

MEDIA RELEASE

A glimpse behind the Iron Curtain

Legendary Borodin Quartet tours for Musica Viva



"Fierce, formidable and authoritative...the gold standard for Russian chamber music." - The Guardian

20 SEP - 9 OCT 2018

In our fast-paced, throwaway society, it is a rare thing to be able to pause, to honour and appreciate the past but it is exactly this opportunity the **Borodin Quartet** offers its audience. Considered 'the world's greatest string quartet' (*UK Telegraph*), the revered ensemble returns from **20 September** for **Musica Viva** in two programs of masterpieces by **Haydn, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky** and **Wolf**, paired with compelling insights into the music of **Shostakovich**.

It all began at the Moscow Conservatorium, back in 1945, when four students in Professor Terian's chamber music class formed a quartet. Now approaching its 75th anniversary, the group's individual players may have changed but each has embraced the unique history and famous sound of this remarkable institution.

"Newcomers and established players alike, we all are doing our best to inherit the way our predecessors and current colleagues are treating the score and instruments and sound production," says violist Igor Naidin, who joins Ruben Aharonian (violin), Sergey Lomovsky (violin) and Vladimir Balshin (cello) in the Quartet's current membership.

Right from the start, the life of the Borodin Quartet was bound up with Dmitri Shostakovich. Founding violist Rudolph Barshai brashly rang him up in 1946, when they were all still students, saying they loved his first quartet and wanted to play it to him. From then on, the Borodins worked closely with Shostakovich.

"He was a man of great humour and sarcasm; he was able to be joyful and funny. I think nobody has played his music more in the world than the Borodin Quartet," says Naidin.

The 15 quartets remain at the heart of the group's repertoire, and they were among the first to perform them as a cycle, recording the first 13 in 1967-71. On this tour, Shostakovich's Ninth Quartet forms the centrepiece of Program One, flanked by Haydn's op 33 no 1 and the thirteenth quartet of Beethoven.

Shostakovich finished the first version of his Ninth Quartet in the autumn of 1961. In a fit of depression, or, to quote him in his own words, 'in an attack of healthy self-criticism', he burnt it in the stove. It took him nearly three years to write another version, his 'second' Ninth Quartet completed only in 1964.

MEDIA RELEASE



Program Two opens with Tchaikovsky's glorious first quartet and the *Italian Serenade* of Hugo Wolf, closing with Shostakovich's final – and longest – quartet no 15, much of it written from a hospital bed in Moscow. He famously remarked to the Taneyev Quartet, who premiered the work, "Play the first movement so that flies drop dead mid-air." The music is breathtakingly spare, and it may indeed slow your heartrate, but there's a stark beauty about it, as though everything has been stripped away except its expressive power.

"They are all, each and every one of them, masterpieces!" says Naidin of the Shostakovich quartets. "The composer entrusted his most personal feelings and thoughts to this intimate genre, where he could 'speak out' about everything he was thinking of." With the Borodin Quartet, his thoughts have found their most perfect expression.

The Borodin Quartet will tour to Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Sydney, Newcastle and Perth. For bookings and further details, please visit www.musicaviva.com.au/borodin.

Members of the Quartet will also mentor talented students at masterclasses in Melbourne and Sydney. Members of the public are welcome to attend. For details, please see www.musicaviva.com.au/masterclasses.¹

BORODIN QUARTET

Ruben Aharonian violin
Sergei Lomovsky violin
Igor Naidin viola
Vladimir Balshin cello

TOUR DATES

Brisbane 20 Sep 2018 7:00 PM
Melbourne 22 Sep 2018 7:00 PM
Melbourne 25 Sep 2018 7:00 PM
Adelaide 27 Sep 2018 7:30 PM
Hobart 29 September 2018 8:00 PM²
Sydney 01 Oct 2018 7:00 PM
Newcastle 04 Oct 2018 7:30 PM
Sydney 06 Oct 2018 2:00 PM
Perth 09 Oct 2018 7:30 PM

PROGRAM ONE

(Melbourne Weekend, Adelaide, Newcastle, Sydney Weekend)
HAYDN String Quartet in B minor, op 33 no 1
SHOSTAKOVICH String Quartet no 9 in E-flat major, op 117
BEETHOVEN String Quartet no 13 in B-flat major, op 130

PROGRAM TWO

(Brisbane, Melbourne Weekday, Sydney Weekday, Perth)
TCHAIKOVSKY String Quartet no 1
WOLF *Italian Serenade*
SHOSTAKOVICH String Quartet no 15 in E-flat minor, op 144

VENUES

Adelaide: Adelaide Town Hall
Brisbane: Queensland Conservatorium Theatre
Hobart: Hobart Town Hall
Melbourne: Melbourne Recital Centre
Newcastle: Newcastle Conservatorium
Perth: Perth Concert Hall
Sydney: City Recital Hall

¹Musica Viva's Masterclass program is supported by principal patrons Stephen Johns & Michele Bender, Wesfarmers Arts (WA), Anonymous Donor (SA) and the late Mary Turner OAM (Newcastle).

²Hobart concert presented in association with Musica Viva Tasmania. Bookings: <http://mvt.org.au/concerts/2018/borodin-string-quartet/>.