

**Serenade for Strings in C minor,
K. 406 (K. 516b)**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

The year 1786 was the zenith of Mozart's career in Vienna. Perhaps because of intrigue but more probably because the geometrical expansion of deep expression in his newest music did not suit the fickle taste of the Viennese, his local popularity began to wane. Though he tried to economize by moving from his spacious apartment in the Schullerstrasse (now a Mozart museum, just behind the Stephansdom, known as the "Figaro House") to a smaller flat at 224 Landstrasse, he could not abandon his taste for fine clothes and elegant entertaining, and took on debts, several of which were to the textile merchant Michael Puchberg, a fellow Mason. On April 2, 1787, an announcement signed by Mozart appeared in the *Wiener Zeitung* stating that he was offering for sale by subscription three new quintets, "finely and correctly written," which would be available at Puchberg's establishment after July 1st. The intention was apparently that Puchberg would keep the proceeds to repay a debt. To create the promised trio of works (18th-century publishing practice demanded that instrumental works usually be issued in sets of three, six, or 12), Mozart created anew the quintets in C major (K. 515) and G minor (K. 516), and arranged the magnificent Wind Octet in C minor (K. 388) for five strings (K. 406, corrected to K. 516b in Einstein's revisions of Köchel's catalog). The quintets were completed in April and May during a hectic interruption in the composition of *Don Giovanni* (those same weeks saw Mozart's only meeting with Beethoven when the 16-year-old Bonn musician came to Vienna for a fortnight of lessons, and the death of Papa Leopold Mozart in Salzburg), but the number of subscribers was so small that Mozart placed another advertisement in the Viennese press on June 25th. This, too, was largely ignored, and the project was dropped, though Artaria & Co. brought out K. 515 in 1789 and K. 516 a year later. Mozart returned to the string quintet form in December 1790 and April 1791 with works in D major (K. 593) and E-flat (K. 614) for the wealthy Hungarian amateur violinist Johann Tost. They were the last pieces of chamber music that he wrote.

The Serenade for Eight Winds in C minor on which the String Quintet, K. 406, is based occupies a special place in Mozart's output as his only piece of "entertainment" music in a minor key. The occasion and patron for whom it was written are unknown, and even the exact date of its composition is uncertain. It is possible that he referred to it in a letter of July 27, 1782, where he wrote that he was composing a *Nacht Musique*—a "night music" or serenade—"in a great hurry." Though he did not identify the work completely, it may well have been this serenade, since he stated that the new composition was for winds. It has been conjectured that the work was written for the composer's musician friends in Vienna, either as listeners or as performers. Certainly the dramatic nature of the music and the elaborate technical machinations of the third movement indicate that it was not intended for a simple outdoor party, but rather for a sophisticated audience that would give it the same attention usually accorded to a fine symphony or quartet. It was virtually Mozart's final essay in the form of entertainment music, succeeded only by *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (K. 525) and *The Musical Joke* (K. 522). In it, he heralded the deepening spiritual resources of such later works as his Piano Concerto in C minor (K. 491) and *Don Giovanni*, and even looked forward to Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, also in C minor.

Of the emotional milieu of this composition, Alfred Einstein wrote, "If G minor is the fatalistic key for Mozart, then C minor is the dramatic one, the key of contrasts between aggressive unisons and lyric passages. The lyric quality is always overtaken by gloomy outbursts." The first movement opens with just such an "aggressive unison" in long note values that establishes the deeply emotional nature of the entire work. Following a brief silence (Mozart's characteristic marker for this important structural junction), the lyrical second theme is played in the brighter tonality of E-flat major. The development is given over to sighing figures derived from the main theme. The recapitulation recalls the thematic material from the exposition, but maintains the dark color of the minor tonality to the stern closing measures of the movement.

The second movement is a lyrical song in sonata form with the moonlit overtones of an



operatic love scene. The third movement is one of Mozart's most elaborate contrapuntal inventions. The minuet proper is in strict canon (i.e., exact imitation, like a round) between the first violin and the cello, with the other instruments filling in the harmony. The central Trio, occupying yet another level of polyphonic complexity, is written in *canone al rovescio*, or "canon in reverse." The new canon melody of the Trio is played both in its original version and upside-down, in mirror image, by the four voices of violins, first viola, and cello. This pedanticism (derived from Mozart's careful study of the works of Bach) can be clearly heard in the music, but, as with all of his compositions, it results in a beautiful, euphonious whole that may be enjoyed without the slightest bother about its compositional technique. The finale is a set of variations on a 16-measure theme announced at the outset by the first violin. The dark shadow of C minor passes from the music in the closing pages for a high-spirited galop in C major to the end.

**Violin Concerto in D minor
Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)**

In addition to being born with the proverbial silver spoon, Felix Mendelssohn was virtually bestowed a golden baton as a natal gift. His parents' household was among the most cultured and affluent in all of Berlin, but his family saw to it that his privilege was well balanced by discipline and responsibility. Young Felix arose at 5:00 every morning (6:00 on Sunday), and

spent several hours in private tutoring with the best available teachers. When his musical talents became obvious in his early years, he was first given instruction in piano, and soon thereafter in theory and composition by the distinguished pedagogue Carl Friedrich Zelter. Mendelssohn's earliest dated composition is a cantata completed on January 3, 1820, three weeks before his 11th birthday, though this work was almost certainly preceded by others whose exact dates are not recorded. To display the boy's blossoming musical abilities, the Mendelssohn mansion was turned into a twice-monthly concert hall featuring the precocious youngster's achievements. A large summer house was fitted as an auditorium seating several hundred people, and every other Sunday morning the city's finest musicians were brought in to perform both repertory works and the latest flowers of Mendelssohn's creativity. These matinees—complemented by an elegant luncheon—began in 1822, when Mendelssohn was 13 years old. He selected the programs, led the rehearsals, appeared as piano soloist, played violin in the chamber pieces, and even conducted, though in those early years he was still too short to be seen by the players in the back rows unless he stood on a stool. With sister Fanny participating as pianist, sister Rebecca as singer, and brother Paul as cellist, it is little wonder that invitations to these happy gatherings were among the most eagerly sought and highly prized of any in Berlin society. By 1825, Mendelssohn had written over 80 works for these concerts, including operas and operettas, string quartets and

other chamber pieces, concertos, motets, and a series of 13 symphonies for strings.

A frequent participant in the Mendelssohn Sunday matinees was Eduard Rietz, a close friend of young Felix and a violinist of excellent talent and taste. Rietz, born in Berlin in 1802 (just seven years before Mendelssohn), was the son of a musical family—his father was a musician at the Prussian court; his brother, Julius, a noted cellist, conductor, and composer, succeeded Mendelssohn as director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts upon the composer's death in 1847 and edited his complete works for publication in the 1870s. Mendelssohn began violin lessons in 1816 with Carl Wilhelm Henning, a respected member of the Berlin Opera orchestra, but he soon thereafter requested that his instruction be taken over by Rietz. In appreciation and friendship, he composed the Violin Concerto in D minor for Rietz in 1822, and three years later presented him with the superb Octet for Strings as a birthday gift. (Young Felix is thought to have played one of the viola parts at the work's premiere in October.) It was Rietz who wrote out Mendelssohn's study score of the *St. Matthew Passion* from Bach's original manuscript (which Zelter had rescued from a cheese monger who intended to use it as wrapping paper), and who both copied out the parts for his friend's epochal revival of the work in 1829 and acted as concertmaster, refusing payment for any of his services. Rietz and Mendelssohn remained close, and Felix was deeply grieved by Eduard's premature death from consumption in January 1832, at the age of 30. "He was my favorite violinist," Mendelssohn wrote. "The knowledge that there was such a man in the world, one in whom you could repose, and who lived to love you, and whose wishes and aims were identical with your own—that is all over. It is the most severe blow I have ever received. Never can I forget him." As a memorial to Rietz, he composed the touching Adagio that became the slow movement of the String Quintet in A major, Op. 18.

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in D minor of 1822 (the E-minor Concerto, one of the most beloved and frequently performed works in the violinist's repertory, was written 22 years later) comprises the conventional three move-

ments of the Mozartian model, though there are everywhere evidences of the young composer's distinctive techniques and elegant manner of expression. The work opens with a long orchestral introduction that presents the first movement's two dominant thematic ideas: a falling scalar figure in quick notes followed by the tonic chord broken into a rising arpeggio, and, two dozen measures later, a gentler motive that moves gradually upward by small steps. The violin enters and provides flowing embellishments around these thematic materials. There is a certain exuberantly youthful showing-off in the lengthy and adventurous development section, but Mendelssohn's innate sense of good taste and formal balance exerted itself by omitting the gentle second theme from the recapitulation. The young composer may have regarded the Andante, whose form and forward direction are rather wayward and diffuse, as an experiment in harmony, a way of seeing how chromaticism, modulation, and passages in minor keys could heighten the emotional effect of the D-major tonality in which the movement begins and ends. The finale is a nimble rondo of featherstitched figurations and buoyant spirits that seems to defy its firmly maintained minor mode.

Serenade for Strings in E major, Op. 22 Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

In the mid-1860s, Emperor Franz Joseph, in a magnanimous burst of generosity, established a State Commission to award grants to aid struggling artists in the eastern provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the summer of 1874, less than a year after his marriage and just as the newlyweds were expecting their first child, the young Bohemian composer Antonín Dvořák decided to apply for the prize to supplement his meager income as organist at Prague's St. Adalbert Church. He first presented himself at the Prague City Hall to obtain official certification of his poverty, and then gathered together a hefty stack of his recent scores—the Third and Fourth Symphonies; the *Dvur Kralové* Songs; the overtures to the operas *Alfred* and *King and Charcoal Burner*; a later-destroyed *Romeo and Juliet* overture; a piano quintet; and a string quartet—and sent them with his application for assistance to Vienna.

The members of the grants committee were a most distinguished lot—Johann Herbeck, director of the Court Opera; the renowned critic Eduard Hanslick; and the titan of Viennese music himself, Johannes Brahms. Their report noted that Dvořák possessed "genuine and original gifts" and that his works displayed "an undoubted talent, but in a way that as yet remains formless and unbridled." They deemed his work worthy of encouragement and, on their recommendation, the Minister of Culture, Karl Stremayer, awarded the young musician 400 gulden, the highest stipend bestowed under the program. It represented Dvořák's first recognition outside his homeland, and his initial contact with Brahms and Hanslick, both of whom would prove to be powerful influences on his career through their example, artistic guidance, and professional help. An excited burst of compositional activity followed during the months after Dvořák learned of his award, in February 1875: the String Quartet in G major, the *Moravian Duets* for soprano and tenor (it was these delectable pieces that, when he submitted them to support an application for another government grant three years later, caused Brahms to recommend him to the publisher Simrock), the Piano Trio in B-flat, the Piano Quartet in D major, the String Quintet in E-flat, the

Symphony No. 5, and the lovely Serenade for Strings all appeared with inspired speed.

The Serenade for Strings, Op. 22, written in only 11 days in May 1875, is one of Dvořák's most popular compositions. In his classic study of the composer's music, Otakar Sourek noted that the piece is "mainly cast in a poetic mood, with an overtone of ardent longing, yet not altogether devoid of a certain cheerful gaiety." As its name implies, this work is lighter in character, simpler in structure, and less weighty in argument than the larger orchestral genres. The gentle opening movement is cast in a three-part form whose outer sections grow from a short, songful phrase presented immediately by the second violins. The movement's central portion is based on a melodic motive that tours up and down the chords of the harmony in tripping rhythms. A sweetly nostalgic waltz is presented as the second movement. The third movement is a fully developed scherzo with a bright, good-natured main theme and intervening lyrical episodes. The deepest emotions of the Serenade are plumbed in the Larghetto, a tenderly romantic song of almost Tchaikovskyan introspection. Reminiscences of this music and of the opening movement occur during the vivacious finale, a lively folk dance brimming with bubbling high spirits.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Bonucci, Jean-Bernard Pommier, Giora Feidman, and Alexander Lonquich.

From 1992 to 1995, Boris Belkin was artistic director of the Salzburg Chamber Soloists. During his tenure, the orchestra released two CDs of works by Mozart.

In 1993, the Soloists made their first major tour of South America. Another major success were the group's concerts at "La Folle Journée Mozart" in Nantes, France, in February 1995. That same year, the ensemble completed its second tour of South America, and was cited by critics as the best foreign orchestra to perform at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, that season.

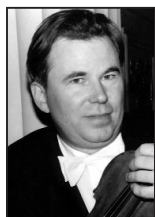
Since then, the orchestra has performed in the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), the Philharmonie (Berlin), the Théâtre des Champs Élysées

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

(Paris), the Tonhalle (Zurich), and other important concert halls.

The Salzburg Chamber Soloists are regular guests at various festivals, including Academia Chigiana in Siena, the Turku Musikfestival in Finland, the Mozart Festival in Würzburg, the Schubertiade in Roskilde, and the Salzburger Kulturtag. In 2001, the orchestra was invited to Lebanon to perform the final concert of the Baalbeck Festival.

In January 2002, the ensemble toured Germany with actress Senta Berger, performing a program entitled *8 Seasons*, featuring music by Antonio Vivaldi and Astor Piazzolla.



Lavar Skou-Larsen (*artistic director, violin, leader*) was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil. He first took violin lessons at the age of four from his father, Gunnar. Later, he studied with Ernst Moravec in Vienna.

Skou-Larsen was admitted to the Mozarteum in Salzburg at age 14 to study with Helmut Zehetmair, and earned a performance diploma with distinction. He later completed a postgraduate diploma program under Sandor Végh.

Skou-Larsen has won many prizes, both as soloist and chamber musician, including the Concertino Prague and the Sergio Lorenzi in Triest. He was a member of the Camerata Academica under Sandor Végh from 1983–86. Skou-Larsen has been teaching violin at the Mozarteum since 1991, the same year he founded the Salzburg Chamber Soloists.

Skou-Larsen has been invited to perform with leading symphony and chamber orchestras in Europe and South America—as leader, concertmaster, and conductor—including the European Union Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonietta Amsterdam, Orchestra Internazionale d'Italia, Orchestre de Chambre de Geneve, Orchestra Sinfonica de Porto Alegre, and many others.

In 1997, he and pianist Alexander Müllenbach released the first-ever recordings of music by the Brazilian composer Camargo M. Guarnieris.



Lena Neudauer (*violin*) was born in Munich in 1984 and began violin lessons shortly before her fourth birthday with Helge Thelen; later, she studied with Sonja Korkeala. From 1995 to 2003, she was a student of Helmut Zehet-

mair at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, and of his son, Thomas Zehetmair, at the University of Arts in Graz, Austria. Since 2003, she has studied with Christoph Poppen in Munich. At age six, she also started to take piano lessons with Viera Fischer. Master classes with Felix Andrievsky, Ana Chumachenco, Ljerko Spiller, and Wolfgang Marschner completed her education.

Neudauer made her first concerto appearances at age 11, and in 1996, she toured Japan with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra. Many concerts followed in Germany, Austria, France, Russia, Bulgaria, and Switzerland. In 1999, she played the Sibelius Violin Concerto in an ORF-TV production in Graz. In 2001, she performed music by Mozart at the Mozartwoche in Salzburg.

Neudauer scored a great success at the 4th International Violin Competition “Leopold Mozart” in Augsburg, Germany, in November 1999, where she won four major prizes.

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