

Thursday 19 March | 1pm

The Villiers Quartet with Lucy Cox

From Sunrise to Nightfall

Haydn Quartet No 63 in B flat, *The Sunrise*

I Allegro con spirito
II Adagio
III Minuet
IV Finale

Dixon The 'lost' Scherzo (Concert Premiere)

Nocturnal Scherzo

Sohrab and Rustum

The Spirit of Love: 3 songs for soprano & quartet

I As the harmonic to the sounding string
II From far, from eve and morning
III The night has a thousand eyes

The Villiers Quartet

Katie Stillman Violin I
Tamaki Higashi Violin II
Carmen Flores Viola
Toby White Cello

Lucy Cox Soprano



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extended programme
notes.



From Sunrise to Nightfall

Haydn's *'Sunrise' Quartet* forms the curtain-raiser for a musical journey from earliest dawn to deepest night, showcasing rediscovered works by Ailsa Dixon (1932-2017) from the Villiers Quartet's latest recording. Of all the works to emerge in the remarkable posthumous revival of Dixon's music, *The 'lost' Scherzo* offers the most striking story of rediscovery. Written in 1955 and believed to be lost, the manuscript turned up recently in an attic and receives its concert premiere today, seven decades later. Her sunniest quartet piece, it shows the beginning of her compositional style in playful counterpoint and tonal influences from 20th-century British composers.

Nocturnal Scherzo demonstrates a characterful development of the form. A drowsy 'sleep' theme ushers in a dream-sequence featuring two *commedia dell'arte* figures, Pierrot and the 'macho man', representing the contest and reconciliation of two halves of the psyche. *Sohrab and Rustum*, inspired by Matthew Arnold's poem derived from a Persian epic, tells the story of the fatal encounter between an estranged father and son on opposite sides of a battle between the Tatar and Persian armies. Framing the human tragedy is the River Oxus, rising in the starlit mountains, tumbling down to the plain where the drama unfolds, and (as armies light their evening fires) flowing into a calm sea.

The Spirit of Love was among the works premiered posthumously after Ailsa Dixon's death, greeted by critics and audiences as 'something special', and 'a stunning find'. An exploration of love's transcendence, these three quartet songs combine lyrical melismas and fluid harmonies, sometimes cloudy or dissonant, with a radiant vision of eternity.

This concert is generously supported by the Vaughan Williams Foundation and The Music Reprieval Trust.



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