# Kevin Raftery chamber music

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>String Quartet No. 1</strong></td>
<td>15:41</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Heath Quartet</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Companion</strong></td>
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<td>16:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I. To Canterbury and back –</td>
<td>5:06</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>II. Melodies</td>
<td>5:23</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>III. Vivace</td>
<td>5:31</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Berkeley Ensemble</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pleasantries</strong></td>
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<td>15:51</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I. A little bird told me</td>
<td>1:27</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>II. You can say that again</td>
<td>1:19</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>III. A bit windy</td>
<td>1:48</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>IV. I was gobsmacked</td>
<td>1:17</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>V. I’m so sorry</td>
<td>2:06</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>VI. Go on, then</td>
<td>1:38</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>VII. Those were the days</td>
<td>1:28</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>VIII. How pathetic</td>
<td>2:53</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>IX. Reading between the lines</td>
<td>1:50</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Berkeley Ensemble</em></td>
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<td><strong>“Friedhof” Quintet</strong></td>
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<td>18:40</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I. Andante non tranquillo</td>
<td>5:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>II. Cantabile</td>
<td>6:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>III. Vivace</td>
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<td><em>Animare Ensemble</em></td>
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**total duration** |   | 66:13 |
String Quartet No. 1 (2012)
_in memory of Richard Oake, who loved string quartets_

For over 35 years I refrained from composing a string quartet, daunted by the medium’s history of sublime works by great composers. But on the day I heard of my friend Richard Oake’s death, I was struck by the necessity of contributing something in his memory. String quartets were his great love. I’d spent many happy hours listening to and discussing quartets with Richard. We sometimes disagreed, but that was part of the liveliness of the occasion. I hope that this composition would have met with his approval.

The main “movement” bears some similarity to classical sonata form. A warm first subject is presented, and contrasted with a _delicato_ second subject. However, the seam between them is a brief, violent outburst from the viola and cello. During the development section the two main subjects are given further expression, as one would expect. But the violent music returns too, each time at greater length.

Following one such outburst, a “second movement” interrupts. It’s the opposite of violent; it has the “divine unconcern” that Matisse noted in Moroccan art. (Richard Oake’s other great love was painting; even when his walls were full, he couldn’t help buying a new painting that took his fancy). This interlude consists mostly of trills, slides, and palindromes.

Warmth and forward motion resume when the first subject reappears. It’s given a full recapitulation as one would expect in a classical quartet. When it comes to rest, however, the next recapitulation is not given to the second subject but rather to the violent seam – and this time the first violin is leading the outburst. Only the second violin is left holding on to the original tempo and quiet regularity; the other three instruments give vent to all the violence they can muster.

Its energy spent, the first violin is finally persuaded to join the final recapitulation of the _delicato_ music. This gradually, gently takes on some of the attributes of the “divine unconcern” music. All is reconciled.

First Companion (2012)
_ for clarinet, bassoon, violin and cello_

Two of the most popular works ever written for small ensemble are Beethoven’s _Septet_ and Schubert’s _Octet_. A concert promoter, however, has a challenge building a whole program around one of them. The instruments involved don’t make combinations for which there’s a widely varied much repertoire.

_First Companion_ is the first of a projected series of works to address this challenge. It can similarly be used to flesh out a program that includes Stravinsky’s _Septet_ – a refreshing and witty piece that deserves more performances.

The rather odd title of the first movement refers to a similarity, which I discovered late in the composing process, between this movement and the _Canterbury Tales_ by Chaucer. Companions gather to plan a journey; they set off; at intervals they pass the expected milestones; eventually they retrace their steps, passing the milestones in reverse order; all the way they are telling each other stories, some well-told and others badly told; at times they are at odds with each other; finally they gather in a pub to refresh their spirits before taking the last homeward steps.
The final milestone is within sight when the second movement interrupts. It’s titled *Melodies* because everything in the movement is a melody — except for some rather dull accompaniment figures played by the cello. The cello is never quite comfortable in this secondary role, and makes various attempts to state its own melodies.

The third movement is full of high spirits like the first — and like the great pieces by Beethoven, Stravinsky and Schubert to which I offer this humble companion.

**Pleasantries (2011)**
*for oboe/English horn, clarinet, bass clarinet and bassoon*

The years 2008-2010 were years of losses, including both my parents. At the start of 2011 it seemed time to look forward. Shortly after finishing my “Friedhof” Quintet, I attended a concert given by Calefax, the reed quintet from Amsterdam. No better boost to the spirits could be imagined. Their amazing musicianship and energy inspired me. Within weeks, the first few of my *Pleasantries* appeared.

The title is an indication of the whimsical nature of these short pieces. I’d thought of writing a “serenade” or a “divertimento” but these terms had historical connotations that weren’t appropriate for what I wanted to create. My set of pieces is open-ended, and performers can choose to play any number of them, in any order. My predecessors include Kurtág’s *Játékok*, Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos*, and Mendelssohn’s *Songs Without Words*.

The title of each piece is a phrase one might overhear when people are making “small talk”. *You can say that again* was the first composed, not long after the death of the eminent American composer Milton Babbitt. It’s dedicated to him and his spirit of fun. Babbitt gave humorous titles to many of his pieces. (One of my favorites is *Swan Song No. 1*.) Were he to hear my piece, I’m sure he would laugh at its absurd, dull-witted parody of his compositional method.

Most of the pieces, in fact, are dedicated to American composers, including George Perle (*I was gobsmacked*), Elliott Carter (*Go on, then*), Conlon Nancarrow (*Those were the days*), Morton Feldman (*How pathetic*), and even Frank Zappa (*A little bird told me*).

**“Friedhof” Quintet (2011)**
*for flute, harp, violin, viola and cello*

I’ve always loved the peacefulness of cemeteries. German ones are the best, always green and beautiful. The word *Fried* of course means “peace”, and that is what I find there. I heard a robin singing in a cemetery in December 2009. Somehow the beauty of its song, in that cold but tranquil place, gave me what I needed to start writing a piece that I knew wouldn’t be completed until after my mother had died.

The first movement is marked *Andante non tranquillo*. The walker’s steps are hesitant, a bit anxious, certainly not at peace. Occasionally a bird comments. At the center of the movement, flute and harp lead our thoughts far away. We come back to the cemetery, but we’ve been changed. The cello leads us through the *Cantabile* middle movement, where we come closest to expressing grief. Alto flute lends a calming influence at the movement’s center. The third movement is the truest picture of my mother. She hated sadness. She loved joy, and asked that we sing Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* at her memorial service. *Vivace* could be interpreted as “living” as well as “lively”, and seems the most fitting sort of ending for a piece about my mother. The harp, which throughout the movement plays a puckish role, spurring the others on to higher levels of energy, has the center of the movement to itself.
Kevin Raftery was born in St. Louis in 1951 and studied composition with Peter Racine Fricker at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

In 1989 he moved to London where he studied with Justin Connolly and maintained a dual career as musician and project manager.

He sings contemporary music with the New London Chamber Choir, plays bassoon in several ensembles, and is Music Director of the 500-member Richmond Concert Society.

All scores can be downloaded from kevinraftery.net
Produced by Alexander van Ingen
Mastered by Dave Rowell

Heath Quartet recorded 16 February 2013 at All Saints’ Church, East Finchley
Engineered and edited by Dave Rowell

Berkeley Ensemble recorded 11-12 May 2013 at All Saints’ Church, East Finchley
Engineered by Will Brown
Edited by Claire Hay

Animare Ensemble recorded 8 May 2011 at Charterhouse Chapel, Godalming, Surrey
Engineered by Alexander van Ingen
Edited by Claire Hay

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Photographs of Animare Ensemble and the composer by Jutta Raftery
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The performers

Heath Quartet
violins: Oliver Heath, Cerys Jones | viola: Gary Pomeroy | cello: Christopher Murray

Formed in 2002 at the Royal Northern College of Music, the Heath Quartet was awarded a Borletti-Buitoni Special Ensemble Scholarship and in 2012 won Ensemble Prize at the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In 2013 the quartet became the first ensemble in 15 years to win the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society’s Young Artists Award.

Notable performances have included a complete Beethoven cycle at the Kilkenny Arts Festival, a John Tavener world premiere at the BBC Proms, and concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Musée d’Orsay and Louvre in Paris, and the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna. The quartet has played in New York at both Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Centre, and continues its residence at Middlebury College, Vermont.

The Quartet has worked with leading composers including Hans Abrahamsen, Louis Andriessen, Brett Dean, Anthony Gilbert, and Sofia Gubaidulina, taking part in the European premiere of Steve Mackey’s Gaggle and Flock for string octet, the world premiere of John Musto’s Another Place with Carolyn Sampson at the Wigmore Hall, and critically acclaimed performances of Ligeti’s Quartet No.2 and Thomas Ades’ Arcadia for The Park Lane Group.

The quartet’s members are Professors of Chamber Music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Their recording of Tchaikovsky’s first and third quartets earned superlatives, while their complete Tippett cycle won the 2016 Gramophone Chamber Award.

The Heath Quartet appears by arrangement with Harmonia Mundi.

Berkeley Ensemble
oboé, English horn: Katie Bennington | clarinet: John Slack | bass clarinet, clarinet: Jonathan Parkin | bassoon: Andrew Watson | violin: Sophie Mather | cello: Gemma Wareham

Hailed by The Strad as “an instinctive collective”, the Berkeley Ensemble takes its name from two modern British composers, father and son Sir Lennox and Michael Berkeley. It was formed in 2008 with the aim of exploring the wealth of twentieth and twenty-first century British chamber music alongside more established repertoire.

It now enjoys a busy schedule performing throughout the UK and abroad, and is much in demand for its inspiring work in education.

The ensemble’s flexible configuration and collaborative spirit have led to performances with leading musicians including Sir Thomas Allen, Richard Sisson, Gabriel Prokofiev and Nicholas Daniel. The group enthusiastically champions new music and has
worked with composers John Casken and Robin Holloway. It was proud to premiere its first commission, Michael Berkeley’s *Clarion Call and Gallop*, in 2013 and featured the piece on its debut recording. Released in March 2014, the album was praised by *Gramophone* for “the vibrancy of the Berkeley Ensemble’s performance even compared with Dennis Brain and friends”.

The ensemble has a reputation for innovative and thought-provoking programming and in spring 2014 received official recognition with a Help Musicians UK Emerging Excellence award.

Taking its music to new audiences is central to the ensemble’s activities. Its work in this area includes self-directed projects in addition to collaborations with Southbank Sinfonia, Merton Music Foundation and Pan Concerts for Children. The ensemble regularly coaches students in chamber performance at the University of York, is ensemble-in-residence at Queen Elizabeth School in Cumbria and Ibstock Place School in London, and runs an annual residential chamber music course in Somerset.

**Animare Ensemble**

*flute*: Matthew Featherstone | *harp*: Anneke Hodnett | *violin*: Florence Cooke | *viola*: Drew Balch | *cello*: Karen French

Animare Ensemble was formed by the members of Trio Anima, to explore the wealth of repertoire for string trio, flute and harp. Trio Anima formed in 2006 at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and since then have delighted audiences with their distinctive combination of flute, viola and harp. The trio won the Elias Fawcett Award for Outstanding Chamber Ensemble at the 2012 Royal Overseas League Competition, and First Prize at the Camac Harps Chamber Ensemble Competition in 2007.

Matthew Featherstone is Principal Flautist of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and also performs as Guest Principal with many orchestras. He was awarded the Royal Overseas League Wind Prize in 2012. Anneke Hodnett enjoys a busy orchestral and chamber career, playing with orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and performing chamber music in ensembles throughout Europe. Florence Cooke is internationally recognized as a chamber musician and soloist, her playing described in the Observer as “taut, precise and atmospheric ... appeared flawless”. Drew Balch has played around the world in many chamber music ensembles and festivals. Karen French is a member of the Alke Quartet, Park Lane Group Artists and finalists in the St Martin’s Chamber Music Competition and the Ernest Bloch Music Competition.
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