

Music



REVIEW: luventus String Quartet in Plymouth

14th March 2008

If you wanted to know how classical musicians enjoy a girls' night out, then you needed only to have watched the Luventus Quartet having a real ball at Plymouth's Sherwell Centre as they zipped through the finale of Haydn's C major Quartet, Op 74 No 1, making light work of the brilliant and demanding writing, yet achieved with quite amazing accuracy.

But even from the outset, there was a real sensation that this wasn't going to be just another concert-opener from the composer's prolific pen.

There could then have been scarcely a greater contrast than Ravel's String Quartet, but here the players showed themselves equally adept in luxuriating in the work's opulent textures and sonorities, from the heartfelt pathos of the slow movement, to the high spirits and rhythmic complexities of the finale.

But if the matchless quality of the performance had so far left the audience somewhat taken aback, the final work, Schubert's Death and the Maiden Quartet, clearly surpassed even this.

The work presents a challenge, not just technically, but more so emotionally, if the composer's delicate yet vital psychological balance is to be precisely conveyed.

It takes genuine maturity to bring this off, and here Ruth Rogers's superb musicianship and lead encouraged the finest possible response from her fellow-players, in a quartet performance that must surely rank among the best heard in the city for many years.

PHILIP R BUTTALL

