



Houston Friends of Music
The Shepherd School of Music

Chamber



Music

Series

1994
1995



THE TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Stude Concert Hall Alice Pratt Brown Hall Rice University

October 4, 1994

8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

String Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 428
Allegro non troppo
Andante con moto
Menuetto: Allegro
Allegro vivace

Larry Alan Smith
(b. 1955)

String Quartet No. 2 (1994)
Moderato
Allegro con spirito
Andante con moto
Presto

INTERMISSION

Robert A. Schumann
(1810-1856)

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 41, No. 1
Introduzione: Andante espressivo; Allegro
Scherzo: Presto; Intermezzo
Adagio
Presto

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PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet in E-flat, K. 428
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The E-flat quartet is the third of the six quartets Mozart dedicated to Franz Joseph Haydn, whose Opus 33 quartets had affected Mozart deeply. The present quartet was composed in 1783, probably completed in July; and as with the other quartets written for Haydn, the manuscript shows more signs of labor, more erasures and corrections, than those of his other works. It was after hearing these quartets that Haydn told Mozart's father, "Before God, and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me, either in person or by name. He has taste and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition."

The first movement establishes the tonality with all four instruments playing an octave leap from the keynote, E-flat, an example of what Charles Rosen calls Mozart's "sublime economy." But in the chromatic bars that follow, still in unison, Mozart introduces accidentals that alter each of the flats in the key signature. The second violin introduces a rhythmic motif that is played backward and repeated before a return to the opening theme in full harmony. A more aggressive violin theme supported by eighth notes in the cello then propels the movement into a conversational passage leading to the second subject, first stated by the violin and repeated by the viola. The development begins with a statement of the opening theme, now in B-flat, and continues with a motif derived from the second subject and decorated with triplet arpeggios. After the recapitulation, the movement ends without a coda.

The *Andante con moto* moves serenely in six-eight time; the meter is outlined by the cello and pulled against by tied notes and suspensions in the upper voices. The chromatic harmonies Mozart uses in this movement are so advanced that Melvin Berger claims to hear in a passage in the development section anticipations of Wagner's *Tristan*.

The minuet begins with a strong rhythmic push. The second section, in contrast, begins with all four parts tiptoeing quietly on the beat. The trio, in further contrast, introduces a melancholy minor key.

The closing *Allegro vivace* is a rondo, with a lively, good humored theme, scampering sixteenth notes, and droll double takes caused by sudden *pianos* following *fortes*. The section before the final statement of the theme ends with a dialogue between the upper and lower voices that must have made Haydn smile.

The Mozart Quartet K. 428 was last performed on our concerts by the Guarneri Quartet 9/21/89.

String Quartet No. 2 (1994)
Larry Alan Smith

Born in Canton, Ohio, in 1955, Larry Alan Smith studied with Nadia Boulanger and Vincent Persichetti, and earned B.M., M.M., and D.M.A. degrees at the Julliard School, where he served on the faculty from 1980 to 1986. He has also taught at the Boston Conservatory and was Dean of the School of Music at the North Carolina School of the Arts. He is currently Dean of the Hartt School of Music of the University of Hartford. In addition to being a prolific and award-winning composer, he has performed as a pianist, and has conducted orchestras and chamber ensembles in Europe and South America as well as in the United States.

The composer writes: "*String Quartet No. 2* (1994), completed in July of 1994, was commissioned by the Houston Friends of Music to celebrate the organization's 35th Anniversary Season (1994-95). The work is in four movements lasting a little more than twenty minutes. A single twelve-note theme provides the melodic unity for the work, though the theme is constantly being manipulated throughout the piece. The first half of the melody features minor seconds and minor thirds. Perfect fifths (or when inverted, perfect fourths) provide contrast in the second half of the theme.

"The third movement, in ternary form, was the first to be written. Movements I, II, and IV followed. The first movement is through-composed, while the second movement is in a quasi-sonata form. The final movement is rondo-like in its construction with sections of fugal writing.

"Unlike many of my other works, which are built on programmatic ideas, *String Quartet No. 2* is straightforward in its abstract simplicity."

Tonight's performance is the world premiere of the Larry Alan Smith String Quartet No. 2

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 41. No. 1
Robert Alexander Schumann

Schumann tended to compose works in clusters, writing mostly piano music until 1840, the year of his marriage to Clara Wieck, which inspired a flood of songs. In 1842, he turned to chamber music, producing all three of his quartets in June and July of that year. He admired the Opus 44 quartets of Mendelssohn, which had been written four years before, and he dedicated his own set of quartets to Mendelssohn. But Schumann prepared himself for composing by studying the quartets of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. He began the A-minor quartet on June 4, and on June 8 wrote in his day-book that it was "fairly complete." He began his second quartet on June 11.

The contrapuntal *Andante espressivo* which

begins the work was composed after the following *Allegro*. Since the *Allegro* starts in F major, the introduction is necessary to establish the A-minor tonality. The *Allegro* begins with a flowing melody in six-eight time, which is eventually broken by a three-note rhythmic motif that punctuates duets between shifting pairs of instruments. The development takes these motifs through a number of modulations before recapitulating the opening material.

The second movement is a scherzo, a *Presto* in A minor whose light patter at first recalls some characteristic passages of Mendelssohn; but the theme also gets more forceful treatment. The middle section is in a contrasting, smoother vein.

The *Adagio*, after some introductory flourishes on the cello and violin, settles into a lush, romantic song in F major. The rather pianistic accompaniment figures in the viola soon take on a more important role, leading to a statement of the melody by the cello. The more agitated middle section has touches that recall Beethoven's quartet writing.

The finale, another A-minor *Presto*, is in sonata form, but is dominated by the opening motif, two short notes followed by a higher and longer note and a descending run. Hurried runs of broken thirds move the piece along through inversions and modulations of the main motif until near the end, when the tempo changes unexpectedly, and the broken thirds are transformed into a pastoral tune played over a droning pedal. Soft whole-note chords lead to a coda which brings back the original tempo and theme.

The Schumann Quartet Op. 41, No. 1 was last performed on our concerts by the Vermeer Quartet 3/21/79

Tokyo String Quartet

Now in its twenty-fifth year, The Tokyo String Quartet has received extraordinary acclaim for its exceptional technical command and dynamic performance style. In celebration of its anniversary, the quartet will perform the complete Beethoven string quartets throughout the world. They recently performed the Beethoven cycle at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Konzerthaus in Vienna, and for the first time in history at La Scala in Milan. The 1994-95 season will include performances at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris, the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, and a series of six concerts at Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall in New York for the benefit of Classical Action: Performing Arts Against AIDS. The members of the quartet are artists-in-residence at Yale University and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of

Music. Recording exclusively for BMG Classics/RCA Victor Red Seal, their latest releases include works by Barber, Britten, and Takemitsu, plus the complete Beethoven quartets. Their recording of the Debussy and Ravel quartets is to be released in October. The quartet has been featured on major TV programs including PBS's "Great Performances," and CBS's "Sunday Morning," and a taped concert at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington was broadcast nationally on PBS.

Although the quartet was formed at the Julliard School in 1969, it traces its origins to the Toho School in Tokyo, where the founding members were profoundly influenced by Professor Hideo Saito. The original members of what would become the Tokyo Quartet, including violist Kazuhide Isomura and cellist Sadao Harada, eventually came to America for further study. Receiving scholarships at the Julliard School, they studied with members of the Julliard String Quartet, and soon won first prize at the Coleman Audition in Pasadena, California, the Munich Competition, and the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, attracting the worldwide attention they have enjoyed ever since. Kikuei Ikeda, who had also studied at the Toho School and with Dorothy DeLay at Julliard, joined the quartet as second violinist in 1974; and in 1981, Peter Oundjian, also a Julliard student of DeLay and Ivan Galamian, became first violinist. Although the members of the quartet are primarily committed to chamber music, they have held positions in symphony orchestras and have performed as soloists. Kazuhide Isomura has recorded viola works for Music Masters/Musical Heritage Society, and Peter Oundjian, who frequently appears as soloist with Canadian orchestras, has recently recorded a selection of French violin works for CBC Classics.

Peter Oundjian plays a 1743 Guarnerius del Jesu violin, and Kikuei Ikeda plays a violin by Antonius Stradivarius from 1719; Kazuhide Isomura's viola was made by Luigi Mariani of Pesaro in the late sixteenth century, and Sadao Harada's cello was made by J. B. Guadagnini of Piacenza in 1743.

Program notes by Edward Doughtie

We welcome you to our thirty-fifth season of fine chamber music concerts. At milestones like this we like to reflect on our past and try to predict the future. Those of us who have been loyal "Friends of Music" will agree that we have enjoyed many memorable moments together. Our standards of presenting the finest chamber music are unsurpassed and we constantly strive to bring you the best. This season promises to be another one of outstanding quality. We have chosen some of the top groups performing today, including new, young talents as well as the established standard bearers. We offer this series with pride and hope you will enjoy each one of them with us.