

Colorado String Quartet

The College of Wooster
Gault Recital Hall
525 E. University Street
Wooster, Ohio 44691

Sunday, November 14, 2004
3:00 P.M.

minor. Though it remains true to the conventions of sonata form, it features a robust developmental section more typical of Beethoven than Mozart. The Minuet (marked *Allegretto*) occurs one movement earlier than was customary at the time. It too is unusually substantial and dramatic for its time, featuring a *Trio* section with considerable chromatic tension.

The *Andante* flows effortlessly with Classical grace and poise. First violin and first viola are clearly featured here, so much so that Charles Rosen describes the movement as “an operatic duet.” The movement culminates in a brief but an exquisite cadenza weaved by both instruments. For the *Allegro* Finale, Mozart crafts a delightful fusion of contrapuntal writing and elegant melody. The juxtaposition creates a closing movement that is at the same time irrepressibly energetic and refined.

Written by Brian Biddle

The Colorado String Quartet

Julie Rosenfeld, Violin
Deborah Redding, Viola
Marka Gustavsson, Viola
Diane Chaplin, Cello

with
Carol Rodland, Viola

The Colorado Quartet is well-known to the Wooster audience, having visited often since first performing here during the early years of the Chamber Music Series. Audience members have come to appreciate the group’s lively performances, which are sometimes marked by wit and always distinguished by passionate and focused playing. The Colorado Quartet was founded by violinist Deborah Redding at the University of Colorado twenty years ago, and then moved to The Juilliard School in New York for training. Ms. Redding is the only original member who remains with the group. She is joined by Julie Rosenfeld, violinist, Marka Gustavsson, violist, and Diane Chaplin, cellist.

The Colorado Quartet has won international acclaim as one of the finest string quartets, and has toured more than twenty countries on four continents. They have performed numerous times at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, as well as the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw. They regularly play the complete Beethoven Quartets, and their recent performances in Berlin made them the first female quartet to have performed the complete Beethoven cycle in both North America and Europe. They performed the complete Bartok String Quartets in Philadelphia, and twenty Haydn Quartets at the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York. Winners of both the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, the Colorado members have also served on the juries of several international competitions. The Colorado Quartet is Quartet-in-Residence at Bard College. They teach private lessons, give master classes throughout North America, and coach chamber ensembles. The Quartet members’ deep scholarly knowledge of the quartet literature not only informs their playing, but is also passed on to future players in the form of courses on the Literature of the String Quartet at Bard College.

The Colorado Quartet has made critically acclaimed recordings of works by Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Also noteworthy is their recording of contemporary quartets by Karel Husa, Ezra Laderman, and Mel Powell. The Colorado worked closely with all three composers during the production of this CD, which was

recorded in Sprague Hall at the Yale School of Music. They recorded during late night hours, in a (not always successful) attempt to lessen the likelihood of noisy interruptions from nearby street traffic. Another contemporary recording is their “Mosaic Chamber Music of Henry Cowell,” recorded in collaboration with the Musicians Accord ensemble.

The Colorado Quartet is joined today by Carol Rodland on viola. Ms. Rodland made her solo debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra at age 17, and went on to perform throughout North America and Europe. She has given solo recitals at Merkin Hall and Carnegie’s Weill Recital Hall, has played concertos with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra and the Davos Festival Orchestra, has performed as guest violist with the Henschel Quartet throughout Europe, and has played frequently with both the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Vermont’s Craftsbury Chamber Players. Ms. Rodland won first prizes at the Washington International Competition, the Artists International Auditions, and the Juilliard Concerto Competition. She has been professor of viola at the New England Conservatory for two years.

Written by Sarah J. Buck

PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

QUARTET IN A MINOR, OP. 132 (1825) – The monumental last quartets of Beethoven, the final major works he completed, provide much insight into the struggle of the composer to remain creatively active in the midst of the hardships fate had dealt him. In late 1824, Beethoven began to sketch the A minor quartet, the second of a set of three commissioned by Prince Galitzin. Work was interrupted, though, when he was struck with a severe and debilitating abdominal illness that winter. A period of rest and recuperation in the country allowed Beethoven to recover, and he was able to finish the work by July of the following year. The gravity of the sickness clearly left an impression on the composer; however it is not the pain of the illness which Beethoven chooses to depict in this piece, but the joy and thankfulness of his restored health.

The opening of the first movement (*Assai sostenuto–Allegro*) derives from the simple, atmospheric landscape of the gentle beginning of the Ninth Symphony. A solitary rising half step in the cello provides the seed for an expanding texture in which the other three instruments quickly join in. As in the Ninth Symphony, though, we are swept into the movement proper without much delay. Though it proceeds as a well-behaved sonata-form movement is expected, we are frequently reminded of the half-step motive from the introductory passage. Following is a *Scherzo* (marked *Allegro ma non tanto*) that is

more relaxed than Beethoven’s typical breakneck pace for such movements. The *Trio* section features a lilting melody with a drone that may remind the listener of a bagpipe tune.

It is in the third movement that we are witness to the emotional backdrop of the piece. It is prefaced with the inscription *Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenden an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart* (Holy song of thanks to God, in Lydian mode). The movement opens with a sober chorale using the Lydian scale (F major with B-natural instead of B-flat, using all white notes on the piano). Suddenly, though, the chorale breaks free, arriving in a spirited D-major passage. The chorale soon returns in a more rhythmically active form, again followed by the lively section. The chorale once again resurfaces. This time, however, it is transfigured, the upper voices reaching heavenward until the movement gradually fades away.

There is no triumph here, no sense of accomplishment in cheating fate of its victim. Instead we find a pure statement of thanksgiving (sometimes prayerful, sometimes ebullient) for the delight of regained strength.

Beethoven follows this centerpiece movement with a curious march (marked *Assai vivace*) whose regimented nature contrasts sharply with the previous movement. A transition leads us directly into the Finale, a rondo marked *Allegro appassionato*. Its straightforward character may be deliberate; after such trying times there may be comfort simply in returning to routine. The piece concludes in A major, confirming the resolution and restoration celebrated throughout the quartet.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

QUINTET IN C MAJOR, K. 515 (1787) – Mozart is easily eclipsed in the canon of Classical-era string quartets by Haydn, the original master of the genre. Mozart himself illustrated this through the famous set of six quartets written in homage to his elder contemporary. Not to be outdone, though, Mozart dabbled in variations on the traditional quartet instrumentation. For Mozart, this called for the addition of an extra viola, possibly because it was his favorite member of the string family (the more common quintet instrumentation doubled the cello instead). Five original works were composed for this quintet of two violins, two violas, and cello. The C major quintet, along with its companion piece (K. 516 in G minor) were composed in 1787.

The surprisingly expansive opening *Allegro* commences with a delightful conversation between cello and violin. The cello begins with an arpeggiated C major chord, quickly followed by an answer in the violin. Soon, though, the instruments reverse roles and shift to C

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Program

Quartet in A minor, Op. 132
Assai sostenuto – Allegro
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto adagio – Andante
Alla marcia, assai vivace
Allegro appassionato

BEETHOVEN

INTERMISSION

Quintet in C Major, K. 515
Allegro
Menuetto: Allegretto
Molto adagio – Andante
Andante
Allegro

MOZART

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