CHAMBER MUSIC
•T U L S A•

P R E S E N T S

Brentano Quartet with Hsin-Yun Huang

Mark Steinberg,
violin

Serena Canin,
violin

Nina Lee,
cello

Misha Amory,
viola

Hsin-Yun Huang,
viola

Saturday, November 10, 2018
7:30 p.m.

Kathleen P. Westby Pavilion
Tulsa Performing Arts Center

Salon Concert

String Quintet No. 2 in C Minor, K.406/516b — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)
- *Allegro*
- *Andante*
- *Menuetto in canone – Trio in canone al rovescio*
- *Allegro*

String Quartet No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 44, No. 3 — Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)
- *Allegro vivace*
- *Scherzo: Assai leggiero vivace*
- *Adagio ma non troppo*
- *Molto allegro con fuoco*

Today's performance is part of the annual Susan and Eduard Douze memorial concert weekend.

Chamber Music Tulsa's concerts and educational outreaches are presented with the assistance of the Oklahoma Arts Council and Arts Alliance Tulsa.

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About the Program

by Jason S. Heilman, Ph.D., © 2018

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria
Died December 5, 1791, in Vienna

String Quintet No. 2 in C Minor, K.406/516b

Composed in 1787; duration: 24 minutes

During the eighteenth century, the string quintet evolved out of the string quartet genre, but unlike Joseph Haydn's standardized quartet of two violins, viola, and cello, no one instrumentation for the string quintet became the norm. Instead, two competing concepts emerged: one, which added an extra cello, was pioneered by the Italian cellist Luigi Boccherini, who composed more than 140 such quintets between 1774 and his death in 1805. The other quintet, formed by the addition of a second viola, is attributed to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who wrote six two-viola quintets in his short life. But while Mozart composed his First String Quintet at age 17, this was an unusual work: in addition to the second viola, Mozart also substituted a double bass for the cello, implying that his String Quintet in B-flat major, K. 174, was written for an ad-hoc ensemble that he assembled in Salzburg in December of 1773. It would take another 14 years for Mozart to return to the string quintet and establish his own enduring vision for the ensemble.

By the spring of 1787, Mozart's position in Vienna was starting to feel less and less tenable. After an impressive five-year run of successes, his fortunes were beginning to sour, starting with the failure of his ambitious opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, which closed after only nine performances in 1786. Soon, Mozart's concert appearances at the keyboard began to taper off dramatically, taking a huge toll on his growing family's finances. In response to this, Mozart began looking for opportunities elsewhere, and in early 1787, he briefly took up residence in Prague, where he successfully revived *Figaro* and premiered his Symphony No. 38 (the so-called "Prague" symphony, K.504). Back in Vienna and feeling a little more optimistic, Mozart wrote a pair of two-viola string quintets that spring while he waited for the libretto of his next opera, *Don Giovanni*, to arrive. These remarkable quintets, in C major (K.515) and G minor (K.516), have long been viewed as foreshadowing the final two symphonies Mozart would write in those same keys the following year. But more recent research suggests that Mozart followed them up with another quintet in close succession – and that what we have traditionally called his Second String Quintet may have actually been his fourth.

Moreover, this quintet, now renumbered as Köchel 516b, is a rare example of Mozart recycling an earlier composition: the quintet is an arrangement of a wind serenade (K.388) Mozart had written around 1782 for an octet of oboes, clarinets, horns, and bassoons. It is not entirely clear why Mozart, who we tend to think of as a veritable wellspring of musical ideas, decided to repurpose an older work at the height of his powers. He may have felt the need to deliver a set of three string quintets to his publisher for some quick cash but was distracted by more pressing work on the score to *Don Giovanni*. In any case, his publisher seems to have passed on this set of string quintets, and Mozart's finances continued to decline.

Like the brooding and evocative wind serenade that inspired it, this string quintet is set in the key of C minor – a relatively rare key choice for the typically effervescent Mozart. The first of its four movements, marked *allegro*, opens ominously and seems to unfold in fits and starts until a lyrical second theme emerges in the warmer, related key of E-flat major. Mozart then develops these two themes before abruptly recapitulating them to round off the sonata-form movement as somberly as it began. The *andante* second movement returns to the key of E-flat major, and its gently lilting melodies offer hint at the quintet's origins as a genteel serenade. The third movement is a *minuet* with a striking difference: Mozart presents the opening strain in the form of a canon between the first violin and the cello, which repeats the melody a measure later, while the other three instruments provide contrapuntal support. The second strain introduces a new canon between the first and second violins, but for the movement's central *trio*, Mozart gives us a novel double canon *al rovescio*, with the second violin and first viola playing a glassy new melody in imitation, while the first violin and cello simultaneously present a canon based on a mirror inversion of that very same music. For the finale, Mozart presents a dramatic *allegro* theme at the outset, then transforms it in a series of five variations, which range from turbulent to charming, before concluding with a triumphant final statement in the sunny key of C major.

Felix Mendelssohn

Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg, Germany
Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig

String Quartet No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 44, No. 3

Composed in 1838; duration: 34 minutes

Although he was born into the same iconoclastic Romantic generation as Frederic Chopin, Franz Liszt, and his friend Robert Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn seemed to belong to an earlier age. A child prodigy whose gifts rivalled those of Mozart himself, Mendelssohn started composing surprisingly complex works as a preteen. His teacher in Berlin, Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832), tempered this precociousness by inculcating in Mendelssohn a reverence for the old German masters – and for Johann Sebastian Bach in particular. By the 1820s, Bach's music was still studied intensely, but it was entirely absent from the concert hall. Mendelssohn sought to change this in 1829, when he organized and conducted the first public performances of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* since the eighteenth century.

Bach's music continued to loom large for Mendelssohn when, in 1835, he moved to the Baroque master's final resting place of Leipzig to become the conductor of the venerable Gewandhaus Orchestra. There, Mendelssohn expanded his focus on the past masters to include Haydn, Mozart, early Beethoven, and the posthumous premiere of Franz Schubert's "Great" C Major Symphony in 1839, while snubbing his more forward-looking contemporaries like the young Richard Wagner.

Not long after moving to Leipzig, in March of 1837, Mendelssohn married Cécile Jeanrenaud, the daughter of a French Reformed Christian minister. Less than a year later, the Mendelssohn-Bartholdys (as Felix was known after his father's conversion to Christianity) welcomed their first son, Carl. It seems that balancing his responsibilities as a new husband and father with his demanding job as music director left precious little time for Mendelssohn to write music, as the formerly prolific composer started and finished relatively few new works during his first few years in Leipzig. One notable exception was the set of three string quartets he composed in 1837 and 1838, which he published together as his Opus 44.

One of the most obvious signs of Mendelssohn's musical atavism was his sense of proportion and balance: rather than giving in to the emotional excesses of his contemporaries, Mendelssohn's compositions recall the classic symmetries of Haydn and Mozart. Hand in hand with this was Mendelssohn's devotion to the traditional genres, like the symphony and the string quartet, long after they were considered passé. His Opus 44 string quartets came at a time when the genre was relatively neglected, with the conventional wisdom being that Beethoven had already pushed the ensemble as far as it could go with his late quartets. Instead, Mendelssohn's efforts helped to return the string quartet to prominence in the nineteenth century, directly inspiring Robert Schumann to compose his own quartets just a few years later.

The last of the three Opus 44 quartets was Mendelssohn's most expansive chamber composition. Set in the key of E-flat major, the quartet opens with a Haydnesque sonata-form movement, marked *allegro vivace*, which derives much of its musical material from its introductory five-note turn motive. The *assai leggiero vivace* scherzo that follows moves into a dusky minor key yet still retains all of the fleet-footed brilliance for which Mendelssohn was famed, including a contrapuntal central *trio* and spell-binding coda that has all four instruments playing rapidly in unison. The *adagio ma non troppo* third movement sets a warm and nostalgic mood over which the first violin begins to play another of Mendelssohn's charming "songs without words"; this music gradually builds to impassioned heights before subsiding. The *molto allegro con fuoco* finale picks up where the *adagio* leaves off – literally, as it opens with a rapid-fire restatement of the delicate violin arpeggio that closed the previous movement. This leads into a flurry of perpetual-motion runs that are only occasionally punctuated by more restrained music, propelling the quartet towards its breathless finish.

About the Artists

Since its inception in 1992, the **Brentano String Quartet** has appeared throughout the world to popular and critical acclaim. "Passionate, uninhibited and spellbinding," raves the London Independent; the New York Times extols its "luxuriously warm sound [and] yearning lyricism." Since 2014, the Quartet has served as Artists in Residence at Yale University, succeeding the Tokyo Quartet, and also currently serves as the collaborative ensemble for the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. Previously, they were longtime Artists in Residence at Princeton University.

In addition to their interest in performing very old music, the Brentano Quartet frequently collaborates with contemporary composers. Recent commissions include a piano quintet by Vijay Iyer, a work by Eric Moe (with Christine Brandes, soprano), and a quintet by Felipe Lara (with violist Hsin-Yun Huang). In 2012, the Quartet provided the central music (Beethoven's Opus 131) for the critically-acclaimed independent film *A Late Quartet*.

The quartet has worked closely with other important composers of our time, among them Elliot Carter, Charles Wuorinen, Chou Wen-chung, Bruce Adolphe, and György Kurtág. The Quartet has also been privileged to collaborate with such artists as sopranos Jessye Norman, Dawn Upshaw, and Joyce DiDonato, and pianists Richard Goode, Jonathan Biss, and Mitsuko Uchida.

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. For more information on their activities, visit their website, brentanoquartet.com.

Violist **Hsin-Yun Huang** has forged a career performing on international concert stages, commissioning and recording new works, and nurturing young musicians. Ms. Huang first came to international attention as the gold medalist in the 1988 Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition. In 1993 she was the top prize winner in the ARD International Competition in Munich and was awarded the highly prestigious Bunkamura Orchard Hall Award. A native of Taiwan, she received degrees from the Yehudi Menuhin School, the Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School. She was inspired to play the viola when she fell in love with Haydn's Quartets. She now serves on the faculties of Juilliard and Curtis and lives in New York City with her husband, Misha Amory of the Brentano String Quartet, and their two children, Lucas and Leah. More information on her performances can be found her website, hsinyunhuang.com.

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