

Haydn revisited

LONDON A strong collective vision made for an exciting performance by the Quatuor Parisii in April, found **Edward Bhesania**

Often the most engaging aspect of London's musical life is the diverse range of repertory on offer: lesser-known composers are regularly championed, 20th-century music is healthily explored and innovative programming concepts are frequently formed. So it's all the more refreshing that two of the performances which stood out this month were of the music of Haydn.



Quatuor Parisii; gave a matchless performance

Another refreshing player–repertoire combination came in the **Quatuor Parisii's** Wigmore Hall coffee concert on 27 April. This Paris-based ensemble is perhaps best known for championing the French repertoire (familiar and less so) as well as playing 20th-century music (they made the premiere recording in 2001 of Boulez's *Livre pour cordes*). But here they performed Haydn's 'The Joke' (op.33 no.2) and Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' quartets with great style and persuasion. The Haydn was in some ways the more admirable performance, since it's more texturally exposed. The Parisiis created a beautifully homogenous sound, with first violin Arnaud Vallin judging perfectly his role between soloist and chamber musician in the first movement. The series of duets in the third movement proved each player's individual musicianship; and the finale, from which the subtitle 'The Joke' arises (Haydn's introduction of unexpected rests, it has been suggested, was a ploy to expose chin-wagging audience members), was expertly cheeky. This was one of those performances where individual ability, shared vision, convincing interpretation and more than a touch of spontaneity rolled seamlessly together to create what seemed to be a matchless performance.