



## The Marmen Quartet

R/evolution

**11–13 April 2025 (ML 664)**

**The Castle Hotel, Taunton**

2 nights • Price: from £1,070

Speaker: Richard Wigmore

The Marmen Quartet:

Johannes Marmen *violin*

Laia Valentin Braun *violin*

Bryony Gibson-Cornish *viola*

Sinéad O'Halloran *cello*

The prize-winning Marmen Quartet is fast establishing itself as one of the most impressive and engaging talents in chamber music.

With Haydn and Mozart as cornerstones, we discover, through four vivid and exciting recitals, how different composers through the centuries handled the legacies left behind by their predecessors.

Talks on the music by Richard Wigmore.

The performances take place in a recital hall little bigger than a large drawing room.

Stay throughout in the Castle Hotel, Taunton – renowned for its excellent service.

Tickets to individual concerts are also available to purchase, for those who live locally.

With the courage, vitality and intensity of its performances, the Marmen Quartet is fast establishing itself as one of the most impressive and engaging talents in chamber music. The group has performed at prestigious venues, including Wigmore Hall and Berlin Philharmonie, and festival engagements have taken it to the Amsterdam String Quartet Biennale and BBC Proms, among others. In 2023, the Quartet completed its time as Peak Fellowship Ensemble-in-Residence at the Meadows School of the Arts in Dallas, returning in the 2023/24 season for a tour of the US and Canada.

Johannes Marmen, leader of the Quartet, explains the thinking behind their programme:

The string quartet genre, as established by Joseph Haydn, has undoubtedly been the vessel for the greatest masterpieces of many composers. The notion that this is where they can unleash their fullest expressive formidability has yielded inspired results, yet composers have handled the mighty presence of past masters very differently. How to define one's own voice in the wake of all that tradition? One-upmanship, reverence,



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rebellion, homage – the paths are many.

If Haydn established the string quartet as a genre, then Mozart cemented it as a form of high artistic ambition. He clearly identified and was inspired by the extraordinary level in Haydn's work when he composed a set of six quartets dedicated to his older colleague and friend (of which K.428 is a part).

Beethoven had a less reverent view of Papa Haydn. His first set of string quartets, Op.18, was a clear step forward compared to Haydn, almost deliberately so, like a triumphant statement of progress: more expressive, more extreme, more difficult and virtuosic.

Labelled 'impressionists' against their will, there are unmistakably French qualities to the musical languages of Debussy and Ravel. One may not think there is much kinship between them and Haydn, but Debussy especially uses structural and large scale harmonic devices taken right out of the playbook of the Austro-German music tradition. Ravel followed suit but in a leaner, more minimalist style, with added influences from the music of the far east.

Driven by a rigorous ethnomusicological interest, Bartók's use of traditional music in his writing isn't 'added' but rather inseparably intertwined. We hear his first and third quartet

– the latter in particular constructed out of an intricate web of age old classical counterpoint techniques and even older local folk music influences. The marriage of the two results in a music not new, not old, but timeless.

### The Programme

**Concert 1: Friday 11 April, 5.30pm**

Haydn, String Quartet in D, Op.33 No.6;  
Coleridge-Taylor, *Fantasiestücke*; Beethoven,  
String Quartet in F minor, Op.95.

**Concert 2: Saturday 12 April, 10.30am**

Mozart, String Quartet No.6 in B flat major,  
K.159; Bartók, String Quartet No.1 in A minor,  
Op.7, Sz.40; Debussy, String Quartet in G  
minor, Op.10.

**Concert 3: Saturday 12 April, 5.30pm**

Mozart, String Quartet No.16 in E-flat, K.428;  
Beethoven, String Quartet in E minor, Op.59  
No.2, *Razumovsky*.

**Concert 4: Sunday 13 April, 10.30am**

Haydn, String Quartet in E flat, Op.33 No.2,  
*The Joke*; Bartók, String Quartet No.3 in  
C-sharp minor, Sz.85; Ravel, String Quartet  
in F.

The Marmen Quartet  
continued

## Speaker

**Richard Wigmore.** Music writer, lecturer and broadcaster for BBC Radio 3. He writes for *BBC Music Magazine* and *Gramophone* and has taught classes in Lieder history and interpretation at the Guildhall, Trinity College of Music and Birkbeck College. He read French and German at Cambridge and later studied Music at the Guildhall. His publications include *Schubert: The Complete Song Texts* and *Pocket Guide to Haydn*.

## The Castle Hotel, Taunton

The Castle is renowned for its excellent service, for comforts traditional and modern, and for its superb catering. It has been owned and run by the Chapman family for over 60 years. Chamber music events have been held here since 1977, and Martin Randall Travel took over the running of them in 2003.

The hotel's bedrooms are individually and charmingly decorated. Doubles and twins are mainly of a good size, and the largest are the Garden Rooms. All single occupancy rooms have double beds, and a single supplement is not charged for the smallest – the so-called 'deluxe singles'. The majority of rooms have a bath with a shower fitment; a very limited amount have walk-in showers.

The hotel has a lift, though some bedrooms are then accessed via stairs, and the Music Room (not accessible by lift) is on a mezzanine level, up a flight of stairs from the lobby. *Please let us know when you book if you have specific access requirements.*

Taunton lies on the doorstep of Exmoor and the Quantocks, areas with some of the loveliest countryside in England.

[www.the-castle-hotel.com](http://www.the-castle-hotel.com)

## Practicalities

**Prices, per person. Two sharing:** standard double or twin £1,070; Garden Room £1,290.  
**Single occupancy:** deluxe single £1,070; standard double for sole use £1,190.

**Start:** rooms are available for occupancy from 3.00pm on Friday 11 April, with afternoon tea available from this point.

**Finish:** the final concert, on Sunday 13 April, will end by 12.45pm.

**Included:** four concerts, talks on the music, accommodation for two nights, breakfasts, two afternoon teas, two dinners, interval drinks, programme, tips for hotel staff.

**Tickets to individual concerts:** £30 mornings; £35 evenings. Interval refreshments and a programme are included.