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**EUSEBIUS QUARTET**

**5-7 September 2019**

**Bishop’s Hull Church (Somerset), Bridport Arts Centre (Dorset)**

**Ilminster Arts Centre (Somerset), CYMT (Taunton), Crewkerne Dance House (Somerset)**

Formed only in 2015 the Eusebius string quartet can very comfortably claim to possess impressive individual and collective performing abilities and qualities. In addition to the usual technical expectations of a professional quartet – impeccable tuning, rhythmic accuracy, and cohesion - there were the positive bonuses of clarity and unity of thought.

Presentation was also a feature that distinguished Eusebius. They were sensitive to the need of a large section of their audience for a verbal introduction to the deeply-felt Quartet No. 6 by Béla Bartók and the monumental Beethoven A minor Quartet Op 132. In this regard both Beatrice Philips (violin) and Hannah Sloane (cello) were excellent.

Throughout the tour Eusebius performed on gut and gut-wired strings. This well suited the Beethoven and Haydn A major Op 9 works and perhaps, rather surprisingly, the 1939 Bartók quartet as well. Naturally the intensity of the vibrato changed from the lyricism of the early (1769 c.) Haydn quartet to the impassioned and disquieting nature of the Bartók work.

The use of gut based stringing brought about a closeness of timbre among the four instruments so that the warmth of the Hannah Sloane’s Piattellini cello was able to synthesise effortlessly with Hannah Shaw’s viola as they criss-crossed in pitch during the Beethoven 3rd movement. This movement requires the musicians to be single minded and show great confidence. The chorale passages in this movement had a very appropriate uniform single-stop church-organ (harmonium?) sound quality. At the Crewkerne performance Eusebius demonstrated their enormous control and assuredness in the last section of the 3rd movement to give a very poignant ending.

Bartók’s 6th Quartet was written at a point when much seemed dark in the composer’s time and his life. The *Mesto* (Sad) passages were enhanced by the natural tonal colour of the strings: dark with a slight nasal quality. Eusebius projected a unified awareness of the various structural dynamics of the movements. In particular, *tempo* variations were well judged, as were the abrupt changes of mood in the *Burlesque* and *March* movements. The last *Mesto* has an almost unbearable intensity of emotion. Through their ability to produce very fine and sensitive sound, Eusebius conveyed a dramatic scene of an empty wasteland and the cry of a lost soul.

In contrast to the Bartók and Beethoven, the concert began with the Haydn quartet. Here Eusebius gave us sensitive phrasing, nuanced dynamics and finely controlled note attacks and endings. Beatrice Philips produced sunny warmth in the lyrical slow movement, superb intonation in the higher pitch range and athleticism in the final *Allegro.*

Venetia Jollands (violin) was the fine and accomplished fourth member of Eusebius.

During Saturday morning Eusebius were able to demonstrate their ability to communicate their love of quartet music to an attentive group of younger instrumentalists at the Centre for Young Musicians Taunton on the Saturday morning.

For their audiences on this short-tour with Concerts in the West, Eusebius brought a fresh and rewarding experience to their aural world. The ability and confidence of the Eusebius Quartet is very persuasive.

[www.eusebiusquartet.com](http://www.eusebiusquartet.com) [www.concertsinthewest.org](http://www.concertsinthewest.org) Andrew Maddocks 2019