



**Concert Programme  
for  
Joseph Horowitz's 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

**Solem Quartet:**

**Amy Tress: violin; William Newell: violin; Stephen Upshaw: viola; Stephanie Tress: cello**

**Guitar:**

**Alastair Putt**

**Five Portraits for String Quartet: a birthday card from New College on Joseph Horowitz's 95th Birthday**

Painting (Joyous sweeps of the brush) – Going, somewhere... (Playful)  
Study (Very slow, with great expression) – Con Brio – Song (Spritely)

Luke Lewis

**Quartet No 4**

Joseph Horovitz

Grave maestoso – allegro molto – lento

**Quartet No 5**

Joseph Horovitz

**Ghetto Song**

Joseph Horovitz

*With thanks to Mark Curtis, Jacqui Julier, Sally Richardson, Jonathan Rubery,  
Nancy-Jane Rucker*

## Notes on the Programme

### **Five Portraits**

*These five portraits have been written to mark not only Joseph's election as Honorary Fellow but, given it is his 95th birthday later this week, these are also a little birthday card from the college.*

*All musical material in the piece derives from speech transcriptions I made of Joseph being interviewed by the Royal College of Music Librarian Pamela Thompson and conductor John Wilson about his life and music. Speech transcription involves finding the melodies present within everyday speech and putting them into musical notation. These can be very interesting as sometimes one finds that a person has been speaking in a musical key, or perhaps that similar rhythms recur in their speaking. Two passages in the RCM interview stood out to me as interesting to explore. In the first Joseph discusses his entry to New College in 1943 and in the second the revelation that after Oxford, 'I paid for my studies with Boulanger with five portraits, which I did'. Clearly, this quote provided more than just musical material: he sold five portraits when he left New College, so perhaps we can give him five back! The first transcription, concerning Joseph's entry to New College, provides the material for portraits one, two and four. The second, about Boulanger and funnily enough in B major, is the basis of portraits three and five. In general, the portraits are not strictly 'of' Joseph, but are more inspired by the events and imagery described in the interview. The quick brushstrokes and lines of portrait one are inspired by him being 'more interested in painting' than music when he first came to New College.*

Luke Lewis

### **String Quartet No.4**

*This work was first performed in 1953 at the Society for Promotion of New Music by the Alfredo Wang String Quartet, who gave the public première in London's Wigmore Hall soon after. The first BBC broadcast was given by the Martin Quartet on 9 March 1954. Later broadcasts include a performance by the Cremona Quartet. My first three string quartets are student works composed during my time at New College, Oxford. The score of the third quartet was accepted as the final part of my Bachelor of Music degree in 1948. The fourth quartet was completed in October 1953, some three months after the premiere of my ballet Alice in Wonderland for Anton Dolin's Festival Ballet Company. Now, more than half a century later, I find it curious that this rather dark and disturbing composition emerged after four years devoted almost entirely to light-hearted music-making in the fields of opera and ballet; I was nonetheless very conscious of my effort to create a convincing structure for the piece. The three movements follow the pattern: slow – quick – slow. The first starts with a fugato on the main melodic idea of the whole work. This is joined by a lyrical companion theme, occupying the middle section, and the rest of the movement is mostly a development of both ideas. The second movement is a scherzo based on the main theme of the previous movement. This, too, has its companion theme, occupying the middle section, rather like a classical trio. Towards the end, both themes are used in quick alternation, ending with a ghostly upward-rushing passage. The slow finale recalls some elements of the first movement that had remained undeveloped. These appear in a rhapsodic arioso on the first violin, and after gradual intensification erupt in a violent break; a moment of silence is followed by a restatement of the initial theme of the work, sounding far less emotionally secure than at the outset. In terms of human temperament the quartet moves from security to uncertainty.*

Joseph Horovitz

## **String Quartet No.5**

*This quartet was composed as a sixtieth birthday tribute to the famous art historian, Sir Ernst Gombrich, commissioned by his publishers, the Phaidon Press. The premiere was given by the Amadeus Quartet at a concert in the Victoria and Albert Museum on 1 June 1969. The emotional content of the music was deeply influenced by the fact that the commissioners, the dedicatee, three of the performers and I, the composer, were all Viennese refugees. We had made our home in England in 1938 after the surface Gemütlichkeit of Vienna cracked overnight from the pressure of the festering growth below. I was eleven then and this experience had not consciously influenced my music during the intervening thirty-one years. I believe that the long interval provided an essential perspective for a musical work to encompass extra-musical ideas; without such a digestive process, it might well become limited to mere reportage. In this one-movement quartet the opening thematic material reflects my admiration for the dedicatee. However, this material is soon overtaken by the decadent chromatic gestures prevalent in early twentieth century Viennese music. Healthier diatonic discords tear into these conflicting elements during a long development section and, in a way, finally cleanse them. The melodies of the first section (statements) are entirely based on the intervals of the Third and Sixth, but with garish appendages of extra chromaticism (produced by means of bi-tonality between upper and lower instruments). After the inevitable conflict these intervals emerge in their true and elemental role as essential pillars of a major key.*

*Joseph Horovitz*

## **Ghetto Song**

*Composed in 1970 for solo guitar, the piece is based on a Jewish folk-melody "My Little Town of Beltz" (in the Ukraine). It is a lament for the passing of a happy childhood.*

*Joseph Horovitz*