**String Quartet No. 2**

When George Vass asked me what I would like to write as a commission for the 2017 Presteigne Festival, I almost immediately responded with ‘a new string quartet’! Having written my First Quartet only as recently as 2015 it may seem a bit strange that I wanted to write another so soon, but the truth is that I had contracted the bug, despite all the challenges that this most difficult of genres present.

Whilst my first quartet (performed at Presteigne in 2015) is a substantial three movement, highly dramatic work, my new quartet is much shorter, structurally compact, and more lyrical in nature. Although it is in one continuous movement there are five distinct sections: *Quasi una Siciliana, Alla marcia, Come prima (Appassionata), Alla scherzo,* and *Siciliana*.

The serenity of the opening and closing music is balanced by two faster and more disruptive sections, where tension is increased both harmonically and contrapuntally. However, the emotional heart of the quartet lies in its middle section, where the opening material returns and is developed, reaching a powerful and passionate climax. The final *Siciliana* is the resolution the music has been waiting for – a simple melodic utterance in modal G major – eventually subsiding into a codetta with upward glissandi harmonics, before fading into the silence from whence the music first began its journey.

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