

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) Three Divertimenti for string quartet (1936)

March

Waltz

Burlesque

These pieces originated in 1933 as part of a planned 5-movement suite for string quartet called *Alla quartetto serioso 'Go play, boy, play'* – a series of portraits of his school friends from South Lodge and Gresham's. The three movements that were actually composed were substantially revised over the next three years. The *March* was entirely replaced, with the original being considered for another quartet suite inspired by the film of Erich Kästner's children's book *Emil and the Detectives*. It finally appeared in the song-cycle *Les Illuminations*. The revised *Three Divertimenti* were first performed by the Stratton quartet (which later metamorphosed into the Aeolian) in the Wigmore Hall in February 1936. Britten became depressed by their reception: 'sniggers and cold silence' he wrote. He withdrew them, and they only reappeared after his death.