

PROGRAM NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

DANIEL HOPE & FRIENDS I WITH JUHO POHJONEN

Friday, March 29 at 6 pm
Trinity United Methodist Church

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756–1791)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, K. 478
(1785)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Andante*
- III. *Rondo. Allegro*

String Duo No. 2 for Violin and Viola in B-flat Major, K. 424 (1783)

- I. *Adagio; Allegro*
- II. *Andante cantabile*
- III. *Thema (con variazioni). Andante grazioso*

INTERMISSION

Prelude and Fugue No. 2 for String Trio in G minor, K. 404a (after J.S. Bach) (1782)



Piano Quartet No. 2 in E-flat Major, K. 493 (1786)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Larghetto*
- III. *Allegretto*

Benny Kim, violin
Paul Neubauer, viola
CarlaMaria Rodrigues, viola
Eric Kim, cello
Keith Robinson, cello
Juho Pohjonen, piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna, Austria, on December 5, 1791.

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, K. 478 (1785)

 Approximate performance time is 27 minutes.
 SMF performance history: 3/28/10

The Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478, is the first of two that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed for a chamber ensemble of violin, viola, cello, and piano. Mozart completed the work in Vienna on October 16, 1785. The second Piano Quartet, in E-flat Major, K. 493 (see page 100), was finished in June of the following year.

Franz Anton Hoffmeister, an Austrian music publisher and composer, published the G minor Piano Quartet in December of 1785. It appears that Mozart was undergoing some financial difficulties during the interim period between the composition and publishing of the Quartet. On November 20, 1785, Mozart wrote the following:

Dearest Hoffmeister!

I turn to you in my distress and beg you to help me out with some money, which I need very badly at the moment...Forgive me for constantly worrying you, but as you know me and are aware how anxious I am that your business should succeed, I am convinced that you will not take my importunity amiss and that you will help me as readily as I shall help you.

According to Georg Nikolaus Nissen (Constanze Mozart's second husband) the G minor was intended as the first of three Piano Quartets by Mozart to be published by Hoffmeister. However, again according to Nissen: "Mozart's first piano quartet in G minor was so little thought-of at first that the publisher Hoffmeister sent (Mozart) the advance on the honorarium on the condition that he not compose the two other agreed-upon quartets and Hoffmeister was released from the contract."

On the other hand, Maynard Solomon, in his biography (*Mozart: A Life*, HarperCollins, New York, 1995), contends that Hoffmeister:

was so little discouraged by the reception of this his first Mozart publication that he issued eleven others of his works over the next three or four years. These included several of Mozart's more uncompromising compositions, such as the String Quartet in D, K. 499 ("Hoffmeister"), the Fugue in C minor for two pianos, K. 426, and the Sonata in C for piano duet, K. 521.

There is no question that the Piano Quartet, K. 478, imposes considerable technical challenges upon all four of the musicians. And, it is quite possible that the dark and brooding nature of some of the music—typical of Mozart's works in G minor—took early audiences by surprise. The G minor Quartet is now universally recognized as one of Mozart's finest and most dramatic chamber works.

I. *Allegro*—The Quartet opens in striking fashion, with a brusque dialogue between the ensemble and piano, introducing the *Allegro*'s first principal theme. An extended and varied treatment of the theme resolves to a flowing, major-key melody, followed by a more playful sequence, introduced by the violin. The exposition concludes with a descending motif, initially played by the violin, then repeated by the piano. The development section begins in subdued fashion, but soon becomes quite agitated. A forceful restatement of the opening theme initiates the recapitulation, predominantly in the minor key. The opening theme returns once again to serve as the basis for the terse concluding measures.

II. *Andante*—In the second movement *Andante*, the *Allegro*'s terse drama yields to rapt lyricism. The slow-tempo movement features a series of hushed episodes, notable for their striking interplay between piano and strings. A varied reprise of those episodes leads to a *pianissimo* close.

III. *Rondo. Allegro*—The piano immediately introduces the *Rondo* finale's tripping, principal theme. The *Rondo* is, by far, the sunniest of the three movements, though even here, storm clouds occasionally darken the horizon. They are all dispelled, however, by the time of the jubilant closing measures.

String Duo No. 2 for Violin and Viola in B-flat Major, K. 424 (1783)

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 20 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

In July of 1783, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his wife, Constanze, traveled from their home in Vienna to Salzburg. For a number of reasons, it was a significant journey. The visit marked the first time in more than two years that Mozart had returned to his native city. In the spring of 1781, Mozart asserted his independence by abruptly resigning from the service of the Court of the Salzburg Archbishop, Hieronymus Colloredo.

Mozart took this bold step despite the pleas of the Archbishop's representatives and the composer's father, Leopold—himself a prominent Salzburg musician. The situation was so acrimonious that Mozart delayed in returning to Salzburg, in part because he feared he might risk arrest by the Archbishop.

Mozart's disobedience of his father's wishes placed considerable strain on their relationship. Matters worsened when, on August 4, 1782, Wolfgang wed Constanze Weber. Leopold did not approve of the union, viewing the marriage as a rash and irresponsible move on his son's part. Even after the wedding, Leopold continued to express his disapproval. Mozart seemed to take a bit of a retaliatory measure when, after the birth of his first child in June of 1783, he chose to name the baby not after Leopold, but after the child's godfather.

By the time Wolfgang and Constanze arrived in Salzburg toward the end of July, family wounds were in desperate need of healing. Wolfgang and Constanze remained in Salzburg for what proved to be a rather unhappy three months. The couple received a decidedly cold reception from Mozart's father and sister. On August 19, Wolfgang and Constanze's infant son, Raimund, died while under a nurse's care in Vienna. Mozart, the proud father, now could only lament: "We are

both very sad about our poor, bonny, fat, darling little boy."

During this stressful period, Mozart still found time to come to the aid of a friend and colleague. Michael Haydn, the younger brother of Franz Joseph Haydn, was then serving as a court musician in Salzburg. In 1783, the Archbishop commissioned Michael Haydn to compose a set of six duos for violin and viola. As a result of illness, Haydn was able to complete only four of the duos. Mozart composed the remaining two (G Major, K. 423, and B-flat Major, K. 424), and Michael Haydn was able (under his own name) to submit a complete set of six to the Archbishop.

Michael Haydn was greatly moved by Mozart's gesture. For the remainder of his life, Haydn treasured the scores of Mozart's two Violin and Viola Duos as "something sacred." Mozart himself obviously took pride in these works as well. In December of 1783, Mozart wrote to his father, requesting that Leopold send the scores of the two Duos to him "as soon as possible," presumably for use in Vienna.

I. *Adagio; Allegro*—The Duo begins with a noble, slow-tempo introduction (*Adagio*). The meter shifts from 4/4 to 3/4 as the violin launches the principal *Allegro* and the initial central theme. A flourish by the violin precedes its introduction of the syncopated second principal theme, soon repeated by the viola. The development section features excursions into the minor key. The violin inaugurates the varied recapitulation of the principal themes. The closing measures, punctuated by beguiling moments of silence, are capped by a pair of *forte* chords.

II. *Andante cantabile*—Mozart directs that the second movement be played both in a moderately slow tempo (*Andante*), and with a singing approach (*cantabile*). Indeed, the movement proceeds as a brief and lovely aria for the violin, affectionately supported by the viola.

III. *Thema (con variazioni). Andante grazioso*—The violin and viola present the finale's central theme (*Andante grazioso*). Six variations on that theme follow, culminating in the Duo's joyful *Allegro* conclusion.

Prelude and Fugue No. 2 for String Trio in G minor, K. 404a (after J.S. Bach) (1782)

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 6 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

After Mozart relocated from Salzburg to Vienna in 1781, he made the acquaintance of Baron Gottfried van Swieten (1733-1803), an amateur composer and generous music patron. Swieten authored the libretto for Franz Joseph Haydn's 1798 oratorio masterpiece, *The Creation*. Mozart participated in Swieten's Vienna Sunday musicales, featuring the study and performance of the music of Bach and Handel. In an April 20, 1782 letter to his sister Nannerl, Mozart wrote:

The Baron van Swieten, to whom I go every Sunday, gave me all the works of Handel and Sebastian Bach to take home with me (after I had played them to him). When Constanze heard the fugues, she absolutely fell in love with them. Now she will listen to nothing but fugues, and particularly (in this kind of composition) the works of Handel and Bach.

That same year, Mozart created a series of six Preludes and Fugues scored for violin, viola, and cello, based upon the music of J.S. Bach, and his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann. In the case of the Prelude and Fugue K. 404a, No. 2, Mozart composed the Prelude Music, followed by his arrangement of Bach's Fugue in F-sharp minor from Book II of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, BWV 883 (1742).

Piano Quartet No. 2 in E-flat Major, K. 493 (1786)

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 26 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/24/16, 3/21/14, 3/18/05*

Mozart completed his second (and final) Piano Quartet on June 3, 1786. Artaria published the Quartet the following year. While the E-flat Quartet does not feature the storm and stress of the G minor (see page 99), it is every bit as challenging for the performers (in a January 15, 1787 letter from Prague, Mozart notes that he played this Quartet with musician friends). Such challenges offer the prospect of great rewards, both for musicians and audiences.

I. *Allegro*—The ensemble launches the vibrant, *forte* opening measures, leading to a series of motifs that serve collectively as the first theme group. The piano, immediately echoed by the violin, introduces the second principal theme, characterized by an ornamental turn, followed by a descending sixth. That theme is also the dominant presence in the ensuing development section. The quartet inaugurates the *forte* start of the recapitulation of the principal themes. The second theme makes a notable appearance in the coda, capped by the pianist's ascending flourish, and the ensemble's trio of emphatic chords.

II. *Larghetto*—The Quartet's slow-tempo movement opens with the piano's flourish and introduction of the graceful principal melody. Mozart completed the E-flat Piano Quartet a month after the premiere of his comic opera, *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), K. 492. The *Larghetto* of the E-flat Piano Quartet is very much in the spirit of an operatic ensemble, as the characters echo and reflect upon each other's comments. The *Larghetto* concludes with flowing passage for the piano, and a final *pianissimo* statement by the ensemble.

III. *Allegretto*—The piano sings the finale's cheerful principal theme, immediately repeated by the strings. A subsidiary theme is introduced in the form of a dialogue between the forceful statement of the strings and the keyboard's subdued response. The themes return throughout in a finale that combines rondo and sonata forms, and features particularly brilliant writing for the piano. The Piano Quartet concludes with a descending keyboard passage, to which the ensemble provides the final exclamation point.