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FROM THE BOARD

How does one describe the joy of experiencing live chamber music? As a board member for the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music, and as someone who has devoted his career to performing string quartets, part of my mission is to help young listeners understand and enjoy this unparalleled artform.

Certainly one can appreciate the nuance and wit of Haydn's string quartets in recordings and the written score. But how do you describe the theater of the repartee and inside jokes that are abundant in live performance to someone who hasn't yet experienced them? Or the feeling of being an onlooker for a conversation written rather for the players instead of the listeners?

Ligeti's musical idiolect can be difficult for young listeners, and I can't tell you how many students tell me at first that they don't like "new" music. But as those seemingly discordant sounds are expressed live, the dissonance melts into something far more relatable and even personal. Even the sounds of sliding pitches and strings slapping against the fingerboard become just a seamless part of the ensemble's lexicon!

Beethoven instructs performers of the second movement of his eighth quartet to treat this piece with the utmost feeling. As a young musician I remember studying the score and recordings of this work, and feeling that I understood it. But I also remember the transformative experience of first hearing it live, and hearing the celestial profundity of that movement after the final reverberations of the swirling first movement receded.

How else do we explain it, except to help new Friends of Chamber Music live it for themselves? Of course, I am preaching to the proverbial choir, but I like to remind myself how lucky we are to experience the magic of live chamber music. Tonight we are in for a treat as Cuarteto Casals, one of the great performing ensembles of the last quarter-century, takes us on a journey through three of this genre's greatest dramas.

TIM KANTOR

Board Member, AFCM

Violin, Afara Quartet

Associate Professor of Violin, University of Arizona



CUARTETO CASALS

FEBRUARY 22, 2023



Cuarteto Casals

Abel Tomàs, *violin*

Vera Martínez Mehner, *violin*

Jonathan Brown, *viola*

Arnau Tomàs, *cello*

Arts Management Group
37 West 26th Street, Suite 403
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CUARTETO CASALS

Founded in 1997 at the Escuela Reina Sofía in Madrid, Cuarteto Casals has been a continual guest at the world's most prestigious concert halls, including Carnegie Hall, Philharmonie Berlin, Cité de la Musique Paris, Konzerthaus and Musikverein in Vienna, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and Suntory Hall, among many others. The ensemble is approaching its 25th anniversary season, which it will celebrate with a recording and series of concerts featuring the complete *Art of the Fugue* by Johann Sebastian Bach.

A prize from the prestigious Burletti-Buitoni Trust in London enabled the quartet to begin a collection of matching Baroque and Classical period bows, which it uses for works from Purcell through Schubert, refining its ability to distinguish between diverse musical styles. In addition, the quartet has been profoundly influenced by its work with living composers, especially György Kurtág, and has given the world premiere of quartets written by leading Spanish composers, including a concerto for string quartet and orchestra by Francisco Coll premiered with the Orquesta Nacional de España, and commissions by Mauricio Sotelo, Benet Casablancas, Dahoud Salim, Lucio Amanti, Aureliano Cattaneo, and Matan Porat.

In recognition of its unique contributions to the cultural life within Catalunya and throughout Spain, Cuarteto Casals has been acknowledged as cultural ambassadors by the Generalitat of Catalunya and the Institut Ramon Llull. Past awards include the Premio Nacional de Música, the Premi Nacional de Cultura de Catalunya, and the Premi Ciutat Barcelona; additionally the quartet has the privilege of performing regularly on the extraordinary collection of decorated Stradivarius instruments at the Royal Palace in Madrid.

Cuarteto Casals often appears on television and radio throughout Europe and North America, and in addition to giving much sought-after master classes, is quartet in residence at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Den Haag, the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole, and at the Escola Superior de Musica de Catalunya in Barcelona, where all four members reside.

Tonight's performance marks the first appearance of the Cuarteto Casals on our concerts.

EVENING SERIES

TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 20, no. 1

Allegro moderato
Menuetto: Allegretto
Affettuoso e sostenuto
Finale: Presto

GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923–2006)

String Quartet No. 1, "Métamorphoses nocturnes"

Allegro grazioso
Vivace, capriccioso
Adagio, mesto
Presto
Prestissimo
Andante tranquillo
Tempo di Valse, moderato, con eleganza,
un poco capriccioso
Subito prestissimo
Allegretto, un poco gioviale
Prestissimo
Ad libitum, senza misura
Lento

INTERMISSION

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

String Quartet No. 8 in E Minor, Op. 59, no. 2

Allegro
Molto adagio
Allegretto
Finale: Presto

PROGRAM NOTES

HAYDN WROTE HIS SIX revolutionary Opus 20 quartets in 1772, a time of personal restlessness. Never happy in his marriage to the unmusical Maria Keller, it was rumored that Haydn had then found a new love interest. Simultaneously, he responded imaginatively to the powerful language heard in the newly popular *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) literary movement launched by his German contemporary Johann von Goethe. Essentially a reaction to culturally dominant French rationalism, Storm and Stress literature developed with heightened passion and exuberant imagery. Inspired by its expressive freedom, Haydn's supple Opus 20 quartets develop with bold harmonies, dramatic pauses, and unexpected turns of phrase. Unlike his earlier quartets, scored for a dominating first violin, Haydn's new quartets interweave all voices both to achieve organic unity and to allow diverse expression. Sympathetic, often witty exchanges among instruments were intended to resonate with an audience that understood and valued the convivial atmosphere of the salon, an important social venue in this "age of conversation."

The Allegro moderato of Opus 20 No. 1 is cast in sonata form but breaks with the expected formal structure. Its exposition explores two themes, a broad statement for first violin and a contrasting idea for cello in its upper register. The development area begins softly but is immediately interrupted by a loud return of the opening theme, signaling a premature recapitulation. However, the development quickly resumes, now with vigorous interplay among instruments; the violin seamlessly leads into the true recapitulation. As a departure from the expected forte conclusion, the movement ends quietly with a brief coda.

The Menuetto is structured like its court dance prototype with four groups of four three-beat measures. At the contrasting trio section the violist bows out to create a true "trio" grouping. Before the return of the Menuetto, a brief motif heard in the second violin and cello foreshadows the main theme of the following slow movement.

"Affecting and sustained," the third movement (A-flat major) unfolds like a hushed and intimate aria.

Kaleidoscopic shifts of color and gentle ornamentation underscore its asymmetrical phrase groupings. Mozart admired this movement and paid tribute in his own E-flat major quartet, K. 428.

The rapid Presto finale develops with syncopated figuration that creates comic moments in its middle section. Since the first violin has no downbeats and the other instruments are silent on the first half of the measure, all sense of meter is obscured. The main theme returns, and the movement fades to a quiet conclusion.

LIGETI DESCRIBES HIS EARLY String Quartet No. 1: "*Métamorphoses nocturnes* was written in Budapest in 1953–54 but was intended only for my bottom drawer, since a public performance was out of the question. Life in Hungary at that time was in the grip of the Communist dictatorship, the country completely cut off from all information from abroad: outside contacts and foreign travel were impossible, Western radio broadcasts were jammed, and scores and books could neither be sent nor received. Even the Eastern bloc countries were isolated from each other. Instead, in Budapest there arose a culture of 'closed rooms,' in which the majority of artists opted for 'inner emigration.' The official art foisted on us was 'Socialist Realism,' a cheap kind of art aimed at the masses and designed to promote prescribed political propaganda. But the fact that everything 'modern' had been banned merely served to increase the attractiveness of the concept of modernity for non-conformist artists. All was done in secret. To work for one's bottom drawer was regarded as an honor.

"I was inspired to write String Quartet No. 1 by Bartók's two middle quartets, his Third and Fourth, although I knew them only from their scores since performances of them were banned. In the present instance, 'métamorphoses' signifies a set of character variations without an actual theme but developed out of a basic motivic cell (two major seconds, displaced by a minor second). Melodically and harmonically, the piece rests on total chromaticism, whereas, from a point of view of form, it follows the criteria of Viennese Classicism—that is, periodic structure, imitation, the spinning out of motivic material, the development section and the technique of phrases, which are then distributed among the different voices.

“But the fact that everything ‘modern’ had been banned merely served to increase the attractiveness of the concept of modernity for non-conformist artists.”

GYÖRGY LIGETI

Apart from Bartók, Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations were my secret ideal. In short, the work is ‘modern’ in its melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic writing, but the articulation of the form—what I would call the ‘discourse’—is traditional.

“Not until after I had fled Hungary in 1956 was this quartet performed, when the Ramor Quartet, which had similarly fled into exile, introduced it to Vienna in 1958.”

PERHAPS THE MOST MUSICALLY fluent of Beethoven’s aristocratic patrons was the Russian Count Andreas Razumovsky, son of the Empress Catherine’s “favorite” and recipient of a lifetime ambassadorship to the Hapsburg Court at Vienna. An accomplished amateur violinist and cellist who maintained a superb string quartet as part of his household staff, Razumovsky commissioned Beethoven to write three quartets for concerts intended to serve a dual purpose—both to celebrate his palatial new embassy, grandly adorned with statuary by Canova, and also to commemorate the grievous 1805 Austro-Russian military defeat by Napoleon at Austerlitz, which left thousands of his countrymen dead. Razumovsky stipulated that each of the quartets include Russian themes as a patriotic gesture, and Beethoven searched for appropriate melodies to honor this request. Although engaged with other large-scale projects of his productive “middle period,” Beethoven devoted his full attention to the commission, and he soon completed his Opus 59 (1806). These “Razumovsky” Quartets mark a new era for the string quartet. Formerly a genre written for intimate chambers, the string quartet is here an

expanded, quasi-orchestral form intended for a concert hall with a large audience.

Beethoven at this time was obsessed by his desire to master sonata form—an established, yet flexible, eighteenth-century scheme that provided large works with a coherent structure: the exposition of ideas, their full development, their return in mostly original form, and an extensive coda. This clear framework allowed Beethoven to create dramatically nuanced, spacious designs with maximum thematic and harmonic contrast. Each of the Razumovsky Quartets features at least the opening movement in sonata form.

Beethoven wrote much of Opus 59 No. 2 during his 1806 summer visit to the Grätz castle of his patron, Prince Lichnowsky. There he binge-worked with such absorption that the castle staff described him as “not in his right mind.” The visit ended badly after Lichnowsky asked Beethoven to perform for several French officers who were at leisure after their victory over the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz. Beethoven refused to perform for the conquerors, and he and the Prince quarreled. With his patronage in jeopardy, the enraged Beethoven set off for Vienna despite a heavy rainstorm, which slightly damaged his new manuscripts.

Inward and mysterious, the compact sonata form Allegro of Opus 59 No. 2 begins with two terse chords followed by wisps of a theme. Although subsequent reiterations are gradually woven into an extended melodic line, shifting rhythms and numerous short pauses create an aura of uncertainty that is only resolved at the assertive coda.

The eloquent Molto adagio, also in sonata form, develops a theme possibly derived from the spelling of Bach’s name, which in German is B flat, A, C, B natural. According to Beethoven’s friend Czerny, this movement occurred to its composer “when contemplating the starry sky and thinking of music of the spheres.” As homage to Razumovsky, the Allegretto showcases the Russian patriotic hymn *Slava* (Glory) in its trio section. The brilliant finale, in sonata-rondo form, gains tension with unexpected harmonic relationships. One hears the Russian herd heading to the front in its spectacular coda.

Notes by Nancy Monsman

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SASO

SOUTHERN ARIZONA
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2022-23 SEASON
Linus Lerner - Music Director

Serendipity

October 8 and 9
Rossini & Tchaikovsky

February 18 and 19
Brahms, Vanbeselaere, Bernstein

April 29 and 30
Wagner, Khachaturian, Beethoven

November 12 and 13
Mendelssohn, Haydn, Dvořák
Guest Conductor: Ahmed Elsaedi

March 18 and 19
War and Remembrance

For more information visit sasomusic.org or call (520) 308-6226

UPCOMING CONCERTS

29TH TUCSON WINTER CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

SUNDAY, MARCH 12, AT 3:00 PM

Music of Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, and the
Arizona Premiere of a work by Julia Adolphe

TUESDAY, MARCH 14, AT 7:30 PM

Music of Brahms, Mendelssohn, and
Eleanor Alberga

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, AT 7:30 PM

Music of Mozart, Ligeti, and Ravel

FRIDAY, MARCH 17, AT 7:30 PM

Music of Beethoven, Schubert, and Louise Farrenc

SATURDAY, MARCH 18

Master class in Bassoon at 3:00 pm

Master class in Oboe at 4:00 pm

FESTIVAL CELEBRATION

6:00 pm—Concert with music by Poulenc,
Schulhoff, and Weber

6:45 pm—Meet, mingle, and dine with the
Festival Musicians

SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 3:00 PM

Music of Poulenc, Franck, and
Stephen Andrew Taylor

MUSICIANS

Jupiter String Quartet

Nelson Lee, *violin*

Meg Freivogel, *violin*

Liz Freivogel, *viola*

Daniel McDonough, *cello*

Sitkovetsky Trio

Alexander Sitkovetsky, *violin*

Isang Enders, *cello*

Wu Qian, *piano*

Windscape

Tara Helen O'Connor, *flute*

Randall Ellis, *oboe*

Alan R. Kay, *clarinet*

Frank Morelli, *bassoon*

David Jolley, *horn*

David Fung, *piano*

Silent Auction throughout the week of the Festival.

All events at the Leo Rich Theater.

Tickets available online or at the box office.

If you are interested in sponsoring a concert or a
musician, please contact Cathy Anderson at
cathy@arizonachambermusic.org.

If you are interested in sponsoring a commissioned
work, please contact Philip Alejo at
palejo@arizona.edu.

For additional program and artist information,
please visit arizonachambermusic.org.

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