

Zemlinsky Quartet

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Vinehall School, 24 November 2012

It is always good to hear Czech music played by Czech musicians, and when they are as internationally recognised as the Zemlinsky Quartet the event is bound to be prestigious.



Janacek's second quartet, *Intimate Letters*, requires rapid changes of mood and dynamic without any sense of rawness. The warmth of the playing, and in particular the vibrancy of Petr Holman's viola, made for elegant transitions and a level of geniality which is often missed. The final movement danced joyously even when there are undercurrents of tension and concern.

It is not often that music can be considered happy, but Dvorak's second quartet, known as the *American*, seems to be just that. The players were certainly happy not only with their performance but with the work itself, often playing from memory and deep commitment. In the context of the Janacek quartet, Dvorak's *Molto vivace* seems to pre-echo the younger composer in the deft mood changes and snatches of melody. The lilting dance of the final *Vivace* was enchanting.

These Czech works were sandwiched between two baroque pieces. The evening opened with Mozart's quartet No17 K458. The playful final movement seems to hint at the more familiar *Eine kleine nachtmusik* while the inner movements range from a Haydnesque *Trio* to a romantic *Adagio*.

As an encore we heard the final movement of the third quartet by Juan Crisóstomo Jacobo Antonio de Arriaga, *The Spanish Mozart*.

It may have been a nasty night outside but in the hall all was warmth and comfort – and a tribute to the organisers who can tempt this quality of performance to the wilds of East Sussex.BH

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