

SUMMER FESTIVAL

FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2013

8:00 PM

SEATTLE
CHAMBER
MUSIC
SOCIETY

PROGRAM

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Duo for Violin and Viola in G Major, K. 423

Allegro

Adagio

Rondeau: Allegro

Amy Schwartz Moretti violin / **Che-Yen Chen** viola

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Quartet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 16

Grave—Allegro, ma non troppo

Andante cantabile

Rondo: Allegro, ma non troppo

Amy Schwartz Moretti violin / **David Harding** viola / **Robert deMaine** cello / **Adam Neiman** piano

INTERMISSION

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ

Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola, H. 313

Poco allegro

Poco andante

Allegro

Erin Keefe violin / **Che-Yen Chen** viola

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Quartet for Piano and Strings in B-flat Major, Op. 41

Allegretto

Andante maestoso ma con moto

Poco allegro piu tosto moderato

Allegro

Erin Keefe violin / **Richard O'Neill** viola / **Edward Arron** cello / **Jeewon Park** piano

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756-1791)

Duo for Violin and Viola in G Major, K. 423 (1783)

Court composer Michael Haydn, younger brother of Franz Joseph fell ill while working on a set of six duos for violin and viola commissioned by the Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus Colloredo. To avert serious financial problems his friend Mozart agreed to complete the project. Mozart thought highly of Michael and threw himself wholeheartedly into the task, writing the two as yet unwritten pieces into a matter of days. The first of the pair was the Duo No. 1 in G Major, K. 423, and Mozart took great pains to compose in his friend's style in order to camouflage authorship. Why? The Archbishop, who detested Mozart—and the feeling was fully reciprocated—would not have taken kindly to Mozart's efforts. The ruse worked; Colloredo never learned about Mozart's intercession.

Works for pairs of stringed instruments have never really held the public's fancy, even for many chamber music enthusiasts. The inherent textural limitation—primarily one of thinness of sonority—is cleverly disguised by Mozart; the music sounds fuller than we might expect. In the G-major Duo the instruments are clearly set as equals. The ample counterpoint and conversational nature of the music are strongly defined.

The opening *Allegro* bursts on the scene with bustling vigor and high spirits. The music hurls forward with unflagging energy, and then abruptly enters without pause into a spacious and lyrical *Adagio*. In these surroundings the melody falls predominantly to the violin while the viola accompanies with broken chords.

The *Adagio* interlude thus completed, independence of line once again resumes in a fleeting and energetic *Rondeau: Allegro*. One of the contrasting episodes finds Mozart working in the minor mode, tantalizing us with an unusual modulation from E minor—not to the expected tonic key of G Major—but into G minor, just another of those wonderfully Mozartian touches designed for the musically alert listener.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770-1827)

Quartet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 16 (1797)

In 1797, six years following Mozart's death, Beethoven took up the piano-with-winds model that his predecessor had used for the Quintet for Piano and Winds in E-flat Major, K. 452. Beethoven knew Mozart's piece well and was obviously attracted to that format. When he had his quintet published in 1801, he included a second version scored as a Quartet for Piano and Strings, using the same opus number. He evidently believed it would enjoy wider circulation among amateur piano and string ensembles that dotted the Viennese landscape at the time. Note that Mozart had done exactly the same thing with K. 452.

Echoing Mozart, Beethoven's piano quartet begins with a slow *Grave* introduction (Mozart used the term *Largo*) of great majesty, laying it out with the dotted (long-short) note values of a Baroque era French overture. If dignity guides the *Grave*, the next section's *Allegro ma non troppo* sings with open lyricism in its three successive themes. Perhaps taking a cue from his erstwhile mentor, Haydn, Beethoven has a few tricks up his sleeve including a false recapitulation in the "wrong" key.

The *Andante cantabile* that follows posits a theme that flows effortlessly from the piano, with its first five notes strikingly similar to the aria "Batti, batti, bel Masetto" sung by the peasant girl Zerlina to her *verklempft* fiancé, Masetto, in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, another work Beethoven knew quite well. The movement is enriched and deepened by a pair of minor-key episodes, plus a richly contrapuntal restatement of the movement's opening material, and a busy but lovely coda that ends on a note of calm.

Ever the Classicist, Beethoven concludes with a *Rondo: Allegro, ma non troppo*, but one with strong sonata elements. The usual rondo layout alternates a recurring section, "A," with contrasting episodes, parsed as "B," "C," etc. Here, the "C" episode functions as a development section based on the "A" theme, while the "B" episode is reprised near the end of the piece. Composers after

Beethoven were quick to pick up on this hybrid “sonata-rondo” format.

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ

(1890–1959)

Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola, H. 313 (1947)

One of the 20th century’s most prolific composers, Bohuslav Martinů’s canon comprises almost 400 works. In an interview in 1942 he noted “I have been influenced by many things but most of all by the national music of Czechoslovakia, by the music of Debussy and by the English madrigals...I recognized something of Bohemian folk music in these madrigals.” Reflecting his compositional speed commentators have noted unevenness in his works, but at his considerable best, his music has immediate coloristic appeal, rhythmic vitality, and a bracing neo-Classic economy of texture.

After the invasion of Czechoslovakia during World War II, Martinů left his homeland for the safer environs of the United States. In poor health, he suffered a serious fall in 1946. During the slow convalescence he composed and later dedicated *Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola* to the well-known duo of violist Lillian Fuchs and her violinist brother Joseph.

The first Madrigal, *Poco allegro* opens boldly with slashing figures exchanged by the two instruments in an energetic romp rich in close-knit counterpoint and alternating homophonic passages. Beginning with slow quiet trills the second Madrigal, *Poco andante* creates a strong contrast with the opening piece. Here the mood is introspective. As the music proceeds the frequent trills provide ongoing forcefulness, occasionally interrupted by drone-like figures that evoke country dance music; further contrast is found in a closing section rich in engaging and wistful lyricism.

The fast-paced third Madrigal, *Allegro* conveys rustic élan that briefly, if unintentionally recalls Dvořák’s take on American hoedown music (as in his Op. 97 string quintet). Energetic trilling reminds us of the opening Madrigal. The fervor of the music is contrasted mid-movement by a *Moderato* section before a return to the fervor of the opening Madrigal.

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

(1835–1921)

Quartet for Piano and Strings in B-flat Major, Op. 41 (1875)

Long-lived Saint-Saëns composed virtually to the very end of his life. Hailed or reviled as a revolutionary in his youth, he drew the same contradictory characterizations in his final years. When a student saw him at the scandalous premiere of *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1913 he asked the aging composer what he thought about Stravinsky’s employment of a solo bassoon in very high register to open the ballet. An obviously upset Saint-Saëns denied that such a transgression had even occurred!

But we get ahead of ourselves. Almost four decades earlier Saint-Saëns composed his *Quartet for Piano and Strings in B-flat Major, Op. 41*, serving as pianist in the premiere in a performance that also boasted the participation of the wildly popular violinist/composer Pablo de Sarasate. Saint-Saëns had advanced the development in the 19th century of so-called cyclical composition (yes, Beethoven had earlier employed that gambit in the finale of his Ninth Symphony wherein he quotes thematic fragments from the first three movements). The *Piano Quartet* is one of many of Saint-Saëns’ works that fit that mold.

The first movement provides two distinct themes: the first motive, initiated by the piano, sounds like an improvisational exchange between the instruments. Gentle chord statements from the keyboard are answered by rising and falling arpeggios from the strings. The contrasting second theme demonstrates the composer’s knack for unforced and flowing lyricism. The overall pacing is not especially fast (hence the *Allegretto* marking rather than *Allegro*) but maintains a sense of mobility via rhythmic thrusts from the piano. The entire movement bathes in a congenial atmosphere free of troubling private thoughts or dark inner feelings and ends peacefully.

The *Andante maestoso ma con moto* opens with strongly inflected chords on the piano before the strings enter after nearly half-a-minute of silent preparation. The keyboard remains the dominant presence through

much of the movement, propelling the music onward through a combination of potent throbs from the bass regions intermixed with furious figuration above. Saint-Saëns also shows his skill at contrapuntal interplay between the piano and the strings. The relaxed mood of the opening movement is undone forcefully.

Beginning quietly the following D-minor *Scherzo* (in *Rondo* form) is marked *Poco allegro più tosto moderato*. After an understated unison opening (the “A” section) the music kicks up with galvanizing energy in the first contrasting episode. The roiling if dynamically constrained “A” section finds additional contrast in subsequent episodes including cadenzas for violin and piano respectively before a concluding gallop through *Presto* and *Prestissimo* passages.

Saint-Saëns’ *Allegro* finale begins in the “wrong” key of D minor with the piano quickly exchanging phrases with the strings. Powerful thrusts from the piano propel the music onward, matched by equal fervor from the often skittering string component. It is in this concluding movement that the composer’s embrace of cyclical form is manifest. Themes from the first and second movements are skillfully interwoven in the coda. Toward the end of the movement Saint-Saëns observes “correct” practice by finally returning to the work’s tonic key, B-flat Major, which shares the same two-flat signature as D minor.

Program Notes by Steven Lowe
