

The Zelkova String Quartet - November 27th, 2014

The Zelkova String Quartet, an award winning, young, Manchester based group, gave a thrilling performance in St Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle on 27 November 2014.

They opened with Anton Weberns' Langsamer Satz, a piece inspired by the composer's love for Wilhelmine Mortl and written when just 22 years old. This was a tonal piece based in three parts and showing a bluesy feel, where the dialogue between the two violins was evenly matched.

Mozart's Quartet in E Flat Op 16 followed, a work dedicated to his friend Haydn in which the opening movement showed great maturity of style in its chromaticism, rare for a classical quartet. This was played with grace and sensitivity.

Frank Bridge's 3 Idylls followed, a melancholy work with jazz inclinations, in which the players showed virtuosity especially in the spiccatto sections.

The final piece was the great Ravel in F major – a work of great complexity showing all aspects of string writing. Ravel's opening movement is haunting, the melody played in canon between the instruments. Interludes of rhythmic development gave the movement a rhapsodic feel. Movement two was dramatic with fantastic pizzicato passages, with the melody being recalled. The clever use of mute enhanced the movement. The third movement comprised three sections of great technical difficulty. Movement four was light and fast, with a clever use of harmonics, ending in a joyful coda.

This was sublime playing, showing great virtuosity and maturity of style from this youthful quartet. Fantastic!

Catherine Swarbrick