



CONSONE QUARTET

World Premiere of a New String Quartet

On a horse, on a hill, faraway, through fog and bonfire

Oliver Leith

Spitalfields Festival 4 July 2025

Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2025, the Consone Quartet is primarily known as a period instrument ensemble noted for its interpretations of music from the classical and romantic eras, although it is also committed to playing and commissioning new work. With the support of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust (BBT) they have commissioned a new string quartet by sought-after young British composer Oliver Leith which will be premiered at the Spitalfields Festival (co-commissioner with support from the New Music Commission Fund).

The *chaconne*, originally a mesmeric 16th century dance, was the inspirational starting point for this work which is in memory of Philip Yeeles, a violinist friend, colleague and supporter of the Consones who passed away in 2021 and was passionate about chamber music.

"Philip took great pleasure in finding *chaconne* motifs in a number of unexpected styles of music,' explains Consone viola player Elitsa Bogdanova. "We have known Oliver Leith for some time and had a strong feeling that, with his charismatic personality and the imaginative ways he plays with different textures and colours, he would have appealed hugely to Philip."

Leith is described as a composer of acoustic and electronic music that focuses on text, image, video, theatre and tangible human themes. He describes *On a horse, on a hill, faraway, through fog and bonfire* as a quartet with seven endings, each movement a different perspective of the same end – close-ups, glimpses, swooping and rolling landscapes all playing their part alongside a focal figure on horseback. While familiar *chaconne* tropes such as repetitions and descending drooping laments are detectable, Leith insists '*those things are more about a feeling than they are form. Like the figure, the chaconne is in the distance.*' And those feelings could be wisps of romance, farewell, return, love...?

The Consone Quartet also used funds from its 2022 BBT Fellowship to commission a new work from Gavin Bryars, *The Bridges of Königsberg*, which was premiered in 2023 and will soon make its way onto CD. BBT has also supported the Consone Quartet's recordings of the complete Mendelssohn Quartets with Linn Records, the first volume of which was released in 2023.

Further press information: Debra Boraston at Borletti-Buitoni Trust

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Oliver Leith: *On a horse, on a hill, faraway, through fog and bonfire*

- i *On a horse, on a hill, faraway, through fog and bonfire*
- ii *Flamberge*
- iii *Crowd at the bonfire*
- iv *Horse breath and muzzle smoke*
- v *The Departing Glance*
- vi *Moonshadow on Dirge Hill*
- vii *Forever gallop*

<https://oliverchristopheleith.com>

Performances:

2025 4 July 7pm Spitalfields Festival, St Mary-le-Bow, London EC2V 6AU

<https://spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk/events/consone-quartet/>

Programme also includes Purcell (arr. Britten) Chacony; Haydn String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 33, No. 2; Schumann String Quartet in A minor, Op. 41. No. 1

2025 20 July 11.30am Music at Paxton

Programme also includes Beethoven String Quartet in F, H.34; Purcell Chacony in G minor (arr. Britten); Emilie Mayer String Quartet in G

<https://www.musicatpaxton.co.uk/event/consone-quartet-music-at-paxton-associate-ensemble/>

The **European premiere** of *On a horse, on a hill, faraway, through fog and bonfire* will be on 6 May 2026, at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam.

CONSONE QUARTET

<http://www.consonequartet.com>

Agata Daraškaitė violin Magdalena Loth-Hill violin
Elitsa Bogdanova viola George Ross cello



Formed 2015 at the Royal College of Music in London.

Prizes and awards include 2015 York Early Music International Young Artists Competition, including the EUBO Development Trust Prize and a place on the EEMerging Scheme in France. 2016 Royal Over-Seas League Ensemble Prize, BBC New Generation Artists and 2022 Borletti-Buitoni Trust (BBT) Fellowship Award.

Venues where the Quartet perform include London's Wigmore Hall, King's Place, St John's Smith Square and St Martin-in-the-Fields, and at the Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Brighton, and Buxton Festivals. The English Haydn Festival and Brighton and York Early Music Festivals have been loyal supporters and are also regular hosts. They are artists-in-Residence at Paxton House (2023-25) and at Saxon Shore Early Music Kenardington (2024-27). Overseas engagements include Heidelberg String Quartet Festival, the Concertgebouw Brugge, AMUZ and de Bijloke in Belgium, Schwetzingen Festival and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany, Amici della Musica Padova, Witold Lutoslawski Studio in Warsaw, MA Festival, Brugge, Canada's Early Music Vancouver and Salle Bougie Montreal, and Library of Congress in Washington DC.

Collaboration partners include Justin Taylor, Steven Devine, Alexander Gadjiev, Anneke Scott, Mary Bevan, Colin Lawson, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Helen Charlston and the Chiaroscuro Quartet.

Music Education The Quartet has worked with students at the Royal College of Music, Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Guildhall School of Music and Drama, as Hans Keller fellows for 2020-2022. They are 'Visiting Quartet' for Music in the Round, Sheffield, working regularly with the South Yorkshire community.

Recordings include music by Haydn and Mendelssohn on the Ambronay label, and Mendelssohn's complete string quartets with Linn Records, the second volume of which will be released in November 2025. Forthcoming recording projects include those with Kate Bennett Wadsorth for the Deux Elles label and Schumann and Mendelssohn Lieder with Helen Charlston for BIS Records.