

Quatuor Parisii at Gloucester Music Society

St Mary de Lode Church, Thursday 18 November 2010

Birmingham Post, Thursday 25 November 2010: Review

In more than 40 years of reviewing, I doubt I've ever been to a more enterprising and brave music club promotion than the one to which Gloucester Music Society tempted me slightly outside the confines of our normal boundaries last Thursday.

The performers – the Quatuor Parisii – were illustrious enough, and are always an immense draw in themselves, performing with such charm and persuasive communication. But their programme here was extraordinary, brilliantly constructed, emotionally satisfying, and at the same time spectacularly cerebral – and the unintimidated audience loved it.

Cornerstones (an appropriate word for this ancient building in the shadows of Gloucester's imposing Cathedral) were excerpts from Bach's *Art of Fugue*, unfolded with clarity and appreciation of their sheer musicality as well as profound contrapuntal genius, and Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, its many-sided, almost cosmic character hypnotically conveyed (it remained an ear-worm for me all through the night).

And interspersing all of this were most of the movements from the *Livre pour Quatuor* by Pierre Boulez, one of the most unbending works penned by this now so genial octogenarian during his angry-young-man period. Textures, attacks, dynamics and heaven knows what else are all rigorously controlled. There is no melody, nor any sense of developing rhythm, but the colours and sheer gripping inevitability of these pieces make their own impact. Concentration and mutual listening from these amazing players could almost be sensed dripping from these walls which have heard so much over the centuries. Nothing could ever have equalled this triumph.

Christopher Morley