

Guilliard String Quartet

JOEL SMIRNOFF, VIOLIN

RONALD COPES, VIOLIN

SAMUEL RHODES, VIOLA

JOEL KROSINICK, CELLO

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2003

— PROGRAM —

String Quartet in D Major, K. 575 W. A. MOZART (1756-1791)

Allegretto

Andante

Menuetto: Allegretto

Allegro

String Quartet, Op. 28 ANTON WEBERN (1883-1945)

Mässig

Gemächlich

Sehr fließend

Six Bagatelles for String Quartet, Op. 9 ANTON WEBERN

Mässig

Leicht bewegt

Ziemlich fließend

Sehr langsam

Äusserst langsam

Fließend

Five Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5 ANTON WEBERN

Heftig bewegt

Sehr langsam

Sehr bewegt

Sehr langsam

In zarter Bewegung

— INTERMISSION —

Quartet in A minor, Op. 132 LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Assai sostenuto - Allegro

Allegro, ma non tanto

Molto adagio - Andante

Alla Marcia, assai vivace - Piu allegro - Allegro appassionato - Presto

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)
String Quartet in D Major, K. 575 (1789)

In April, 1789 Mozart set out for Berlin and Potsdam in the company of Prince Lichnowsky of Vienna, at the Prince's request. The purpose of the trip was at least in part an audience with Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, the same cellist-king for whom Haydn had written his Opus 50 quartets two years earlier. After a ten-day stay at court, Mozart left with a goodly sum in gold coin and a commission to write six string quartets and six piano sonatas. He started to compose immediately and by the end of the month had completed the quartet we hear tonight. Mozart completed three in all, dying before sending any to the king. They are filled with gorgeous writing for the cello – uniquely so in the canon of classical string quartets – and are known as the “cello quartets” to performers, and as the “Prussian Quartets” to musicologists.

Overall, the Quartet is in *concertante* form, i.e. essentially a duet for the first violin and the cello. However, inner voices are not neglected, as indeed the viola and second violin play important roles expanding and emphasizing thematic ideas and taking part in the subtle counterpoint woven into all four movements, like a miniature string orchestral accompaniment.

The first movement, *Allegretto*, starts with a sunny, pastoral theme in the first violin, quickly passed off to the viola; the cello does not play at all for the first eight bars and does not have a solo until the twenty-second measure. Thereafter, and for the remainder of the four movements, the cello has a truly remarkable number of solo passages, some requiring a level of virtuosity which tells us a great deal about King Frederick II's aspirations.

The *Andante* is an aria in form and spirit – a lovely song for all four instruments, emphasizing cello and violin. The *Menuetto* provides the cellist with a respite – the two upper and two lower voices parallel each other for most of the section, while the *Trio*, in contrast, is entirely in the cellist's hands. The final *Allegretto*, which starts out with a simple melody in the cello, suddenly breaks out in bravura passages and grows contrapuntally complex. Mozart clearly intended that this music be carefree and fun, but not simple or easy to play.

Program notes © by Nora Avins Klein, 2003

ANTON WEBERN (1883-1945)

String Quartet, Op. 28 (1936-38)

Six Bagatelles for String Quartet, Op. 9 (1911-13)

Five Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5 (1909)

Serial music or serial murder of music? Berg and Webern came of age in the Vienna of 100 years ago, a time when radical ideas were in the air, fomenting thought in social philosophy, science, and the arts. The two young men took up composition with Arnold Schoenberg, a decade their senior, following along as he theorized his way from high nineteenth-century romanticism into the uncharted territories of atonality (in which each of the twelve tones of the musical scale are accorded equal musical weight, and melody as previously understood disappears) and serialism (the playing of each of the twelve notes in an order fixed by the composer, none to be repeated until each has been sounded). They viewed their musical ideas as a logical extension of the music of Wagner, Strauss and Mahler, rather than a radical break with the past. Much of the music composed in this vein has disappeared from the concert stage, rejected for its dissonance and perceived artificiality. But some has survived because, despite the strangeness of the language, performers enjoy playing it and audiences increasingly recognized its inherent musical interest.

This season, we present four such works for string quartet: Webern's *String Quartet*, *Six Bagatelles* and *Five Movements*, and Berg's *Lyric Suite* (to be performed at the next concert). Of the three members of the "New Viennese School," Webern was the most extreme and the actual inventor of serialism. Grounded in the polyphonic music of the Renaissance, and devoted to Bach, he opposed Wagnerian expansiveness, aiming instead for extreme concentration of musical expression.

The *String Quartet*, Op. 28 is in three movements. The twelve-tone row on which the piece is built is basically the B-A-C-H motive (B-flat, A, C, B-natural) as used in Bach's *Art of the Fugue*. This four-note motif is presented in a variety of positions, difficult to detect, owing to octave transpositions and the fact that the last six notes are the same as the first six only backwards. This difficulty for the listener wouldn't have been important to Webern, who expected the audience would be able to hear that everything was connected in a way that made sense. The first movement is based almost entirely on the prime form of the row, and consists of a theme and variations, the last variation also being the coda. Each of the variations is canonic (the instruments follow each other as in *Frère Jacques*) and each deals with two forms of the row a minor third apart. The second and third movements are based on other forms of the fundamental twelve-tone row.

Webern's *Six Bagatelles* pushes minimalism to an extreme. Less is more. Each note can be viewed as representing an entire phrase, as each has its own dynamic marking. The work is thus a whirlwind of expression, a kaleidoscope of color, rhythm and tempo. The entire work, all fifty-seven measures, is over in three minutes.

Five Movements for String Quartet can be seen as expressing the essence of a classical string quartet. In the opening movement, sonata form is represented by a first subject consisting of two notes; the shadow of a second theme is intoned by the cello, then a brief whiff of development section in pizzicato is followed by a disguised recapitulation with the first "theme" inverted. The second, slow movement, over almost before it begins, hints of the contour and sentiment of a traditional ABA song form; the half-minute third movement simulates a scherzo, and the fourth and fifth movements contain fleeting fragments of truncated themes and phrases moving in and out like thoughts in a daydream. For all its abstract formality, the work was, for Webern, a response to the death of his mother three years earlier. A single hearing of these works inevitably fails to do them justice.

Program note © Nora Avins Klein, August, 2003 with thanks to Prof. David Bushler for his discussion of Webern's Quartet, Op. 28.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132

During Beethoven's lifetime, the focus of music was moving into concert halls, away from the church and the drawing rooms of aristocrats. Beethoven helped to change the role of the composer from that of a craftsman for the rich, to a creative artist who composed music as a mode of self-expression. His work eventually led the way to the Romantic era and must be considered one of the great disruptive forces in the history of music.

Beethoven's string quartets span what are customarily known as the three creative periods of his adult life. The first three of the "late quartets" that Beethoven composed were Opp.127, 130, and 132. They were commissioned by a Russian nobleman and amateur cellist, Prince Nikolai Galitzin, who was living in St. Petersburg. In these works Beethoven left the classical style almost entirely. His works of this period are no longer determined by a preset structure, but by the musical thoughts themselves. He composes in a meditative style, working with motifs more often than with melodies. He provides continuity by blurring the dividing lines between phrases and by making use of contrapuntal techniques—treating all four instruments as separate entities. New sonorities are introduced in this manner.

The *String Quartet* in A Minor, Op.132, was actually the second of the three commissioned quartets to be composed. The first movement begins with a short introductory motif—a slow, rising half step followed by a flourish in the first violin, which leads into the main theme, played by the cellist in a high register. One idea follows another in rather free form.

The second movement begins with two motifs. The first is a pair of ascending three-note figures and the other is a long note that then descends quickly. The middle section of this movement is characterized by a bagpipe-like drone over a high melody in the first violin. The beginning section returns to complete the movement.

While working on this quartet Beethoven became very ill, completing the work as he was recovering; hence the subtitle of the third movement “Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Divinity by a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode.” The use of the Lydian mode (a modern F major scale, but omitting B-flat) was a reference to the ancient ecclesiastical scale. The middle section reflects a return of strength through the use of alternating loud and soft measures that surge with powerful force. At the end of the movement the first theme returns with Beethoven’s instructions written in the score to be played “with the most intimate emotion.”

The fifth movement follows the fourth movement march without pause. Due to the delay caused by his illness, Beethoven abandoned the original plan for the finale and drew on another plan from his sketchbooks that had originally been intended for the finale of his *Ninth Symphony*. From this evolved the *Allegro Appassionato*. This string quartet was completed in May 1825.

Program notes © by Margaret Bragg, 2003

Juilliard String Quartet

The Juilliard String Quartet is internationally renowned and admired for performances characterized by beauty of sound, purity of line, and an extraordinary unanimity of purpose. It is celebrated for its performances of works by composers as diverse as Beethoven, Schubert, Bartók and Elliott Carter, and for over fifty years has been recognized as a leader in its field.

This season the Quartet celebrates its fortieth anniversary as Quartet-in-Residence at the Library of Congress, an event that will be marked by a ten-concert series which includes a complete Beethoven cycle intertwined with works by contemporary American composers whose work the ensemble has championed throughout its career. The Quartet performs at the Library of Congress on a set of priceless Stradivari instruments which were donated to the Library in 1936 by Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall.

As Quartet-in-Residence at New York City's Juilliard School, the Juilliard String Quartet is widely admired for its seminal influence on aspiring string players around the world. The Quartet continues to play an important role in the formation of new American ensembles, and was instrumental in the formation of the American, Emerson, Tokyo, Brentano, and other noted string quartets.

In its history, the Juilliard String Quartet has performed a comprehensive repertoire of some five hundred works, ranging from the great classical composers to masters of the current century. The Quartet has been a particularly ardent champion of twentieth-century American chamber music. It has premiered more than sixty compositions of American composers, including works by some of America's finest jazz musicians.

All members of the Juilliard String Quartet are American born and trained. Violinist JOEL SMIRNOFF is a native of New York City and has been a member of the Quartet for nearly fifteen years – the last four as the ensemble's leader. Mr. Smirnoff attended the University of Chicago and the Juilliard School, and was a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra for six years.

Born in Arkansas, violinist RONALD COPES joined the Quartet as second violinist in 1997. A regular participant at the Bermuda, Cheltenham, Colorado, and Olympic music festivals, he appears in solo recitals across the United States and Europe. Mr. Copes studied at the Oberlin Conservatory and at the University of Michigan.

Violist SAMUEL RHODES, also a New York native, appears regularly in recitals and as an orchestral soloist in addition to his activities as a composer and teacher. Celebrating his thirty-fourth season as a member of the Juilliard String Quartet and faculty member at the Juilliard School, he is also associated with the Marlboro Festival and Tanglewood.

As cellist of the Juilliard String Quartet since 1974, JOEL KROSNICK has recorded most of the great quartet literature and has performed throughout North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Appointed to the faculty of the Juilliard School in 1974, Joel Krosnick has been Chair of the cello department since 1994.

The Juilliard String Quartet records exclusively for Sony Classical.

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IN PLACE OF BERG'S *LYRIC SUITE*, AND BRAHMS' *QUARTET IN C MINOR*,

THE LEIPZIG STRING QUARTET WILL PERFORM:

BERG'S *STRING QUARTET, Op. 3*

AND BRAHMS' *STRING QUARTET IN A MINOR, Op. 51, No. 2*

ALBAN BERG (1885-1935)

String Quartet, Op. 3

I. *Langsam*

II. *Maessiges Viertel*

Alban Berg composed the Op. 3 Quartet in 1910 when he was twenty-five years old and near the end of his seven years' study with Schoenberg. He was at a period in his life analogous to Bartók's when he composed his *Quartet No. 2*. Both composers were committed to the modern idiom they were forging, but unwilling, just yet, to shed all vestiges of nineteenth century classicism. The quartet is a bridge between the past and the future.

The opening movement of the Op. 3 Quartet is labeled *Langsam* (slow); it is also expressive, tranquil for the most part, and, above all, interesting. The person who searches for theme and development is not disappointed, although the "melodies" resemble those of the old order more in manuscript than in sound. There are two basic contrasting groups of musical ideas, each developed freely and extensively. The coda summarizes most of what has gone before, and the movement ends quietly. The second movement, *Maessiges Viertel*, is faster than the previous movement with frequent changes of tempo.

It is full of dynamic and melodic contrasts, but even at its most frenzied offers more of the standard sonorities of the instruments than the quartets of Bartók, which have more plucking, glissandi, and harmonics. In this movement, one finds both classical elements (it is basically a rondo with frequent re-statements of the theme) and twelve-tone elements, which Berg developed more extensively in his later works.

Program note © by Jack B. Mazow

NOTICE!

November 15, 2003 deadline for **Anonymous 4** subscriber tickets at \$40.

All tickets after this date are \$50 or \$100 Patron tickets.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2 (1873)

Lyrical, luminous and romantic, this second published quartet of Johannes Brahms is nevertheless filled with a bouquet of polyphonic devices culled from long study of the music of Bach. Themes and counter themes weave around each other with such richness of harmony that each individual instrumentalist is convinced that he or she has the most important part of the moment.

The opening phrase of this quartet contains, in musical notes, the personal motto of Brahms, lifelong friend, the famous violinist Joachim, *Frei aber einsam* (*Free but lonely*): F-A-E. The motto plays a seminal role in the structure of the movement; it is elaborated in the development section, played upside down and backwards as well as in canon. It will make its quiet appearance again in the latter portion of the last movement, emerging from behind a Hungarian-style *czardas*. This first movement is quite long, as both the exposition and the development sections explore an intricate working out of rhythm, harmony and musical ideas. The exposition is meant to be repeated, as shown by its elaborate endings, and the recapitulation is more a further development of ideas rather than a mere restatement. As in so many of Brahms sonata-form movements, there is an elaborate and important coda.

The second movement, *Andante moderato*, glows with pulsating warmth as the first violin opens with a gorgeous melody over the rich accompaniment of the cello and viola. The inner voices provide kaleidoscopic changes of color; there is a brief interlude of high drama and then a return to the dreamy, richly textured, highly polyphonic opening.

The third movement, *Quasi minuetto, moderato*, cast in a somewhat mysterious mood at its outset, has passages reminiscent of the lightness of Mendelssohn. Then again, the interlude contains an astonishing Baroque feat of counterpoint—a double canon, involving the first violin and viola playing one theme from the interlude while the second violin and cello simultaneously play another based on the minuetto.

The *Finale: Allegro non assai* provides a change of mood—a sturdy dance-like Hungarian-flavored rondo, with strong beats and syncopations. Out of this eventually emerges the quiet, dreamy arching theme of the first movement and ultimately a winding up of the various moods of the work. The movement ends with the cello and first violin playing a version of its opening theme in an elongated canon which fades away until the entire group suddenly gives up on polyphony and comes to a climax with a flamboyant, unison burst of energy.