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Present

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Tuesday, September 18, 2007

MIRÓ QUARTET

Tuesday, October 9, 2007


TRIO CON BRIO COPENHAGEN

Tuesday, November 13, 2007

STUDE CONCERT HALL

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TOKYO STRING QUARTET

MARTIN BEAVER - VIOLIN
KIKUEI IKEDA - VIOLIN
KAZUHIDE ISOMURA - VIOLA
CLIVE GREENSMITH - CELLO

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2007

~ PROGRAM ~

Quartet in G Major, K. 387

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Allegro vivace assai

Menuetto: Allegro

Andante cantabile

Molto allegro

Quartet No. 1, "Kreutzer"

LEOS JANÁČEK (1854-1928)

Adagio con moto

Con moto

Con moto: Vivace: Andante

Adagio con moto

~ INTERMISSION ~

Quartet in A Major, Op. 41, No. 3

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Andante espressivo; Allegro molto moderato

Assai agitato

Adagio molto

Finale: Allegro molto vivace



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*Tonight's performance by the Tokyo String Quartet is funded in part by
Asia Society Texas.*

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)
String Quartet in G Major, K.387 (1782)

In 1781, after a break of nine years, Mozart set about writing string quartets again. The early quartets had not been a commercial success – in fact, truth be told, most of them were not very good. During the intervening years, however, he had studied Haydn's innovative Opus 20 quartets. Then, in 1781, the very year of Mozart's move to Vienna, Haydn published his famous Opus 33 quartets written "in an entirely new manner" which pushed the string quartet ever further from its origins as a tuneful divertimento towards a more complex, expressive, and serious "conversation among four intelligent friends." Haydn's public success with these works was not lost on Mozart. Now 25 and on his own - having freed himself from the stifling influence of Salzburg and out to prove himself to the European capital of music - he set about, by his own admission, to make a deep study of Haydn's new quartets and within a year, for his own purposes and without commission, he had written three of the six now-famous "Haydn Quartets," lovingly dedicated to his mentor; three sublime masterpieces of the quartet literature, whose genius has never been surpassed. We are to hear the first of these tonight. One glance at the quartet he had written nine years before, K. 173, gives us ample justification to view this G Major quartet, K. 387, as among the most important works of his life. With it we witness a conscious leap into the ranks of genius.

The G Major quartet starts out in pastoral serenity; openhearted, graceful, and sweet, the melodic line quickly expands into something intricate without being ornate. Two more themes appear, delicately chiseled, cheerful and internally related. This music, even though inspired by Haydn, could never be mistaken for Haydn; it sings more, the melodic lines are longer and more highly colored by chromatic passages, and their emotional content is more subtle and varied. The exposition section ends with a new motif - a tiny, gallant, curtsey in the form of a bouncy little rhythm. The development, which follows, presents us with unexpected rhythmic and contrapuntal complexity and a surprisingly darker cast, all the while incorporating every thematic and rhythmic motif of the exposition. It leads to a traditional recapitulation made entrancing by perfectly timed, delicate ornamentation of the opening themes - the same themes are there but with added color. The movement ends, again, on that graceful little rhythmic motif - a bow to the gallant past in a work which will be breaking new ground.

The second movement, a vigorous *Menuetto*, gives a clearer signal

of the innovative genius which will unfold over the next ten years. This is no ordinary Minuet-Trio. By making it considerably longer and musically more substantial than customary, Mozart has given it entirely new importance. Ordinarily designed as a brief intermission – an entertainment or a respite between the two great outer movements, first and last, and a slow, sentimental middle movement – the minuet-trio was usually positioned third in the progression of the four movements. But in this first of his great quartets, Mozart casts that mold aside, endowing the Minuet-Trio with significance and substance equal to that of the other movements. He starts out with a Haydnesque joke – accents on the wrong note blurring the rhythm by fooling the ear into hearing two instead of three beats to the measure. Then he gives us a melody of the utmost simplicity followed by intriguing chromatic passages and a second section – an inversion of the first – introduced by the cello not the violin, thereby providing textural interest. Overall, the Minuet is amusing. However, there is nothing merely amusing about the G minor Trio section which follows. It is dramatic, at moments even ominous, with those slow, rising chromatic scales in the cello and piercing sadness in the first violin. This is Mozart in his famous G minor mood, the key he will choose at the end of his life for his great dark 40th Symphony and the ineffably sad G minor string quintet.

The *Andante cantabile*, which follows, is the internal soul of the work. It too is astonishing for its exceptional length. Its penetrating depth of feeling shows how confident Mozart was of his lyric gifts. In hearing it one recognizes echoes of an operatic love aria – part outpouring, part lament – always intimate, delicate and exquisite.

The work ends with a high-spirited, absolutely brilliant double fugue in sonata form, ripping fun to play and fun to hear; the composer's instructions are *molto allegro* (and if Mozart's letters to his father tell us anything, this meant "play as fast as possible"). Here is Mozart proving to the world that he could write fugues with the best of them. The performers have exhausted themselves; Mozart allows them to fade out with a polite bow.

With this totally remarkable work from his first year in Vienna, Mozart announced to the world the astonishing musical gifts which would mark the rest of his life.

Program note © by Nora Avins Klein, June, 2007

LEOS JANÁČEK (1854-1928)

String Quartet No. 1, "The Kreutzer Sonata" (1923)

The Moravian composer, Leos Janáček, composed his String Quartet No. I in E Minor in a brief few days during the fall of 1923. The quartet was inspired by Leo Tolstoy's story *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Tolstoy's story describes an unhappy marriage with resultant adultery, jealousy and murder. Most of the trouble revolves around a performance, given by the narrator's pianist wife and her new male violinist friend, of Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata, No. 9, Opus 47 for Violin and Piano. (The sonata was originally composed by Beethoven in 1803 and was dedicated to his friend, Rodolphe Kreutzer.)

As might be expected, the overall mood of this composition is very dark. Free form and unusual technical requirements place enormous demands on all four players. The intensity of Tolstoy's story is portrayed by the tense alternation of themes. The first motif is comprised of two short notes and one long note, first ascending and then descending, and this is followed by a more aggressive nine bar phrase that is played by the cello and that is reminiscent of a Russian folk melody. More pleasant sections are continually interrupted by these two themes.

The tempo instruction, *Con Molto*, is given for each of the next three movements. However in addition, specific metronome markings are included which specify that the second movement should be fast, the third one slow, and the fourth one fast.

The second movement begins with a cheerful swaggering melody, but once again turns sinister, helped by an eerie tremolo played near the bridges (*sul ponticello*) of the instruments. The third movement, too, starts calmly. This movement is thought by some to contain ideas derived from Beethoven's sonata. The calm is soon dispersed by a frightening version of its initial theme. The two ideas wage conflict until the appearance of an equally agitated subject leads back to the opening music.

A slow introduction to the fourth movement gives way to the original opening bars of the quartet, though the instrumentation is now darker. As suspense builds, the use of a falling sequence of loud pizzicatos is used to interesting effect. The tension remains unresolved to the end, with the second violin uttering two final despairing repeats of the initial theme.

This quartet is believed to incorporate material from a piano trio composed by Janáček in 1908 and bearing the same inscription "On reading Tolstoy's novel *Kreutzer Sonata*." The trio was never published and only a page of fragments remains.

Program note © Margaret Bragg, July, 2007

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)
String Quartet in A Major, Op. 41, No. 3 (1842)

Other than receiving piano lessons from a local organist, Robert Schumann had no formal training as a musician and was, for some time, as interested in literature as he was in music. He was the youngest of five children born into a family of non-musicians, in Zwickau, Germany. His father owned a bookstore, giving the young boy access to the great writers of the past as well as those of his own day. Schumann also became proficient at improvising on the piano and even did some composing. When the boy was fifteen years old, his father died from complications of mental illness—a malady that would later claim the son. His mother, determined that Robert should study for a career in law, sent him to Leipzig at the age of eighteen. This was perhaps the wrong thing to do, considering her goal, as there were too many musical, as well as literary enticements in Leipzig—concerts at the Gewandhaus, music services at St. Thomas (Bach's former church), performances by the choral society, etc. Summoning friends to read Goethe, Shakespeare and Byron, and discussing music, life, and aesthetics well into the night became the order of the day for Schumann. Around this time he began to lean toward a career as a pianist, studying with Friedrich Wieck, whose daughter Clara, ultimately one of the best concert pianists in Europe, was to become his future wife. Several years later he sustained an injury to one of his fingers and turned to composition as a career.

Anyone who studies the life and work of Robert Schumann will be struck by the fact that, as an adult, he composed exclusively in one genre at a time. From 1831 until 1839 he wrote pieces for solo piano. The year of 1840 bore only songs, 1841 saw the completion of his first symphonies, and 1842 was the year in which he composed all of his chamber music—three string quartets, a piano quintet and a piano quartet. As a composer, Schumann was in the forefront of the Romantic style. He felt strongly that it was important to break away from the rules of structure inherent in eighteenth-century classical music, and he stated, "I am affected by everything that goes on in the world—politics, literature, people—I think it over in my own way, and then I long to express my feelings in music."

In preparing to write his string quartets however, he admits to having carefully studied the quartets of Mozart, Beethoven, and Haydn, as well as the contrapuntal techniques of Bach. In the string quartets of Op. 41, he remains close to traditional form. The three string quartets are dedicated to Felix Mendelssohn whom Schumann greatly admired.

The String Quartet in A Major, Opus 41, No. 3 is a pleasing work and

very accessible to the listener. With the exception of some conflicting moods in the slow movement, the structure and harmonies are straightforward and lyrical, while playful syncopations add interest to the whole. The interval of a descending fifth characterizes the first movement, both during its slow introduction and during the two themes of the Allegro.

The second movement consists of a theme with variations. The fourth movement is a sprightly rondo. The third movement Adagio, however, illustrates Schumann's interest in Romanticism in a form that is freer both in structure and harmony. The initial melody disregards the usual model of eight bar phrases and stretches to nineteen bars. It is then developed with constantly shifting tonality and with increasing textural complexity in the accompanying instruments. The result is an emotional and at times impassioned statement that is in contrast to the simplicity evident in the rest of the work. The four movements work well together and make for a very pleasant listening experience.

All three of Schumann's string quartets were premiered as a gift for his wife Clara on her twenty-third birthday, September 13, 1842.

Program note © Margaret Bragg, July, 2007

Tokyo String Quartet

MARTIN BEAVER - VIOLIN	KIKUEI IKEDA - VIOLIN
KAZUHIDE ISOMURA - VIOLA	CLIVE GREENSMITH CELLO

The Tokyo String Quartet has captivated audiences and critics alike since it was founded more than 30 years ago. Regarded as one of the supreme chamber ensembles of the world, the Tokyo Quartet—Martin Beaver and Kikuei Ikeda (violins), Kazuhide Isomura (viola) and Clive Greensmith (cello)—has collaborated with a remarkable array of artists and composers, built a comprehensive catalogue of critically acclaimed recordings and established a distinguished teaching record. Performing over a hundred concerts worldwide each season, the Tokyo String Quartet has a devoted international following that includes the major capitals of the world and extends to all four corners, from Australia to Estonia to Scandinavia and the Far East.

Officially formed in 1969 at the Juilliard School of Music, the quartet traces its origins to the Toho School of Music in Tokyo, where the founding members were profoundly influenced by Professor Hideo Saito. Soon after its creation, the quartet won First Prize at the Coleman Competition, the

Munich Competition and the Young Concert Artists International Auditions. An exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon firmly established it as one of the world's leading quartets, and it has since released more than 40 landmark recordings. The ensemble now records on the Harmonia Mundi label.

The members of the Tokyo String Quartet have served on the faculty of the Yale School of Music as quartet-in-residence since 1976. Deeply committed to coaching young string quartets, they devote much of the summer to teaching and performing at the prestigious Norfolk Chamber Music Festival. They also conduct master classes in North America, Europe and the Far East throughout the year.

The ensemble performs on the "Paganini Quartet", a group of renowned Stradivarius instruments named for legendary virtuoso Niccolò Paganini, who acquired and played them during the 19th century. The instruments have been on loan to the ensemble from the Nippon Music Foundation since 1995, when they were purchased from the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The Tokyo String Quartet has recorded for Angel/EMI, BMG Classics, CBS Masterworks, Deutsche Grammophon, Vox Cum Laude and Vanguard.

Visit the Tokyo String Quartet at www.tokyoquartet.com.

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WORTHAM CENTER, NOVEMBER 11, 5 PM

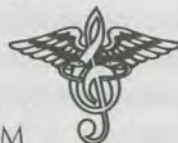


EAST MEETS WEST

Ragas for sitar & orchestra

Dvorak 8th symphony

WORTHAM CENTER, FEBRUARY 10, 5 PM



with UNA INTERNATIONAL CHOIR

Puccini, Messa di Gloria

on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Puccini

RICE UNIVERSITY, STUDE HALL, MAY 17, 5 PM