

**MUSIC**  
**ARONOWITZ**  
**ENSEMBLE**

LORETTO SCHOOL CHAPEL,  
MUSSELBURGH

★★★★

THE Aronowitz Ensemble really are something very special. Right from the start of their Lammermuir Festival recital in the warm surroundings of Loretto School, the London-based musicians – six string players and a pianist – were elegant yet passionate, thoughtful yet spontaneous, wringing every last drop of meaning from even the most innocuous phrases but never pushing things too far.

They opened with a magical Sextet from Strauss's *Capriccio*, played with utter conviction and a sophistication – even though they only formed in 2004. And they negotiated the thick textures of Brahms' G major String Quintet expertly,

playing very much as soloists yet maintaining a searing unity of vision within the group, even in the most rhapsodic music. The first movement's surging cello melody was despatched joyfully by Guy Johnston, and his violinist brother Magnus came to the fore magnificently in a vivid, gypsy-tinged finale.

Between the Strauss and the Brahms came a truly bizarre sonic experience, as pianist Tom Poster joined the string players for a chamber version of Chopin's Second Piano Concerto. The playing was exemplary – especially Poster's muscular, gratifyingly assertive vision of the solo part – but his thundering octaves and scintillating filigree decorations blurred together in a muddy wash of incoherent sound in the chapel's resonant acoustics. And he needed more than just a quartet of players to match the sheer power of his delivery.

**DAVID KETTLE**