonic sequence. A puckish scherzo follows. It scampers impishly along to reach with the trio the middle of the overall arch form of the quartet. Here the introductory ideas of the quartet return. The journey back begins with a recapitulation of the scherzo, then the introduction itself now truncated and for cello alone. Second time around the slow music is developed and rises to an ardent climax as the ideas are reviewed, before a tranquil coda brings the work to an end in the calm of the major key.

The *Fourth String Quartet* was dedicated to Bridge's American friend and patroness, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. It was composed in 1937 with the première taking place in 1938, performed by the Gordon String Quartet, at Mrs Coolidge's Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music in Massachusetts. The work follows the developments Bridge had made in his *Third Quartet* in its use of chromatic dissonance; however, as the Bridge scholar Anthony Payne has observed, its formal structure has a more classical approach with a clear-cut sonata-form first movement, followed by a minuet and a rondo finale.

The opening movement embraces several swiftly changing moods and directions, contrasting energy and tenderness. After a brief call to attention by the viola, the athletic principal theme is introduced on the first violin. Instructions to the players that pepper the score such as '*agitato*', '*frenetico*' and '*impetuoso*' give the clue to the character of the fast music. By contrast, the second main idea is an outburst of singing lyricism for the viola. Bridge follows this opening drama not with a slow movement but one with an intermezzo-like quality. It is not, however, in the relaxed vein as the term might suggest; instead it is a sinister minuet built from the obsessive rhythm of the opening bar. Here is a world of twilight shadows with the omnipresent rhythm offset by outpourings of haunted melody frequently exploiting the dark hues of the viola. In the concluding rondo Bridge blows away the mood of the preceding movement with music which proceeds by leaps and bounds and increasingly takes on a confident character. Such is the integrated thematic quality of the whole work that allusions are made to the minuet's rhythm, and just before the final appearance of the rondo theme both subjects of the first movement are worked into the music in a masterly fashion. A swift, bracing and affirmative coda brings to an end the apogee of Bridge's contribution to the genre of the string quartet.

Andrew Burn

The Maggini Quartet

Laurence Jackson, Violin I

David Angel, Violin II

Martin Outram, Viola

Michal Kaznowski, Cello

Formed in 1988, the Maggini Quartet is one of the finest string quartets on the international chamber music circuit, performing at major festivals and concert halls throughout Europe, the United States and the Far East. Renowned for championing British composers, the Quartet won Gramophone Chamber Music CD of the Year 2001 for the *String Quartets and Phantasy Quintet* of Vaughan Williams (8.555300), part of the Gramophone Award-winning Naxos series that has brought world-wide sales of more than 100,000 discs. The recording of Elgar's *String Quartet and Piano Quintet* (8.553737) with Peter Donohoe was a 1997 winner of the Diapason d'Or, France's most prestigious award for classical music recordings, and the release of the *String Quartets and Trio* (8.554079) by E. J. Moeran proved to be one of the best-selling chamber music CDs of 1998. The Maggini has also recorded all the Britten *String Quartets* for Naxos (8.553883 and 8.554360), winning praise from *Diapason* in France, while the second volume was an Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and in *Classic CD*. The recording of Walton's *String Quartet and Piano Quartet* with Peter Donohoe (8.554646) was nominated for a Gramophone Award, as well as being an Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*, and the CD of Bax *Quartets Nos.1 and 2* (8.555282) won a 2002 Cannes Classical Award. The first CD of repertoire by Bliss (8.557108) was nominated for a Grammy Award 2004. Further recording plans include repertoire by Bridge, Rawsthorne, Arnold, John Ireland and Tippett. The Maggini Quartet has won similar praise for other recordings and has commissioned a number of works, including Robert Simpson's last work, his *Cello Quintet*, first performed at the Cheltenham International Festival in 1996, a year which also saw the first performance of *Olivia* by Roxanna Panufnik, commissioned for the Maggini by Brunel University Arts Centre in London. The Maggini's 10th Anniversary commission was James MacMillan's *Second Quartet*, which received its world première at the Wigmore Hall in London in 1998, with subsequent performances in North America and Europe. The Maggini has embarked on an exciting collaboration with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, performing and recording his ten new *Naxos Quartets*. The Wigmore is hosting performances of all ten works, including six world premières. Commissioned by Naxos, the works fulfil the composer's long-held intention of bringing a major contribution to chamber music repertoire, and the project is providing a unique opportunity for performers and composer to work together over a five-year period. The first CD of *Naxos Quartets Nos 1 and 2* (8.557396) was an Editor's Choice in *Gramophone*. The Quartet takes its name from the famous sixteenth-century Brescian violin-maker Giovanni Paolo Maggini, an example of whose work is played by David Angel. .

Martin Roscoe

The British pianist Martin Roscoe performs as a concerto soloist, recitalist and chamber musician all over the world. As a concerto soloist, he has worked with Sir Simon Rattle, James MacMillan, Kent Nagano, and Yan Pascal Tortelier, among others. He has performed with all the major British orchestras, keeping especially strong links with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra with which he has appeared on more than ninety occasions. A close relationship with the BBC has led to over four hundred broadcasts on Radio 3 and invitations to perform at the BBC Proms on six occasions. As a chamber musician he has appeared with many leading British musicians including Tasmin Little, Michael Collins, Steven Isserlis, Peter Donohoe and Emma Johnson. For Naxos Martin Roscoe has recorded four discs of the piano music of Karol Szymanowski, and has recorded widely for a number of leading companies. He was a professor of piano at the Royal Academy of Music for six years (now holding an Honorary Associateship) and was also Head of Keyboard at the Royal Northern College of Music. He is the Artistic Director of the Beverley Chamber Music Festival, and also initiated and directs the Ribble Valley International Piano Week.

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At the outset of his career Bridge established his name through a series of chamber works in which he demonstrated a wholly idiomatic understanding of string instruments, with the viola, his own main instrument, frequently having prominence. The *Second String Quartet*, Bridge's first chamber masterwork, is a transitional work between his early and later styles. The *Phantasy Quartet*, written in a late Romantic idiom, belongs to the same period as Bridge's most famous work, the orchestral tone poem, *The Sea* (Naxos 8.557167). The intense, dark and often frenetic *Fourth String Quartet* was completed four years before his death.

Frank BRIDGE

(1879-1941)

String Quartet No. 2 in G minor

23:54

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| ① | Allegro ben moderato | 8:38 |
| ② | Allegro vivo - Andante con moto - Tempo 1 | 6:39 |
| ③ | Molto adagio - Allegro vivace | 8:37 |

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| ④ | Phantasy for Piano, Violin, Viola and Cello in F sharp minor | 12:14 |
|---|---|--------------|

Andante con moto - Allegro vivace - L'istesso tempo - Tempo dell'introduzione -
Andante con moto - Pochettino allargando - Tranquillo

String Quartet No. 4

23:24

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| ⑤ | Allegro energico [Tempo 1] - Largamente [Tempo 2] | 11:30 |
| ⑥ | Quasi minuetto | 4:42 |
| ⑦ | Adagio ma non troppo - Allegro con brio | 7:13 |

Maggini Quartet:

Laurence Jackson, David Angel, Violins • Martin Outram, Viola • Michal Kaznowski, Cello

Martin Roscoe, Piano

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