

String Quartet No. 3 in D minor, Op. 64

String Quartet No. 4 in G minor, Op. 99

String Quartet No. 7 in C minor, Op. 166

(First Recordings)

DANTE QUARTET Krysia Osostowicz & Oscar Perks *violins*
Yuko Inoue *viola*, Richard Jenkinson *cello*

String Quartet No. 3

[26:41]

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Allegro moderato ma appassionato | 6:05 |
| 2 | Allegretto semplice | 5:40 |
| 3 | Andante (quasi Fantasia) | 7:54 |
| 4 | Allegro feroce ma non troppo mosso | 7:01 |

String Quartet No. 4

[27:57]

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 5 | Allegro moderato | 9:46 |
| 6 | Allegretto vivace | 4:18 |
| 7 | Adagio | 7:08 |
| 8 | Allegro molto vivace | 6:44 |

String Quartet No. 7

[21:13]

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|------|
| 9 | Allegretto ma con fuoco | 7:26 |
| 10 | Andante | 6:57 |
| 11 | Allegro molto | 3:31 |
| 12 | Allegro giusto | 3:18 |

Total recording time 76:09

Recorded at St. Nicholas Parish Church, Thames Ditton.

Nos. 3 & 4: June 22-23, 2017; No. 7: May 8, 2018

Producer: Siva Oke Recording Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor

Front cover: *Psyche Entering Cupid's Garden* by JW Waterhouse (1849-1917)

© Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston / Bridgeman Images

Design: Andrew Giles Booklet Editor: Michael Quinn

Charles Villiers
STANFORD

String Quartets
Nos 3, 4 & 7

First Recordings

DANTE
QUARTET



Charles Villiers STANFORD

String Quartets Nos 3, 4 & 7

Having composed his first two string quartets in 1891, when he was almost 50, Stanford embarked on his **String Quartet No. 3 in D minor, Op. 64** in Milan during one of his many European summer holidays. The first three movements were completed rapidly there between September 22 and 26, 1896 although the finale was not finished until he had reached London on September 29. Dedicated 'to my friends the Joachim Quartet', it was this famous ensemble of Joseph Joachim, his pupil Johann Kruse, Julius Wirth and Robert Hausmann who gave its first performance at a Monday Popular Concert at St James's Hall, London on April 2, 1898 (where they were a hugely popular attraction) after its publication by Augener the year before. It was later performed in Cologne in March 1899 by the Gürzenich Quartet and received with considerable enthusiasm. "England is never tired of showing the liveliest interest in German art and German artists," wrote one critic in the *Cologne Gazette*, "and yet we still labour under the impression that such a thing as English music does not exist. If any one work could remove this erroneous idea it was this quartet of Stanford's, which we count amongst the most enjoyable novelties of the whole winter season".

The idiom of the string quartet was always a serious intellectual challenge for Stanford and this example is no exception in its demonstration of structural subtlety, thematic imagination and brilliant ensemble writing. This Stanford undoubtedly learned

from the examples of the 19th-century German canon (and especially the three quartets of Brahms) and which he passed onto his pupils such as Vaughan Williams, Bridge, Dyson and Howells. The key of D minor for the work also re-echoed another substantial work, the Op. 25 Piano Quintet that Stanford had dedicated to Joachim in 1887.

Marked *Allegro moderato ma appassionato*, the stern first movement, agitated, severe and carefully worked out – a demanding essay for one of the world's finest quartets of the time – sets the tone for what is a big-boned, hot-blooded work. The first subject begins with a series of uniformly rhythmic gestures (a minim followed by a quaver) but this is prelude to a much more agitated and restless outburst, initially from the first violin but later from the whole quartet. The second subject, in the viola, provides some lyrical relief, though at the close of the exposition the first subject returns and this material passes seamlessly into the development with even greater purpose. The sense of continued agitation is also communicated by the last part of the development in which the first subject is presented more indignantly and obliquely. As if to calm this persistent disquiet, the recapitulation of the second subject in D major, this time in the second violin, comes as some relief and there is even a hint of forced humour. However, this glimpse of strained joy is soon contradicted by the return of D minor and more climactic treatment of the first subject.

The second movement (in place of the traditional Scherzo) is an antidote to the first in its outward simplicity, though its lyrical poise conceals much of the inner harmonic complexity. The slow movement in G major, marked *Andante (quasi Fantasia)* (though originally marked *Adagio molto*) reveals a more pensive side to

Stanford's personality, and also a freer, less classically contained imagination in its impression of improvisation and rhythmical abandon. This magnificent, highly original, introspective movement was clearly written with Joachim in mind, evidenced by the agility of the first violin part and by the range of expressive tone expected from the player. Much of the passion of the movement is derived from the variation which Stanford gives to the plagal gesture (iv – I) of the opening with its minor inflection and its dissonant 'contradictory' F natural in the first violin. Stanford uses this material with increasing dramatic force to delineate the close of the second subject, and, with even greater intensity, the return to G major (marked *ff*), though it is the closing, more expansive reiteration (marked *sul G* for the first violin) that imparts the most profound sense of tragedy. This, together, with the rapid rhythmical filigree with which Stanford constantly surrounds his central idea (reminiscent perhaps of the laments of the Irish *sean-nós* tradition), captures the fantasy-like character of the movement.

While the slow movement provides a window into the soul, the finale is a ferocious, extrovert dance-like movement, whose technically demanding rhythmical material contrasts vividly with a delightful, euphonious secondary theme. After a bar of silence, the development begins quietly and is characterized by a gradual crescendo to its climax on the dominant of F. A cadence into this key is, however, contradicted by one into D minor and the recapitulation of the first subject (now marked *ff*). A more buoyant second subject, this time in the cello, returns in D major, but like its counterpart in the first movement, its optimistic mood is quashed by the restoration of the minor mode and an even more furious attempt by the first subject to assert itself in the breathless coda.

Completed on October 30, 1906, Stanford's **Fourth Quartet, Op. 99** was dedicated "to my friend Johann Kruse". Born in Melbourne, Australia in March 1859 of German extraction, Johann Secundus Kruse travelled to the Berlin Hochschule in 1875 to study with Joseph Joachim and such was his reputation that he was dubbed 'Joachim secundus' by Berlin critics. After returning to Australia in 1885, he was recalled by Joachim to Berlin to assist him with work at the Hochschule until 1891. In 1892, while living in Bremen and leading a quartet of his own, he joined Joachim's famous quartet as second violin and remained a member of the ensemble until 1897 when he moved to London. There he played a major part in revitalising the flagging Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts at St James's Hall. At the same time, he formed his own eponymous Quartet and forged a successful career as a prominent chamber musician in Britain. With the Joachim Quartet, Kruse took part in the first performance of Stanford's Third Quartet in D minor, Op. 64 at a Popular Concert on April 2, 1898. This led to further performances of new Stanford works such as the Violin Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 70 (1898), the String Quintet No. 1 in F major, Op. 85 (1903) and the Serenade in F major, Op. 95 (1905).

The unpublished Fourth Quartet – a work of considerable technical demands (and here performed in an edition by Colleen Ferguson) – was first performed at a chamber concert of the Cambridge University Musical Society on February 20, 1907 by Kruse, the second violinist Haydn Inwards, the violist Lionel Tertis and the cellist Herbert Withers. A second performance took place as the first of six subscription concerts at the Bechstein Hall on October 26, 1907 by a reconstituted Kruse Quartet (which now included second violinist Horace Fellowes, violist H. Krause and cellist Jacques Renard) where the work was well received. Brimfull with invention, like the

String Quartet No. 3, it was written with its dedicatee in mind. The part for first violin is especially challenging in its range and agility (Kruse was well known for his brilliant staccato bowing and supple trills), features which also determined the intensely contrapuntal character of the work as a whole.

A 'question-and-answer' paradigm shapes the opening of the first movement, the first gesture outlining an interrupted cadence, the second a proper cadence into G minor. This material is then treated more expansively, while still retaining its underlying interrogatory character, before a much more Schubertian second subject in B flat (redolent of the late Piano Sonata in B flat major, D. 960), with its tantalising irregular phrases, is proclaimed. The more dramatic development draws its intensity from Stanford's arresting tonal scheme which, in its further treatment of the second subject, reaches a distant F sharp major. However, it is the 'interrupted' element of the first subject that shapes the oblique recapitulation of the recomposed first subject. Here, Stanford deftly avoids a cadence into F sharp by shifting his bass (a C-sharp pedal point in the cello) to D (in the viola), thereby signalling the arrival of G minor but without any sense of definitive cadence. In fact, it is only with the restatement of the second subject that G (now in the major mode) is confirmed.

The playful Scherzo is a dazzling example of Stanford's love of continuing variation. The first part of the movement is shaped by the lilting momentum of its 6/8 metre. At the point of recapitulation, replete with an extended trill for the first violin (undoubtedly intended for Kruse), the first subject, now in 2/4, is transformed into Mendelssohnian quicksilver of staccato semiquavers. This brittle, delicate texture underpins much of the rest of the movement, and while the second subject attempts

to reassert the 6/8 metre, it is only in the distilled material of the coda (complete with reference to the interrupted cadence of the first movement) that the 'will-o'-the-wisp' ambiance is finally extinguished.

A deeply-felt slow movement in C minor, melancholy in temperament, is dominated by an extended, song-like melody in which the brooding colour of the open C strings of the viola and cello is a distinctive, memorable feature. The second subject, in A flat, is reached by means of an interrupted cadence (V-VI), reiterating once again, the pervasive influence of the first movement. A powerful, impassioned melody, it is shared between the first violin and cello until the two combine in a duet of fervent resolution. With the reprise of C minor, the atmosphere of lament is enhanced by the open C strings of the viola and cello, though, with the emergence of C major and a memory of the second subject in the concluding bars, one senses a conciliatory outcome to this elegiac outpouring of emotion.

The quartet concludes in G major with a virtuoso tour de force of compelling energy whose rapid 9/8 metre invokes the spirit of an Irish 'hop jig' (one Stanford had used to great effect in his *Irish Symphony* of 1887). The brisk staccato quavers of the first subject, requiring agile bowing, were almost certainly intended for Kruse, though in this movement all the players are expected to show equal dexterity. Moreover, as if to make reference to the 'question-and-answer' paradigm of the first movement, Stanford ingeniously begins his first subject in A minor and even cadences in that key before G major is allowed to materialise. Some relief from the enthralling forward momentum is provided by the more tranquil and rhythmically becalmed second subject in the dominant, but the sense of *moto perpetuo* is

restored with the uptake of the development. The oblique nature of the first subject deliberately obscures the sense of recapitulation which is skilfully reworked to incorporate a cyclic reference to the slow movement in the subdominant. While this temporarily injects a darkness to the demeanour of the movement, the sense of fun and exuberance is unshakable as the movement ends tumultuously with even greater swiftness and abandon.

The **String Quartet No. 7 in C minor, Op. 166** was probably composed in late 1918 or very early 1919. It was first performed at the Royal College of Music in London on February 27, 1919 by a student quartet: John Pennington (violin), Gertrude Newsham (violin), Sybil Maturin (viola) and Edward Robinson (cello). A second performance took place to mark the 50th anniversary of Stanford's death at the capital's Savile Club on March 24, 1974 by the Alberni Quartet (who later broadcast the work on BBC Radio 3 on April 18 the same year) as part of an evening chaired by Herbert Howells. The score has been assembled by Professor Jeremy Dibble from a set of manuscript parts in the Robinson Library at Newcastle University.

The first movement is a stern contrapuntal affair in which Stanford makes full use of the sonorities of the viola's and cello's open C strings, and there is Neapolitan colour to spice up the chromatic fluidity of Stanford's harmony. The opening figure for the first violin is developed with particular thoroughness in the turbulent development, rich in rhythmical invention, and the restatement of the main thematic material in the cello is given a renewed urgency with the surrounding triplet activity for the rest of the quartet.

This same pressing mood inhabits the coda though it is eventually becalmed in the concluding bars. Cast in A-flat major, the *Lento espressivo* begins with a song-like melody and this yields to an equally lyrical second subject in the dominant. With the establishment of E flat, however, Stanford introduces a new idea, more disquieting in its restive rhythmic accompaniment, which is introduced by the viola, and this material is subject to more exploratory tonal treatment in F-sharp minor and A minor before, with true legerdemain, Stanford facilitates the return of the first subject in A flat.

The Scherzo in F minor is a tour de force. A *spiccato* accompaniment to a more *legato* idea for first violin contrasts with a second idea characterised by a series of repeated notes, and a third idea, a rapid downward scale for viola and cello which terminates on their open C strings. The second part of the Scherzo develops these three ideas with extraordinary fecundity before the 'trio', in F major, takes the second idea of repeated notes and doubles the time values. Emphasis is subsequently placed on this figure throughout the rest of the paragraph before the 'will-o'-the-wisp' mood of the Scherzo is restored.

The first subject of the Finale is a hop-jig in 9/8. This, however, is unusually contrasted with a lively dance in 2/4 (and a later version in 3/4) in E flat made all the more distinctive and quirky by its irregular phrase lengths. A short developmental phase is answered by a recapitulation in which Stanford's two thematic ideas return in reverse order, a device which allows the jig material to form the energetic closing phase of the movement in the tonic major.

DANTE QUARTET

Krysia Osostowicz & Oscar Perks *violins*
Yuko Inoue *viola*, Richard Jenkinson *cello*

The Dante Quartet was founded by Krysia Osostowicz in 1995, its name inspired by the idea of an epic journey. The quartet has appeared at all the major UK festivals and concert societies, as well as in many European countries, and also has a strong following in Japan. Recipient of many awards, including the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber Music, the Diapason d'Or and the BBC Music Magazine Award, the Dante Quartet has recorded the quartets of Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Franck, Janacek, Kodaly, Smetana and Sibelius. The project of recording Stanford's complete string quartets for SOMM, most of them hitherto unpublished, has been embraced enthusiastically by the Dantes.

In the past couple of years the Dante Quartet has performed the complete quartets of Shostakovich as well as touring "Beethoven's Quartet Journey", an innovative Beethoven cycle in which the composer himself is brought to life by renowned actor David Timson with a script by Clare Norburn, drawing closely upon Beethoven's own writings.

Committed also to teaching, the Dante Quartet has worked closely with King's College Cambridge, and gives annual courses in England and France. The thriving Dante Summer Festival in the Tamar Valley (www.dantefestival.org), founded by the quartet in 2004, has helped to create a new audience for live chamber music and attracts visitors from all over the UK.

Oscar Perks plays first violin in the recording of Quartet No. 7.

SOMM Recordings would like to thank The Stanford Society and the Durham University Music Department for their generous financial support of this recording.



THE STANFORD SOCIETY

The Stanford Society was formed in 2007 to promote greater interest in Stanford's life and music and to encourage and support performances and recordings of his music. The Society holds an annual Stanford Festival Weekend in a Cathedral City in the UK or Ireland. These Weekends have included performances of music by Stanford (including premiers of the Second Violin Concerto and Variations for Violin and Orchestra in orchestrations by Jeremy Dibble) and his students and contemporaries as well as talks, social events and Cathedral services.

Society members also receive regular newsletters with news and information about performances of Stanford's music and new recordings.

Further information about the Stanford Society may be found at the Society's website at www.thestanfordsociety.org or by contacting Daniel Wilkinson, the Society's Honorary Secretary. His email address is wilkinsondb@hotmail.co.uk.

We would like to thank the following members of the Stanford Society for their support of this recording:

John Covell and Constance Frydenlund

Professor and Mrs. Jeremy Dibble · Dr. Colleen Ferguson · Dr. David Frankel

Mr. and Mrs. David Colville · Dr. David Miller

Mark and Laura Fisher · Charles Covell.