

30
june

SATURDAY

8 PM

Barry Shiffman, *artistic director*
Osvaldo Golijov, *composer-in-residence***BRENTANO STRING QUARTET**Mark Steinberg, *violin* | Serena Canin, *violin*Misha Amory, *viola* | Nina Lee, *cello*

WITH

DAWN UPSHAW, *soprano*

Pre-concert talk, 7 PM

QUARTET IN E-FLAT MAJOR, K. 428 (1783)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Allegro, ma non troppo

Andante con moto

Menuetto (Allegretto)

Allegro vivace

IL TRAMONTO (THE SUNSET), POEMETTO LIRICO FOR VOICE AND
STRING QUARTET, P. 101 (1914)**Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)**

:: INTERMISSION ::

BAGATELLEN, OP. 9 / MINUETS, D.89

Anton Webern (1883-1945) | Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Mäßig

Minuet I

Leicht bewegt

Minuet II

Ziemlich fließend

Minuet III

Sehr langsam

Minuet IV

Äußerst langsam

Minuet V

Fließend

QUARTET NO. 2 IN F-SHARP MINOR, FOR STRING QUARTET
AND SOPRANO, OP. 10 (1907-08)**Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)**

Mäßig (Moderate)

Sehr rasch (Very Brisk)

Litanei: Langsam (Litany: Slow)

Entrückung: Sehr langsam (Rapture: Very slow)

*This concert is sponsored in part by the generosity of Phil and Eve Cutter.***GLOVSKY***Counselors-at-Law**Festival
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Notes by Brentano Quartet members.

QUARTET IN E-FLAT MAJOR, K. 428

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (b. Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756;

d. Vienna, Austria, December 5, 1791)

Composed 1783; 28 minutes

When I was younger I aspired to be a serious composer. It seemed to me that a good approach to composing would involve choosing one of the received forms—sonata allegro form, for example—and, having devised a couple of striking melodic ideas, fit them into that form and follow the rules for getting from one structural point to the next, while maybe, I don't know, throwing in two or three unexpected twists and turns along the way.

Studying the music of great composers, I often felt that I could detect a similar creative system in use, where, on a very good day, I could imagine myself coming up with something nearly that good using my assembly method. But then there was music which seemed to defy this logic, where I was unable to imagine a method that would summon this music into being. Where my approach to writing music was like taking a boxy, pre-fab house, cutting some doorways between the rooms, and populating the rooms with furniture and things, this other music evoked the contemplation of lovely objects, the exploration of unknown passageways, and then, eventually, a realization that the form itself, an airy mansion that contained these things, had risen up around us, called into being by its contents.

Very often, the composer of that music turned out to be Mozart. And the first movement of his E-flat Quartet, K. 428, is a perfect example of it. Why should he attempt to construct his opening theme out of ungainly, awkward intervals, using nine of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale in the process? And how can that ill-advised approach lead him, as a result, to a melody so full of grace and equipoise? Again, how did he think of taking the last two notes of this melody, a falling step, and expand it gradually to four falling steps, then to six, creating in effect a magic carpet that transports the music joyously to its next key area? Having reached that new key area, B-flat major, what inspired him to write a second theme that, instead of consolidating B-flat major as it's supposed to do, spends its time flirting with three other keys? Or again, in the middle, development section of the movement, by what alchemy did he excise the rather elegant opening flourish of that second theme, and repurpose it as a kind of nefarious muttering in a minor key, beset by phantasmagorical triplet arpeggios that come from who knows where?

In movements like this one, the sonata form seems not like an uncomfortable suit of clothes into which the complaining composition must fit, but something bespoke: the form is called into being by the substance. Mozart doesn't seek to satisfy the form, but rather to justify its very existence, to explain with his music why it is beautiful and needful.

Likewise with the slow movement. On the one hand it lives in a binary-form "house," one which gives it a nominal definition and direction; on the other hand, the gentle, melancholy inhabitant of that house takes no particular notice of its surroundings as it wanders from chamber to chamber. Again, we have to ask the unanswerable questions. How do the contents of the opening—awkward contours, grinding chromaticism, almost bitter dissonance—become endowed, in this composer's hands, with such luminosity? And how did Mozart, that greatest of melodists, choose to write this music, which contains no melody that can be articulated as such? Rather, we are preoccupied here with shadowy chromatic motion, with shifting planes of chordal progressions like the surfaces of a great abstract painting, out of which the melodic element seems always about to be born, but in the end remains a thing alluded to, not revealed.

The E-flat Quartet was one of six quartets that Mozart dedicated in a group to his great contemporary, Joseph Haydn, and the Minuet movement is the moment of frankest homage to the older composer. The *affect* of the main section lies close to the particular flavor of Haydn's humor and spirit, opening with a guffawing figure, and tending to make jokes out of stuttering motions, as well as passages that get stuck and go around in circles before finding their way out again. By contrast, the central Trio section is pure Mozart. Written in a nearby minor key, and set against brooding bass pedal points, it presents a drifting, mesmeric tableau containing classically Mozartean paradoxes: grace by dint of asymmetry, consolation through the expression of sadness.

The finale starts with a children's tease: a few little fillips of tunefulness, wrapped up innocently enough, and then abruptly interrupted by a rambunctious blizzard of activity, tearing all over the map. The teasing continues in the next passages, as the moment of the outbreak shifts, becomes unpredictable — a game of musical "gotcha." Later melodies are graver, sweeter; it is ever Mozart's way, in his chamber music as in his operas, to get us chuckling, and then to transfix us with a moment whose tenderness is all the more affecting because it came out of nowhere. At the end of the movement, when the children's tease returns for the last time, it is adorned with a graceful upper melody, a kind of birdsong, which might seek to forgive or relax the earlier fakery. However, the horseplay persists right up to the end, as the music dwindles almost to a pinpoint before clobbering us with four final, triumphal chords.

—Note by Misha Amory

IL TRAMONTO: POEMETTO LIRICO FOR VOICE AND STRING QUARTET, P. 101

Ottorino Respighi (b. Bologna, Italy, July 9, 1879; d. Rome, Italy, April 18, 1936)

Composed 1914; 16 minutes

Best known for sumptuously orchestrated, visually inspired tone poems, including the well-known "Roman Trilogy" (*The Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome* and *Roman Festivals*), the Italian composer Ottorino Respighi also wrote songs throughout his life—more than fifty in all. "Whoever knows the songs of Respighi knows much about the man," his widow Elsa



"Atonality: thank heaven, that's done for! The future course of music? Who can say? I believe that every composer should first of all be individual. The Italian genius is for melody and clarity."

Respighi interviewed,
Musical America, 1925

wrote, "since songs, as a musical form, were the maestro's lifetime companion, from his teens to his Fifties." Three settings of poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley—*Aretusa* (1910–11), *Il tramonto* (1914) and *La sensitiva* (1914–15)—were important milestones along the path of becoming the most significant Italian composer of art song of his generation. In Shelley, as translated by Roberto Ascoli, Respighi responded to the young English poet's Romantic extremes of joy and despair. In *Il tramonto* (The Sunset), he employs music of the utmost sensitivity and refinement to underline and dramatize Shelley's heart-wrenching narrative of love found, then almost immediately lost, followed by a lifetime of grief and longing for release.

Respighi's "lyrical poem" gains intimacy and immediacy in its setting for voice and string quartet (an alternate

version is with string orchestral). An impassioned opening from the strings quickly fades to a *quasi parlando* (spoken) vocal entry and the narrator's melancholy setting of the scene. As the music increases in intensity while the young lovers discover their love, the soaring violin symbolizes their hopes for a future together. Respighi's scoring is skilled; he performed with the Mugellini Quartet for almost a decade early in his career. With only the briefest of instrumental interludes, the music follows the emotional contours of Shelley's poem, warmly embracing the descriptive picture of the lovers in the sunset. Stabbing chords tell of the young woman's shock at discovering her lover dead in the morning, while the music's increasing sparseness underscores a subsequent lifetime of grief. As Shelley's words move quickly through the narrative, Respighi's music deftly switches tempo and harmony, often within a subdued dynamic tension. The music builds to the word "Pace," in which a now elderly woman seeks release and peace, before dissolving into the most eloquent of silences.

– Program notes © 2018 Keith Horner. Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

BAGATELLEN, OP. 9 / MINUETS, D. 89

Anton Webern (b. Vienna, December 3, 1883; d. Mittersill, September 15, 1945)

Franz Schubert (b. Himmelfortgrund, suburb of Vienna, January 31, 1797;
d. Vienna, November 19, 1828)

Bagatellen composed 1911-13; Minuets composed 1813; combined performance: 12 minutes

In 1932 Anton Webern conducted and recorded his arrangements of six German dances by Schubert. The recordings are full of vibrant detail and freedom, and of evident love for and kinship with the music. Schubert, and perhaps particularly the visceral sweep, swoop and sway of the dance music, occupy a sizable branch of Webern's genealogical tree. For the Second Viennese School composers (Schubert being part of the so-called First Viennese School), dance, meaning primarily the waltz and thus, reaching backwards, its precursor the minuet, represents the life force, the external, socially viable manifestation of archetypal impulses of the psyche. Webern's Vienna, home of Sigmund Freud, was leading the way down a new path in understanding of the self. Poised between a veneer of accommodation and conventionality and the nascent flowering of investigation into the emotional mind (with its attendant associations and desires), a space for interior questioning was being pried open.

As the Schubert dances, written when the composer was just sixteen, fit and work their magic within a solid, architectural framework, the Webern pieces of Op. 9 create their form as a vapor spreads its smoky tendrils. They are catalogues of breaths, sighs and gasps; charged, compressed conversations of intimate gestural wisps. The alternation of Schubert and Webern is an oscillation between generations, between public and private expression, between the shapes of the body and the shapes of thoughts. It is also a new composite structure within which gestures slip across the boundaries of time, mirroring each other, reflecting back and forth in unstill waters, betraying their common ancestry in a collective soul. The great violinist Felix Galimir used to always encourage young artists to search for and bring out in performance the element of dance in the music of the Second Viennese School. Clearly this was a concern for Webern himself, and in these intertwined works we can begin to feel the resonance in our somatic memories permeating it all.

– Note by Mark Steinberg

QUARTET NO. 2 IN F-SHARP MINOR, FOR STRING QUARTET AND SOPRANO, OP. 10

Arnold Schoenberg (b. Vienna, September 13, 1874; d. Los Angeles, July 13, 1951)

Composed 1907-08; 32 minutes

Arnold Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, Op. 10, is widely considered to be a visionary work. But whereas it is oft remarked that the piece sees into and points the way toward the future of musical rhetoric, it is interior seeing which lends it power and mesmerizing depth.

Schoenberg, active as a painter as well as a composer, produced a series of haunting paintings which he called "Visions." These are portraits whose searing eyes gaze intensely at, through and, even into the viewer, searching for truth. This spirit is felt as well in the Second Quartet, a piece searching for a new world of self-expression. A hearing of this work convinced Wassily Kandinsky that he and Schoenberg were kindred spirits. Having attended a performance of the quartet, Kandinsky initiated a correspondence and a friendship with the composer. Like Kandinsky, Schoenberg was concerned with the primacy of introspection and emotion in art. Form was to arise out of the inner compulsion for self-expression; if necessary, the boundaries of the art form would shift to accommodate understanding won through interior questioning. In the case of this piece, the gravitational relationships inherent in the tonal system, writing in a key, begin to yield to a freer treatment of pitch. Kandinsky writes to Schoenberg:

In your works, you have realized what I, albeit in uncertain form, have so greatly longed for in music. The independent progress through their own destinies, the independent life of the individual voices in your compositions, is exactly what I am trying to find in my paintings....I am certain that our own modern harmony is not to be found in the 'geometric' way, but rather in the anti-geometric, antilogical way.

Certainly there is much of interest in the artistic links between these two great figures. However, one might argue that in terms of emotional sensibility Schoenberg may be closer to painters such as Kokoschka and Schiele, as well as to a writer such as Strindberg, in whose plays Schoenberg had great interest. This work not only occupies a pivotal place in the history of music, but is as well very much a child of its own historical period, pre-war Vienna. This is the Vienna of Freud, of Klimt, of Kokoschka, of Wittgenstein, a simmering cauldron of intellectual and artistic ferment. Dialogue between disciplines was commonplace and highly stimulating.

One may see here connections to Mahler, a composer with whom Schoenberg had a complicated relationship. Like Mahler's First Symphony, this quartet features a quotation of a popular folk tune (more on this soon), and like Mahler's Second Symphony it features vocal writing in the third and fourth movements. More importantly, the expressive seed from which this quartet germinates finds itself firmly planted in Mahlerian soil. The rich, dark palette and late-Romantic sensibility of Mahler inform the overall affect of the piece.

Much has been made of the progression of this piece from relative tonal stability to the instability of atonal writing, but in fact there is more ambiguity here than such a view suggests. The first movement starts firmly in F-sharp minor, but somewhat tentatively, quickly collapsing into a single, foreign pitch, catapulting the music into breathless uncertainty. (This quick move away from the opening material is reminiscent of Brahms's first string quartet.) The second theme we encounter evokes the world of the Viennese waltz, but fraught with

anxiety, an early suggestion of the hallucinatory waltzes to be found in the String Trio, Op. 45, much later in the composer's life. Herein can be felt the central issue of the piece, familiar steps in an unfamiliar landscape. The movement ends temporarily at rest, but with a feeling of defeat.

The second movement, a scherzo, opens disembodied, drum-like on a single low cello pitch, perhaps an echo of the parallel movement in Beethoven's Quartet Op. 59 No. 1. As various spectral themes are brought in, the movement takes on a macabre cast. One of the two most famous moments in the piece comes when the second violin begins the popular tune "Ach, du lieber Augustin, alles ist hin," music that would ordinarily be accompanied by the simplest of harmonies. However here it finds itself out of place, torn from its natural milieu. Schoenberg remarked to a student of his that the "alles ist hin" (all is lost) was "not ironical [but has] a true emotional significance." As the tune fades away fragmented wisps of the waltz theme from the first movement are heard, disoriented. After a wild unison passage for all four instruments, a quickened version of the drum motive from the start of the movement flashes by as the music seems almost to vaporize.

The Litany that follows is a setting of a Stefan George poem, one where the speaker pleads for solace, for release from worldly passions in order to find peace. Significantly, all the musical material is drawn from the earlier movements; for example, the lonely viola line that starts the movement is a distended version of the opening theme of the piece, accompanied by a prolonged sigh in the first violin drawn from the waltz theme from that movement. Thus there is a sense of looking backwards, reflecting on one's past while searching for a way forward. The music unfolds as a continuous set of variations, embodying the feeling of wrestling with ideas. This is music of heart-wrenching drama, featuring one of the largest vocal leaps in the literature, a plummeting from the highest register to the soprano's lowest ("take from me love," after which the singer continues "and give me thy peace"). The brief answering coda for the quartet alone grows to a shattering cry, which is choked off at its peak.

As if in shock from this suffocated outburst the final movement takes this passionate human cry and answers it with music that is cold and spare. There is no sense of anchor, of tonal underpinnings, and this introductory texture leads to the entrance of the soprano in what is one of the most famous lines in musical history: "I feel the air of another planet." Here is embodied a vision of a whole new space, having wandered far from the Viennese waltzes, the societal references of the first part of the piece. It is a world of subjectivity, of sensitivity to the sometimes alienated feelings of the individual. The poem, however, ends "Carried aloft beyond the highest cloud, / I am afloat upon a sea of crystal splendor, / I am only a sparkle of the holy fire, / I am only a roaring of the holy voice." Schoenberg saw this piece as the gateway to the next stage of his development as a composer. The initial performance of the Quartet created a scandal, the cries of the public eventually completely obliterating the music. But the piece itself ends in an earned state of tranquility, a turn to F-sharp major, having traveled far from the ending of the first movement. Despite the fear of the new acted out by the Viennese public, we can see now that there is much beauty here, much imagination and color, and much profundity.

– Note by Mark Steinberg



BRENTANO STRING QUARTET

The Brentano String Quartet has appeared throughout the world to popular and critical acclaim, garnering several coveted awards including the Cleveland Quartet Award, Naumburg Chamber Music Award, and Royal Philharmonic Award for Most Outstanding Debut. In 1996, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center invited them to be the inaugural members of Chamber Music Society Two. In recent seasons the Quartet has traveled widely, performing in the most prestigious venues in the United States and abroad. The Brentano Quartet performs a wide range of repertoire, from Baroque and Classical to commissions from contemporary composers. The Quartet has also worked with poet Mark Strand, commissioning poetry to accompany works of Haydn and Webern, as well as collaborating with such artists as Jessye Norman, Joyce DiDonato, and Richard Goode. The Quartet has made multiple recordings for Aeon Records, including works of Haydn, Mozart and Schubert, and all of Beethoven's late quartets. In 1999, the Quartet

became the first Ensemble-In-Residence at Princeton University, where they taught and performed for fifteen years, and then became the Resident String Quartet at the Yale School of Music. The Quartet is named for Antonie Brentano, whom many scholars consider to be Beethoven's "Immortal Beloved," the intended recipient of his famous love confession.

DAWN UPSHAW, *soprano*



A five-time Grammy Award winner, Dawn Upshaw is a leading American soprano, known for her exceptional interest in contemporary music. She is highly active as a recitalist. Raised outside of Chicago, Ms. Upshaw attended Illinois Wesleyan and later the Manhattan School of Music (studying with Ellen Faulk) before rising to national prominence in 1984 by winning the Young Concert Artist Auditions. A year later she won the prestigious Naumburg Competition and soon was receiving leading roles on many of the world's most well-known opera stages (including more than 300 at the Met). In 2007, she was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation, the first vocal artist to be awarded the five-year "genius" prize, and in 2008 she was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Her recording of Maria Schneider's *Winter Morning Walks* received the 2014 Best Classical Vocal Solo Grammy. Additionally, she is featured on more than fifty recordings, including the million-selling *Symphony No. 3* by Henryk Gorecki for Nonesuch Records.

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Post-screening talk led by ARC Ensemble Artistic Director Simon Wynberg

How music was hi-jacked under the Third Reich and the recovery of the works it banned. **FREE**

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