



MALINCONIA

DARK LANDS

THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER
HOLYWELL MUSIC ROOM, 1 PM

The darker depths of the Scandinavian character are turned upside down by Grieg's explosive and exhilarating quartet, based on his song Fiddlers

Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957) Valse Triste for piano solo

Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957) Malinconia for cello and piano

Ole Bull (1810 - 1880) La Melancholie

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) Spillemaend (Fiddlers) song

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) String quartet no. 1 in G minor op. 27
Un poco andante - Allegro molto ed agitato
Romanze: Andantino
Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato - Più vivo e scherzando
Finale: Lento - Presto al saltarello

Heini Kärkkäinen | Henning Kraggerud | Antti Tikkanen | Cecilia Tomter | Lars Anders Tomter | Bjorg Vaernes



Sibelius wrote his *Valse Triste* in 1904 for a play by his brother-in-law, Järnefelt. In it, a woman delirious with fever rises from her bed to dance with an imaginary partner; halfway through, a mysterious man - Death himself - enters and takes over the waltz. Despite the lugubrious storyline, the waltz was an instant, international hit - at a time when Sibelius was only just beginning to be known abroad.

Malinconia was written a few years earlier, shortly after his adored daughter Kirsti, not yet two years old, died in a typhoid epidemic. It is the polar opposite of the *Valse Triste*, being almost without melody, more a matter of gesture and colour – yet wildly expressive, rather than numbly restrained.

Ole Bull was the first Norwegian superstar, a largely self-taught prodigy of the violin, whose enormous energy sustained him through arduous self-promoted tours of Europe (he gave 274 concerts throughout Britain in 1837) and then pre-civil war America. Schumann thought him as brilliant as Paganini. He was perhaps the first musical nationalist, ardently promoting Norwegian folk music – but he gave the same attention to American folk tunes. *La Melancholie* is one of around 70 short pieces he composed for his own concerts.

Grieg's First string quartet of 1877 just doesn't fit the music-history narrative. Quartets are supposed to be full of interweaving lines - this is almost orchestral. Quartets were Central European High Art, not the province of a mere Norwegian tunesmith. But this is a remarkable piece, with all four movements strongly linked via transformations of Grieg's song *Spillemaend*. Despite the melancholy of the song, the quartet soars vigorously, as Grieg wanted. And although music history has largely ignored it, it clearly influenced Debussy's great quartet 16 years later.