

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe Review: Classics at Greyfriars (\*\*\*\*\*)

☒ There's something of a festival within a festival happening this year, as Greyfriars Kirk hosts two remarkable concert series as part of the Fringe. Early in the evening, Welsh pianist Llyr Williams performs the complete Beethoven piano sonatas across 12 concerts; and in a late-night series, the Heath Quartet covers the complete string quartets by the same composer in ten concerts.

It's an astonishingly bold and important addition to the festival landscape, but strangely audiences seem rather thin on the ground. The combination of exceptional young performers, wonderful music and the beautiful setting should make it a strong draw, and performances on Tuesday night reaffirmed its credentials.

Judging by his performance on 16 August, Llyr Williams is a natural Beethoven performer, expansive of gesture and with a keen sense of drama, but also capable of touching serenity. The three op.10 sonatas he played are all early works, but you'd never have thought so in Williams's thoughtful, resonant performances. He brought energy and a full-sounding deliberateness to op.10 no.1, with a glittering, lithely decorated melody in its slow movement. He created some real explosions of sound in sudden fortissimo chords, and his climaxes were often shattering. You get the sense that he's really living the music – especially the almost unbearably mournful slow movement of op.10 no.3, which he delivered with breathtaking intensity.

Later that night, the Heath Quartet contrasted the String Quartet in D major op.18 no.3 with the later 'Harp' Quartet,

op.74 in E flat, in joyful, passionate playing that gripped from start to finish. There was nimble fingerwork from leader Oliver Heath, and urgent articulations from cellist Christopher Murray, and the resonant church acoustic only added to the group's already rich sound.

Whether dipping in and out of the concerts, or taking in a complete survey of these chamber masterpieces, [these events](#) are of the highest standard and deserve to be more widely known about.

[Book tickets here.](#)

**Llyr Williams: Beethoven complete piano sonatas, 17-19, 22-26 Aug, 5.45pm, Greyfriars Kirk**

**Heath Quartet: Beethoven complete string quartets, 18-19, 22-26 Aug, 10.30pm, Greyfriars Kirk**