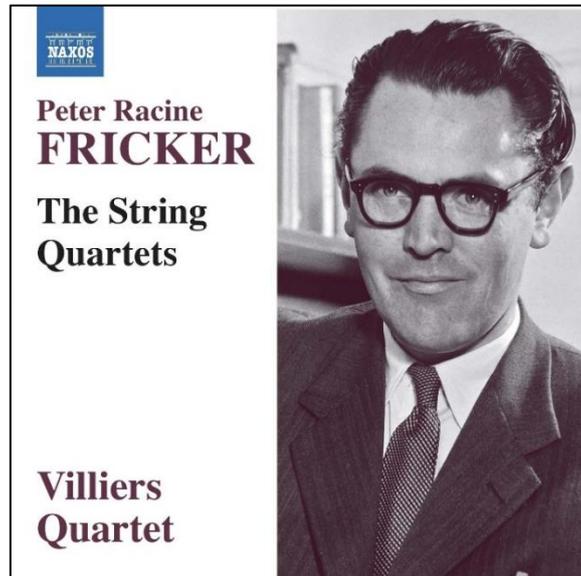




## PRESS RELEASE



### Tracklisting & CD Information

String Quartet No. 1 Op. 8 (1948-9); String Quartet No. 2 Op. 20 (1952-53); String Quartet No. 3 (1976)  
\*; Adagio and Scherzo (1943) \*

\*World Premiere Recording

### Composer & Repertoire Information

Peter Racine Fricker was undoubtedly one of the UK's finest composers, sadly neglected and rejected by the English Establishment, in 1964 he moved to California where he took up a teaching position at UCSB. He continued to compose prolifically, returning to England occasionally.

Born on 5th September 1920 to parents who met during their service in the Mediterranean theatre of World War I, Fricker's interest in music took root while he was a student at St Paul's School. He was especially interested in organ performance, studying with Henry Wilson and Ralph Downes; he also formed an enduring friendship with fellow student Dennis Brain. Fricker entered the Royal College in 1937, continuing his study with Wilson and with Ernest Bullock. This training was thoroughly conservative in outlook, with reverent and obsessive attention paid to counterpoint that would forever remain a hallmark of Fricker's musicianship, however much he may have strayed into new directions. At this time, his interest in composition vied with his interest in organ performance; he continued to consider a career as a concert organist until the late 1940s. He entered military service in 1941, maintaining his musical interests as best he could through the remainder of the war, most frequently composing piano music.

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The “**Adagio and Scherzo**” for string quartet remains the most thoroughly developed work from this time. They were written in the summer of 1943, and were probably intended as the central movements of a formal quartet.

With the end of his military service, Fricker set about resuming his career in music straight away. Determined now to be a composer, he sought out the fervent environment at Morley College. It was here that he met his mentor, Matyas Seiber, (whom he later called “the greatest teacher of the 20th century”) and Michael Tippett. Among so many stimulating influences, Fricker began producing publishable work. His first important success was the Wind Quintet, Op. 5, which took the Clements Prize of 1947 which Dennis Brain took into his repertoire with great and lasting enthusiasm. Fricker then turned to the string quartet in the summer of 1948 as he sought to build a solid base for his catalogue, and successes accumulated at a breathtaking pace. His Op. 8 was started on 14th July and finished on 5th November. He submitted it for the Edwin Evans Prize: though he lost to Elizabeth Maconchy, the committee made honourable mention of him.

His First Symphony, Op. 9, completed in February 1949, was awarded the 1949 Koussevitzky Prize, and was scheduled for a première performance at the 1950 Cheltenham Festival thereby heightening awareness of Fricker as a serious composer. The Op. 8 String Quartet received its première in London in September followed by the Amadeus Quartet’s performance on 11th October and they featured it the following summer on European tour to much critical acclaim. The quartet is cast in one movement, but within this casing an unusual organization of three-movement form may be felt.

A steady flow of compositions followed – mostly concerti. Fricker followed Tippett as Director of Music at Morley College, a post he held for 12 years. By the summer of 1952 Fricker was writing another quartet at the Amadeus’s behest, which he completed in 1953. Despite the warm reception that the Second Quartet received, Fricker would not revisit the medium for twenty years – at the time there was a lack of enthusiasm from publishers for the quartet genre. Elliott Carter’s Third String Quartet changed this view: Fricker dedicated his own Third Quartet to Carter “in admiration”, writing without a commission, and completing it at the end of 1976. Sadly enough, the Quartet went un-played until he suggested it for the 1984 Cheltenham Festival. Fricker was delighted with the very successful performance by the Chilingirian Quartet on 19th July.

Though he began thinking about a Fourth Quartet in the summer of 1989, he was, by then, stricken with terminal cancer and struggling to finish the commissions he had at work. He died in Santa Barbara on 1st February 1990.

### **Artist Information**

The Villiers Quartet was the winner of the 2015 Radcliffe Chamber Music Competition, and holds the position of Quartet-in-Residence at Oxford University’s Faculty of Music. Named after Villiers Street in London’s colourful musical epicentre, the Villiers Quartet encompasses the grand and iconic spirit of the extraordinary music tradition in London. One of the most charismatic and “adventurous” quartets of the European chamber music scene, the Villiers Quartet has developed an international reputation for its performances of English composers including Elgar, Britten and Delius. The Quartet has been featured

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in numerous festivals including the North York Moors Chamber Music Festival, the Brit Jazz Fest, the Hungerford Arts Festival and the British Music Society. Their internationally acclaimed VQ New Works Competition encourages audiences to interact with contemporary music performance online, and supports the creation of new works for string quartet. Known for championing the works of English composers, the VQ has presented master-classes at Dartmouth College, the University of Nottingham, Syracuse University, Goshen College, and the Indiana University South Bend. The VQ is also Quartet-in-Residence at Nottingham High School, where they oversee an extensive chamber music programme for young students. Their début recording for Naxos, Robert Still's The Four String Quartets (8.571353), won high praise from Gramophone and received five stars in Classical Music Magazine. The VQ was the featured quartet on the soundtrack to the BBC television drama Lady Chatterley's Lover, and they have been featured extensively on BBC Radio 3 in live performance and on the programme In Tune.

### **Marketing, Promotion and Further information**

- This new CD will be fully serviced to UK press and media. Advertising will include appropriate classical magazines both in print and online.
- Please request a review copy of the CD from [john@musicandmediaconsulting.com](mailto:john@musicandmediaconsulting.com).
- Interview requests with Villiers Quartet can be accommodated quickly, either in person or by telephone.
- A promotional video is available to be viewed via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU1RCScUY0U>

### **Press/Media Launch Event**

To mark the release of this auspicious recording, the Villiers Quartet would like to invite the recipient of this email to a launch event on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at The Liberal Club in London (1 Whitehall Place SW1A 2HE) at 6.00pm. To confirm acceptance please email [john@musicandmediaconsulting.com](mailto:john@musicandmediaconsulting.com)