



## The Gildas Quartet

21st February 2015

“The String Quartet is, in many ways, the purest form of musical expression” – not my words but a view expressed some 20 years ago by John Summers, well known Lochgilphead musician. It was not surprising, therefore, to see a capacity audience in the Kilmory Council Chamber last Saturday to enjoy a concert given by the Gildas Quartet.

This exciting young Ensemble, formed in 2010, has already won many awards and appeared in leading UK and European venues and the first-class colour programme provided interesting biographies of Canadian Chris Jones (leader), Gemma Sharples (violin), Kay Stephens (viola) and Anna Menzies (cello). Interestingly, all four graduated from different top musical academies. The concert opened with a short homage to Bach – Mozart’s “Adagio and Fugue” in C minor, and Anna spoke briefly about the work before herself playing the first lively theme, which was then in turn taken up by the others in a variety of guises.

There followed Janacek’s 1<sup>st</sup> String Quartet, “the Kreutzer Sonata”, prefaced by Kay’s lucid description of the music written over 7 days in November 1923 and inspired by Tolstoy’s novella of the same name. This challenging quartet traces the main outline of Tolstoy’s tangled story and builds up a musical portrait of the poor downtrodden heroine, revealing the composer’s deep empathy. The quartet played superbly, and their powerful “maestoso” final movement conveyed the reassuring catharsis of the plot, with dignity restored to the victim as well as to the penitent wrongdoer.

The main work after the interval was Beethoven’s 2<sup>nd</sup> “Razumovsky Quartet”. After initial slight tuning difficulties in the lead violin, the players settled into a performance full of brightness, energy and great maturity. The long Adagio 2<sup>nd</sup> movement in particular was masterly, inspired we had been told by Beethoven contemplating the starry sky and thinking of the music of the spheres. This was the composer at his most profound. The two remaining movements then came back down to earth with a bump, the wistful “allegretto” giving way to the foot-tapping “Presto”, incorporating the mandatory Russian folk tune demanded by the Count and evoking horses galloping across the steppes.

It had been a privilege to witness the sheer enjoyment of these young gifted musicians, displaying such skill and maturity as they played together, and the applause was sustained and well merited. To end the evening on a calmer level, we then had a charming “Romance “ by Grieg from his Quartet in A. The MAAA is to be congratulated on bringing to Mid Argyll this exciting young ensemble, and the fine setting of the Kilmory Council Chamber was a fitting venue for a visit by such outstanding artists.

JH