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.