



The Music Room
Conversations about Music
With Zoë Beyers

Series Finale Double Bill
Episodes Eleven and Twelve

(First broadcast 27 November 2020)

Beethoven's Quartet Journey

Dante Quartet

David Timson - Actor

Clare Norburn - Writer

Programme Notes



In the two-part finale to The Music Room series, the Dante Quartet and actor David Timson explore two of Beethoven's late quartets, Op. 130 and Op. 133, the titanic *Große Fuge*. As the voice of Beethoven, David Timson brings to life this remarkable, personal and profound music in a narrative by writer Clare Norburn. The quartet is performed complete, while the narrative, formed from original source material interwoven with Norburn's creative writing, casts a new light both on the music and on Beethoven as a human being.

The Dante Quartet was recorded 'as live' in August 2020 in St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury. David Timson's narrative was recorded from lockdown at his home studio.

In his excellent note on Beethoven's Opus 130, musicologist Kai Christiansen writes:

"...Beethoven was an undaunted pioneer and artistic visionary who created, particularly in the late quartets, truly complicated works of high art that speak on many levels lending themselves to multiple if not infinite interpretations and reactions. They are indescribably compelling works that have mesmerized players, composers, scholars, poets and avid listeners for nearly two hundred years. Perhaps one of their most essential traits is that they can become as "difficult" as one wishes or, miraculously, as direct, simple and obvious as one's willingness to hear and feel. It is entirely your own prerogative to "understand" them as you can and as you will. It is a project worthy of a lifetime."

Click [here](#) to read it in full.

Dante Quartet



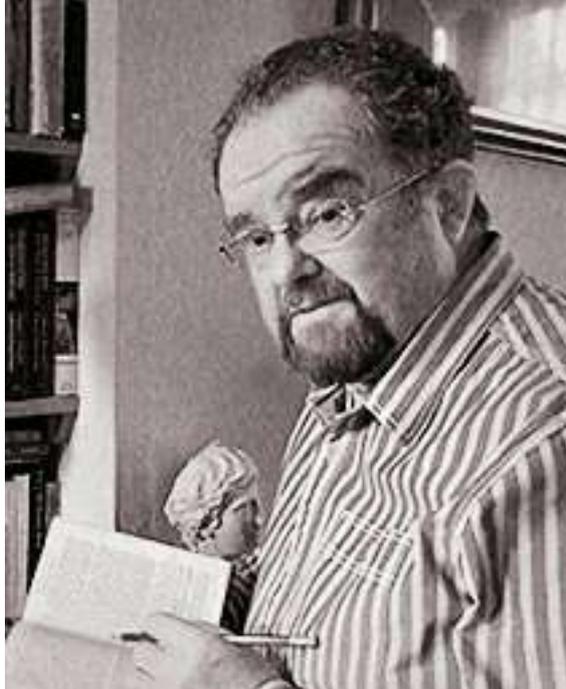
The Dante Quartet, one of the UK's finest ensembles, is known for its imaginative programming and impassioned performances. The quartet was founded in 1995 and chose its name to reflect the idea of an epic journey. The Dante Quartet has been honoured with the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber Music and has also received international awards for its recordings.

Frequently heard on Radio 3, the Dante Quartet has appeared many times at London's Wigmore Hall and Kings Place, as well as at the UK's foremost festivals and music societies. Abroad, the quartet has played in France, Germany, Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Finland, the Czech Republic and Poland, and has twice toured Japan.

From the start of 2020, cellist Richard Jenkinson has taken the Quartet forward with three new members, violinists Zoë Beyers and Ian Watson, and violist Ben Newton. Their inaugural concert in January was hailed as 'superb' and 'truly exceptional' in the press. The recording of Beethoven String Quartets Op. 130 and 133, made in August 2020, marks the first time the Dante Quartet has been able play together since lockdown.

The Quartet's website is currently under renovation, but [this is the link](#) to the old website for reference.

David Timson



David trained at Guildhall School, winning the BBC Student Prize in 1971. He has since made over a thousand broadcasts, from the title role in *Nicholas Nickleby* to *The Archers*. He has appeared in classical and modern plays across the UK and abroad. TV and film work includes *Eastenders*, *Casualty*, *Poirot*. *The Russia House* with Sean Connery, and *Topsy-Turvey* with Mike Leigh.

David has worked regularly for Naxos AudioBooks as actor, director and writer. Recordings include the complete *Sherlock Holmes* stories, five *Dickens* novels and, as director, five *Shakespeare* plays.

In 2001 he won the Spoken Word Publishers Association Awards for Best Original Production for writing *The History of Theatre*, and Best Drama Production for directing *Richard III*. In 2002 he won Audio Book of the Year for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. Other directing work including *Bequest to the Nation*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Faust* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

David has taught at RADA since 2004, specialising in sight-reading and microphone technique.

Click [here](#) to read more.

Clare Norburn



Clare Norburn is a playwright and soprano. She studied music at Leeds University and London College of Music. She has sung as a soloist with many medieval ensembles including her own group The Telling, Mediva (who were finalists in the York International Young Artists Competition and selected for Southbank Centre's Fresh Young Artists Series), Eclipse and Vox Animae with whom she has recorded and performed medieval abbess, Hildegard of Bingen's music drama *Ordo Virtutum*. She has performed throughout the country as a soloist including at The Purcell Room, The Bridgewater Hall and at leading festivals including Spitalfields Music, Brighton Festival, Newbury Spring Festival and Buxton Festival.

Since 2010 Clare has been developing a new genre of concert/plays for actor(s) with live music. Her *Beethoven's Quartet Journey* (a cycle of 6 concert/plays to accompany a full cycle of all Beethoven's string quartets) was developed with funding from Arts Council England with the full cycle premiered in Lymington, Devon. It was featured on Radio 4's Today programme.

Clare's third concert/play, *Breaking the Rules*, received a 4 star review in The Guardian: "vivid and daring one man psychodrama". It is a collaboration with vocal ensemble The Marian Consort, with actor Gerald Kyd as composer and murderer Carlo Gesualdo, directed by Nicholas Renton. She has written three shows about women (including the medieval Abbess Hildegard of Bingen) for her medieval group The Telling.

Click [here](#) to visit Clare Norburn's website.

Further listening...

For a round-up of some of the greatest recordings of Beethoven's late quartets, this [article in Gramophone magazine](#) is a good guide. Here are two interesting historical recordings:

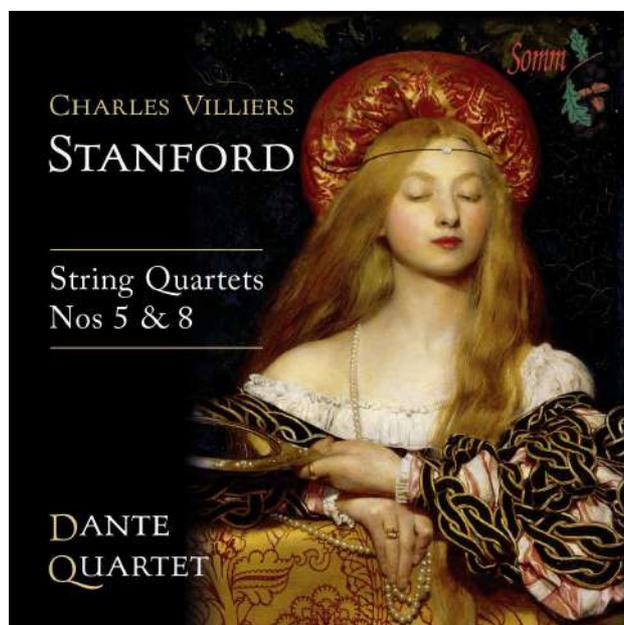
The Klingler Quartet in 1912 playing the fourth movement of Op. 130, Danza alla tedesca.



The Busch Quartet in the late 1930s.



To view the Dante Quartet's discography, click [here](#). A glowing review of their most recent CD release, a collection of Stanford's String Quartets, can be seen [here](#).



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