CIOMPI QUARTET

SUN, NOV 15
VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE
VIRUTAL PERFORMANCE

**String Quartet in B-Flat Major**
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
K.172 (1773) (1756-1791)
Allegro Spiritoso
Adagio
Menuetto
Allegro assai

**String Quartet No.3 ("A Tapestry")**
Stephen Jaffe
(b. 1954)
I. Prelude (fragments)
II. Scherzo I: poised and graceful, but impish ("scherzino")
III. Joy of rhythm
IV. Ribbons (watercolor)
V. Scherzo II ("Scherzone"-with Night Blues")
VI. Postlude (with light of dove and the rose)

**Langsamer Satz (1905)**
Anton von Webern
(1883-1945)
MOZART: STRING QUARTET IN B-FLAT MAJOR, K.172 (1773)

Mozart picked up his first real job in 1773, in the Salzburg court of Archbishop Colloredo. The gig was, overall, acceptable, but also a bit of a let-down. After years of travel and shoulder-rubbing with Europe's elite, Salzburg seemed stifling and remote. So it is not particularly surprising that he took a four-month trip to Vienna later that same year. While there, fueled by the urban energy, he composed several works, including the present quartet. In it, we can sense some of the stimulation Mozart was likely feeling, and also the joys of new knowledge. Being in Vienna brought Mozart in close contact with Haydn's latest works, which were famously pushing the bounds of string quartet style. The B-flat Major quartet displays this influence particularly through its emphasis on interaction, which encourages us to consider the quartet's performance as a communal act.

Delivering on its title, the Allegro spiritoso is a happy music. Most of its substance is located in a series of particularly delightful melodies, and Mozart's wonderful use of the ensemble. Through careful attention to dynamics, register, and texture, we find a particularly cohesive approach to the quartet. This includes some unusual unison doublings of the second theme, which convey a beautiful sense of camaraderie.

The Adagio strengthens the work's emphasis on melody, being cast as a lyric showcase for the first violin. In this regard it's a simpler movement than the first: there are no changes in texture or tone. But the lines are longer, and contain more sophisticated structures and harmonic implications. Many little internal repetitions and unexpected colorings give the violin's line an emotional complexity that foreshadows many of Mozart's later developments (particularly the solo vocal movements in his sacred works.)

After the Adagio's soaring lightness, the Menuetto begins by foregrounding the darker-hued viola. The color contrast is striking, yet playful: one rarely expects the viola take the lead, but here it does so in more ways than one. It introduces the first violin in a canon, with support and commentary provided by the cello and second. The first movement's jovial spirit is thus revived, perhaps
with even more humor. The minor-keyed Trio section eschews melodic emphasis for proto-pointillistic rhythmic diversions. Though not quite vulgar, it’s nevertheless an amusing subversion of the refined, graceful airs cultivated throughout the rest of the quartet.

Like the first movement, the Allegro assai is straightforward in tone and design, which permits it to gleefully summarize the key sounds and gestures of the quartet as a whole. We find more wonderful melodies, patches of unexpected complication, a bit of canonic imitation, and (perhaps most importantly) an overarching sense of cooperation and joy — a welcome message with obvious resonance these days.

**JAFFE: STRING QUARTET NO.3 (“A TAPESTRY”)**

**COMPOSER’S NOTE:**

String Quartet No. 3 (“A Tapestry”) is a gathering of musical fragments woven into a whole. Framed by a Prelude and Postlude, the longest of the six movements lasts about five minutes, the shortest, one minute or so. Musical ideas and phrases migrate across the movements, in the service of the moment and the whole experience.

I composed the work in 2014-15, inspired by the invitation to create again for the Ciompi Quartet, who introduced my First Quartet in 1991, and who made a well-received recording. The Ciompi also programmed my String Quartet No. 2 (“Aeolian and Sylvan Figures”) after it was first presented by the Miami Quartet in 2004. The Ciompi Quartet's members are a tapestry in and of themselves, and it is a privilege for a composer such as me to be able to work with them over many years. String quartets are still unique in the world in that they rehearse with an intense intimacy reserved for big musical gambits.

The six movements of A Tapestry are Prelude (Fragments)—Scherzo I (“Scherzino”, or Little scherzo)—Joy of Rhythm—Ribbons (watercolor)—Scherzo II (“Scherzone” or Big scherzo with Night Blues)—Postlude (with light of dove and the rose). The descriptive titles of each movement or section require little explanation,
excepting perhaps the dolorous trio Night Blues within the otherwise often wild Scherzo II, inspired as a memory-portrait of a performance given by the Ciompi Quartet and cellist Norman Fisher on September 14, 2001 when the whole world seemed to depend on one note; the Postlude’s main section is a free transcription for quartet of a song I composed to Richard Wilbur’s translation from the French of Villiers de l’Isle Adam, which includes the lines “If, like the flower which grows/ In the exile soil of graves/ You beg to share my woes...I’ll bring you a gift of doves.” String Quartet No. 3 (“A Tapestry”) is dedicated to my friends, the Ciompi Quartet.

LANGSAMER SATZ

Webern started composing at an early age, eagerly embracing the diversity of musical styles that thrived in Austria and beyond. As he matured, this thirst never went away, eventually leading to conflicts with the “old guard” who were less sympathetic to shifting stylistic trends. In 1904, this lead the young Anton to his first meeting with Arnold Schoenberg — an encounter that would significantly advance one of classical music’s most divisive developments: atonalism.

Listeners familiar with Webern’s stature as part of atonal music’s holy trinity (along with Alban Berg) may thus be surprised to hear how decidedly tonal the Langsamer Satz of 1905 is. But the concepts of atonal music were not born overnight. In fact, it would be several years before Webern fully abandoned the concepts of key and tonal centers. In these early days, the goal was still to understand the limits of tonality. Webern, like his comrades, loved tonal harmony in all its incarnations, yet also understood that it was not the best language for communicating pre-war European angst. Hence the development of new sounds ensued, but not until after a few final flirtations with the familiar.

Written in a dreamy tone, wafting between the closely related keys of C Minor and E-flat Major, the music follows romantic-era expectations to a T: tight thematic development, a fluid sense of rhythm, shape and harmony, careful attention to light and shade, and a poetic approach to form and mood. One might justifiably
hear the influence of Brahms, but also more progressive voices like Mahler and Richard Strauss. Of course, there is plenty that comes from Webern, too. In particular, there is his attention to the smallest of melodic units. Recurring fragments lasting just a few notes are woven throughout the texture, reflecting an interest in motive that stemmed from Webern’s research on renaissance composer Heinrich Isaac, and would remain a prominent feature of his craft. There are also occasional moments of harmonic opacity, clearly foreshadowing styles to come. But overall, this is a fine and emotionally subtle work. It reveals an expressive depth that the composer never lost, but would soon channel through other languages.

**CIOMPI QUARTET**

**ERIC PRITCHARD** joined the **Ciompi Quartet** of Duke University in 1995 having previously served as first violinist of the Alexander and Oxford String Quartets and taught at San Francisco State University and Miami University. He attended the New England Conservatory, Indiana University and the Juilliard School where he studied with Eric Rosenblith, Josef Gingold and Ivan Galamian. Competitions include first prizes at the London International String Quartet Competition, the Coleman and Fischoff national chamber music competitions and the National Federation of Music Clubs Award in Violin. He has made solo appearances with the Boston Pops, the Indianapolis Philharmonic and served as Concertmaster of the Columbus Symphony and the Spoleto Festival Orchestra. As a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique, Pritchard offers workshops and classes for performing artists at Duke and elsewhere that focus on achieving peak performance through increased body awareness.

**HSIAO-MEI KU**, a Naxos Artist, is a Professor in the Department of Music of Duke University. Ku began her professional training at age ten at the Central Conservatory in Beijing, and first appearing on television at the age of eleven. After coming to America, Ms. Ku received her Master of Music degree with distinction and was a recipient of the Performer’s Certificate from the School of Music, Indiana University. In addition to her world-wide performing career with the Ciompi Quartet, she has further developed her research/
performing interest related to her own heritage—the Chinese culture and has released two solo CDs, “Violin and Piano Music by Ma Sicong (I) and (II)” by Naxos. Of her performances, *Strings Magazine* reviewer Greg Cahill wrote: “These expressive works are played exquisitely by violinist Hsiao-mei Ku... This CD features some of the most beautiful recorded chamber music that you will encounter this year, fiercely romantic and filled with heartfelt emotion”.

**JONATHAN BAGG** is Professor of the Practice at Duke University. Currently co-Artistic Director of Electric Earth Concerts in New Hampshire, he also directed the Monadnock Music festival from 2007-2011. His festival programming has included creative collaborations between authors, poets, and choreographers resulting in new works in a variety of unusual formats. He has performed at the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, the Eastern Music Festival, and the Highlands, NC, Mohawk Trail, and Castle Hill festivals. Bagg’s solo CDs contain music for viola and piano by Robert and Clara Schumann, by the Viennese composer Robert Fuchs, and by Duke colleagues Stephen Jaffe and Scott Lindroth. Other solo works by Arthur Levering, Malcolm Peyton, Robert Ward, and Donald Wheelock are on Bridge, Albany, Centaur and Gasparo Records. Bagg is currently chair of the Music Department at Duke.

Canadian-born cellist **Caroline Stinson** performs widely as a soloist, recitalist and chamber musician, appearing at Zankel Hall (Carnegie), The Gardner Museum (Boston) and The Smithsonian (DC); the Koelner Philharmonie, Lucerne Festival and Cité de la Musique in Europe, and the Centennial Centre in Canada. She is Principal Cello of the Stamford Symphony in CT and performs regularly in Canada and Europe in recital. Ms. Stinson has premiered dozens of works for solo cello, concerti and chamber music, and her many recordings include the solo CD *Lines* on Albany Records. Ms. Stinson studied with Alan Harris, in Germany with Maria Kliegel, and Joel Krosnick at Juilliard, receiving the Artist Diploma. She taught at Juilliard from 2008-2018 music and was a member of the Lark Quartet until joining the Ciompi Quartet as Associate Professor of the Practice of Music at Duke in 2018. With her husband, composer Andrew Waggoner, Caroline is Co-Artistic Director of Weekend Chamber Music in NY State.
STEPHEN JAFFE

Stephen Jaffe’s music has been featured at major concerts and festivals including the Nottingham, Tanglewood, and Oregon Bach Festivals, and performed throughout the U.S., Europe, and China by ensembles including the R.A.I. of Rome, Slovenska Filharmonija, the National Symphony, the San Francisco, North Carolina and New Jersey Symphonies, Berlin’s Spectrum Concerts, London’s Lontano, and many others. Bridge Records has issued three discs of the composer’s music, and recently issued the Da Capo Chamber Players’ recording of LIGHT DANCES (Chamber Concerto No. 2--Bridge 4001), about which one reviewer has written “Light Dances has the capacity, rare in contemporary music, to bring a delighted smile to the listener.” A fourth volume of Bridge recordings devoted to chamber music, and featuring the Borromeo Quartet and the Kennedy Center Chamber Players with David Hardy, cello and Lambert Orkis, piano, is on the way. Jaffe’s compositions include five chamber concertos including the spatially theatrical Migrations (Chamber Concerto No. 4) for walking violinist and mobile chamber ensemble, premiered with violinist Gabriel Richard, students and faculty of the Department of Music here in Baldwin Auditorium in 2018, as well as solo concertos for oboe, violin, cello and piano. The premiere of Three Arcs (Chamber Concerto No.5) for chamber ensemble with optional cameo chorus, commissioned by the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia to celebrate its 250th anniversary, is scheduled for performance by Network for New Music and the Pennsylvania Girlchoir. Stephen Jaffe is grateful to have had the opportunity to work with generously talented students and colleagues in the Department of Music at Duke, where he has taught since 1981.
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