Wednesday, April 22, 2009, 8pm
First Congregational Church

Quatuor Mosaïques

Erich Höbarth, *violin*
Andrea Bischof, *violin*
Anita Mitterer, *viola*
Christophe Coin, *cello*

PROGRAM

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) — String Quartet in C minor, D. 703, "Quartettsatz" (1820)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) — String Quartet in C major, K. 465, "Dissonance" (1785)

Adagio; Allegro
Andante cantabile
Menuetto: Allegro
Allegro

INTERMISSION

Schubert — String Quartet in D minor, D. 810, "Der Tod und das Mädchen" (1824)

Allegro
Andante con moto
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Presto

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Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
String Quartet in C minor, D. 703, "Quartettsatz" (1820)

Between 1818 and 1822, Schubert left several pieces incomplete—most famously, the "Unfinished" Symphony No. 8 in B minor, but also three other symphonies, an unfinished oratorio, and three unfinished piano sonatas. The so-called "Quartettsatz" (quartet movement), written in December 1820, was another such work. What remains of this string quartet is not only the first movement *Allegro*, but also 41 measures of an *Andante*. Like many details of Schubert's life, the reasons for its lack of completion remain unclear. He might have been distracted by upheaval in his living situation. After living in a small apartment for two years with his friend Johann Mayrhofer, a poet of notoriously difficult and melancholy character, for about two years, the increasing strain in their relationship finally persuaded Schubert to move out in January 1821. However, given the sheer number of works he left unfinished over his career, the reason might lie outside any specific event. Schubert may have simply stopped working on a piece when he did not like direction he was going with it, finding it more useful to move on to something else entirely.

Whatever the circumstances that kept him from finishing the piece, the "Quartettsatz" is an important work in Schubert's development as a composer, particularly of string quartets. He wrote more than 20 quartets in his lifetime, four of which have disappeared and five that exist only in a fragmentary or incomplete state. Ten of the completed quartets were composed before the age of 20, but these early essays in the genre are uneven in quality. The first known quartet is from 1811, the String Quartet in mixed keys D. 18, a five-movement work with an unconventional key structure across the movements. Schubert continued to write at least one quartet a year until 1816, when his production of chamber works dropped off significantly. In the four years that passed between quartets, Schubert had gained valuable experience writing piano and symphonic works. The C minor *Allegro* brings a new maturity, displaying a sureness of musical language previously unheard in his quartets.

The dramatic opening phrase introduces an intensity and rhythmic drive that remains throughout the movement, and it also provides musical material that is used and re-used throughout the piece. The ironic first theme in C minor is based on a motive from the opening. It soon gives way to an expansive theme in A-flat major, the relative major of the tonic key. This theme, the first of the second group, uses registral changes to great advantage in the first violin and cello, while the inner voices provide an insistent motor rhythm. After a transition marked by repeated runs in the high range of the first violin, the final theme of the second group closes in the exposition in the dominant key of G major. After a tumultuous development based primarily on the C minor theme, the recapitulation brings back the second group first, taking a harmonic detour before returning to the tonic key. The opening figure finally resurfaces in its complete version to close out the movement.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)
String Quartet in C major, K. 465, "Dissonance" (1785)

"Before God, and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste, and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition." This, according to a letter written by Leopold Mozart to his daughter, was Joseph Haydn's pronouncement upon hearing the string quartets K. 458, K. 464 and K. 465, the final three in the set that Mozart would eventually dedicate to the older composer. Haydn had already listened with approval to the first three, K. 387, K. 421 and K. 428, at a private performance a month earlier in January 1785. Haydn's judgment—of both the composer and the quartets—would be upheld by later generations. The so-called Haydn quartets have remained central to the quartet repertory, especially the "Hunt" Quartet, K. 458, and the "Dissonance" Quartet, K. 465.

According to Mozart's own handwritten catalogue of his works and supporting evidence, the quartets were written over the course of about two years, albeit with a significant break

in middle. He probably composed the first three between December 1782 and July 1783. The dates for K. 421 and K. 428 are uncertain, however; the best evidence for the former is provided by his wife Costanze, who told friends in 1829 that Mozart had been working on the piece while she was in labor with their first child (born June 17, 1783)—providing not only a possible date of composition, but also an interesting glimpse into the domestic life of the Mozarts. The final three quartets of the set were entered into the handwritten catalogue between November 1784 and January 1785. The entire set was published, to some fanfare, in September 1785.

Mozart's decision to dedicate these quartets to Haydn might have been as much financially motivated as out of admiration and appreciation. While a dedication to a member of the nobility might have paid well directly, the presence of Haydn's name on the score provided a different type of monetary reward. After all, Haydn was the pre-eminent composer of the day, and dedicating a work to him was very shrewd marketing—and the publishing house Artaria was quick to emphasize the connection between Haydn and Mozart in their newspaper announcement of the new works. In the customary flowery language of the day, Mozart acknowledged the importance of his meetings with Haydn in the dedication printed with the score:

> To my dear friend Haydn,
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> A father who had resolved to send his children out into the great world took it to be his duty to confide them to the protection and guidance of a very celebrated Man, especially when the latter by good fortune was at the same time his best Friend. Here they are then, O great Man and dearest Friend, these six children of mine. They are, it is true, the fruit of a long and laborious endeavor, yet the hope inspired in my by several Friends that it may be at least partly compensated encourages me, and I flatter myself that this offspring will serve to afford me solace one day. You, yourself, dearest friend, told me of your satisfaction with them during your last Visit to this Capital. It is this indulgence above all which urges me to commend them to you and encourages me to hope that they will not seem to you altogether unworthy of your favor. May it therefore please you to receive them kindly and to be their Father, Guide and Friend! From this moment I resign to you all my rights in them, begging you however to look indulgently upon the defects which the partiality of a Father's eye may have concealed from me, and in spite of them to continue in your generous Friendship for him who so greatly values it, in expectation of which I am, with all of my Heart, my dearest Friend, your most Sincere Friend,
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> —W. A. Mozart

The youngest of these "children," the Quartet in C major, K. 465, takes its nickname from the *Adagio* introduction to the first movement. Much ink has been spilled over these 22 measures in centuries since their composition, not all of it complimentary. Italian composer Giuseppe Sarti, a contemporary of Mozart's whose aesthetic outrage might have been mixed with a touch of professional envy, recorded his objections in his *Esame acustico fatto sopra due frammenti di Mozart* ("Acoustic Examination of Two Fragments by Mozart"), taking issue with both the dissonant *Adagio* and the development section in K. 421's first movement. C. F. Cramer, editor of the *Magasin der Musik*, complained in 1787 that the Haydn quartets "may well be called too highly seasoned—and whose palate can endure this for long?" Though he specified no specific pieces, the dissonant *Adagio* seems to be a likely candidate for this rebuke. As late as 1829, musicologist and critic François-Joseph Fétis went so far as to publish corrections of the offending passages, assuming (as some earlier critics had) that the score was marred by printer's errors. Perhaps the most extraordinary artifact of the quartet's reception is an 1832 issue of the German music journal *Cäcilia* that devoted some 50 pages to discussing the almost 50-year-old harmonic controversy. Included in that issue was a quote attributed Haydn, saying, "if this is what Mozart wrote, than this is what Mozart meant"—an attitude which is perhaps taken for granted by modern audiences.

In fact, the harmony of the opening is not that outrageous for the late 18th century. There are some striking clashes, between the A and A-flat in measure two for instance, and the unfolding of the chords fails to establish a key at the outset of the piece. Yet by the end of the introduction, G major is clearly established as the dominant key, leading directly into the C major *Allegro*. From that point, the quartet's moniker is almost a misnomer, for the harmony in the remainder of the movement is as sunny and clear and as the introduction is hazy and mysterious. This movement is mostly easily understood as a type of sonata-allegro form, introducing two thematic groups in contrasting keys in the exposition, working through some of that musical material in the development, and returning to the thematic groups in the recapitulation, but this time remaining in the tonic key. The deceptively simple first theme is really the central theme of the movement, and it appears in many different guises—with a contrapuntal treatment, as a closing theme to the exposition, as a bass line, and syncopated in the coda. The second group is less remarkable and serves primarily as a foil, though the jaunty, syncopated triplets of the subsidiary theme provide momentum and charm.

The *Andante cantabile* opens with a dignified yet beautifully expressive theme set over a simple accompaniment, taking on an almost operatic texture. A second thematic group is ushered in by an ostinato in the cello, a repeated pattern that returns at strategic points in the movement. The second group achieves even greater tenderness than the first, especially with its poignant turn to minor. The recapitulation of the first theme, which follows the second theme directly, is ornamented as an aria might be. The movement closes quietly with the gentle cello ostinato.

The third movement *Menuetto* comprises a variety of thematic elements, from lightly textured dance music to a clumsy unison figure played *forte*. Bookended by the G major *Menuetto*, the B-flat minor *Trio* is much more unified in tone, featuring a disjointed melody over eighth-note accompaniment. Like the *Menuetto*, the fourth movement emphasizes textural contrast. The finale is a rustic, energetic contradance, whose high energy almost conceals the underlying sonata-allegro structure. The movement also features shifts to unexpected tonalities, included three false recapitulations on E. To compensate, the coda is extended and decisively affirms the C major tonic.

Schubert
String Quartet in D minor, D. 810, "Der Tod und das Mädchen" (1824)

In a letter of March 31, 1824, to his friend Leopold Kupelweiser, Schubert wrote of his great despair at his continuing battle with syphilis:

> In a word, I feel myself to be the most unhappy and wretched creature in the world. Imagine a man whose health will never be right again, and who in sheer despair over this ever makes things worse and worse, instead of better; imagine a man, I say, whose most brilliant hopes have perished, to whom the felicity of love and friendship have nothing to offer but pain, at best, whom enthusiasm (at least of the stimulating kind) for all things beautiful threatens to forsake, and I ask you, is he not a miserable, unhappy being?

"'My peace is gone, my heart is sore, I shall find it and nevermore,'" he continued, quoting the Goethe poem *Gretchen am Spinnrade* ("Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel") that he had set to music ten years earlier. "I may well sing every day now, for each night, I got to bed hoping never to wake again, and each morning only tells me of yesterday's grief."

This letter is often cited to indicate the hopelessness that consumed the young composer in the early months of 1824. After the symptoms of syphilis appeared, probably in late 1822, Schubert was hospitalized several times and withdrew from social interaction. He seemed to improve over the summer, however, feeling well enough by November to write to a friend, "My health, thank God, seems to be firmly restored at last." Unfortunately, this was only a brief reprieve; by early March 1824, he was prescribed a new treatment and a stricter regimen. The above letter, along with five disconsolate journal entries written around the same time, attests

to his depression over the state of his health. Many historians have read this depression into works that Schubert composed at the time, including the String Quartet in D minor, D. 810, with its second movement theme and variations on his lied *Der Tod und das Mädchen* ("Death and the Maiden").

Yet one must always be cautious when looking for correlations between a composer's life and his works. While the Schubert was obviously despondent, the rest of the letter does not sound like the words of a man who was completely defeated. He goes on to discuss more mundane matters—his complaints about the decline of his reading circle, which had been taken over by "beer-drinkers" and "sausage-eaters," his recent compositions and plans for a symphony, and a concert he wanted to organize for Vienna that would feature only his works (a rather unusual event for the time). He was still ambitious, looking toward the future and making plans for composing.

His seemingly indulgent talk of unhappiness, if not exactly hyperbole, may have been rather more strategic than it first appears. Schubert's notebooks reveal a belief in the creative potential of suffering, a potential that nonetheless needed to be harnessed and focused. As he wrote, "There is no one who understands the pain or the joy of others! … What I produce is there because of my musical understand and my sorrow; what sorrow alone has produced seems to give the least pleasure to the world." This excerpt explicitly contradicts the idea of a composer pouring forth his sorrows on the page; in order to compose well, one needed to incorporate both emotion and musical skill. And indeed, these first months of 1824 were incredibly productive for Schubert. He seemed to be following the advice given to him by his father after he had first shown symptoms of disease: "We most not let our spirits sink in gloomy circumstances either, for sorrows too are a blessing from God and lead those who manfully endure to the most glorious goal. Where in history is to be found a great man who did not win the victory through suffering and unflinching perseverance?"

The D minor Quartet could very well be the type of goal to which Papa Schubert referred. This somber work is generally considered to be Schubert's greatest string quartet. The first movement is characterized by concision of means and an almost unrelenting minor-key tension. It opens with a bold, almost defiant triplet figure that recurs throughout the movement, providing a nervous underlying momentum. The aggression of the first theme is balanced in the second thematic group by a singing Italianate tune that first appears in F major. This tune forms the basis for much of the development section. After the recapitulation, there is a coda based on material from the first group that takes an unexpected harmonic turn before closing *pianissimo*.

Der Tod und das Mädchen, the lied that gives the quartet its nickname, was composed by Schubert in 1817. The D minor Quartet is actually the third time he used the theme; it appears as well in *Der Jüngling und der Tod* ("The Young Man and Death"), another lied written only a month after the original. In this G minor movement, the theme is presented in a restrained, almost static manner, with square rhythms played *pianissimo*. Rhythmic interest increases slightly in the first variation, aided by pizzicato in the cello; roles reverse in the second variation, with the cello playing the melody and the upper strings decorating. The third variation has the most rhythmic drive, while the fourth variation, played *legato* and in the major key, provides the greatest overall contrast. After a return to the minor in the fifth variation, the coda of the movement closes softly.

Returning to D minor, the third movement *Scherzo* opens with a striking syncopation that pervades the section. The contrasting *Trio* section is lyrical and graceful, but cannot avoid slipping from D major to minor at certain points. The minor key prevails in the final movement as well. It features the breathless tarantella rhythm, based on the Italian folk dance allegedly caused by the bite of a tarantula. The tarantella figure plays against a bold, chorale-like phrase that reappears throughout the movement but can never quite stem the tarantella's perpetual motion. It almost seems that the major key will hold out until the end, but the minor key wrenches back control at the very end.

Though he began and likely finished composition of the piece in 1824, Schubert's first rehearsals did not take place until late January 1826, and he was still making significant revisions. The first known private performances took place shortly afterward, so he must have been pleased with the results. Unfortunately, the early reception of the quartet was impeded by the composer's inability to get the work published. In 1820s Vienna, publishers were far more inclined to issue songs and piano works, the types of domestic music that were proven moneymakers. We know from a letter of February 1828 that he offered it for publication to B. Schott's Sons, yet they must have declined. The quartet was published by the Czerny firm, but not until July 1831, almost three years after Schubert's death.

Camille Peters

Camille Peters is a Ph.D. candidate in musicology in the UC Berkeley Department of Music.

Program Notes

Wolfgang Krautzer

The **Quatuor Mosaïques** is the most prominent period-instrument quartet performing today. The ensemble has garnered praise for their atypical decision to use gut-stringed instruments which, in combination with their celebrated musicianship, has cultivated a unique sound for the group. The Quatuor has toured extensively, won numerous prizes and established a substantial discography. Formed in 1985, the group comprises Austrians Erich Höbarth (*violin*), Andrea Bischof (*violin*) and Anita Mitterer (*viola*), and the French cellist Christophe Coin. The Quatuor has performed in Europe, the United States, Australia and Japan. They are also regular guests at prestigious European festivals, such as Edinburgh, Salzburg, Lucerne, Bremen, Bath, Styriarte Graz, Schubertiade Schwarzenberg and Oslo, among others. The Quatuor performs regularly in Vienna, London's Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Berlin's Philharmonie. The Quatuor has performed with many international artists including pianists András Schiff and Patrick Cohen, clarinetists Wolfgang Meyer and Sabine Meyer and cellists Miklós Perényi and Raphael Pidoux. In 2006, the Quatuor Mosaïques was invited to Spain to perform for King Juan Carlos I, using the Monarch's personal collection of Stradivari instruments.

The Quatuor Mosaïques has an extensive discography which includes works of Haydn, Mozart, Arriaga, Boccherini, Jadin, Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn, as well as works by modern composers. Their recordings of the "Wiener Klassik" repertoire (Haydn's string quartets Opp. 20, 33 and 77 and the quartets of Mozart dedicated to Haydn) have been awarded numerous prizes such as the Diapason d'Or the Choc du Monde de la Musique and a *Gramophone* Award.

These four musicians met in the 1980s while performing with Nikolaus Harnoncourt's Concentus Musicus, and decided to perform on original instruments as a classical "caper quartet." Although the Quatuor performs on period instruments, it embraces the European quartet tradition, constantly allowing for the evolution of their repertoire as it strives to reveal the music's psychological underpinnings.

Erich Höbarth was born in Vienna, where he studied with Grete Biedermann and Franz Samohyl, and later at the Musikhochschules of Vienna and Salzburg. He was a member of the Végh Quartet from 1978 to 1980, and subsequently held the position of *Konzertmeister* of the Wiener Symphoniker for seven years. Since 1981, Mr. Höbarth has been *Konzertmeister* and soloist for the Concentus Musicus Wien; he also teaches at the Musikhochschule in Vienna.

Andrea Bischof was born in Vorarlberg and studied in Vienna with Grete Biedermann and Thomas Christian. Since 1980, she has held the position of *Konzertmeisterin* and soloist of the Austrian Bach Soloists, and is also a permanent member of the Concentus Musicus and Professor of Chamber Music at the Musikhochschule in Vienna.

Anita Mitterer was born in Lienz in the Ostirrol, and studied with Jürgen Geise in Salzburg, Antonín Moravec in Prague and Thomas Christian in Vienna. She is a member of the Concentus Musicus and Director of the Baroque Ensemble of Salzburg, and she teaches violin and viola at the Mozarteum in Salzburg.

Christophe Coin was born in Caen, and studied with André Navarra in Paris, Nikolaus Harnoncourt in Vienna and Jordi Savall in Bâle. He has performed with the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, Concentus Musicus of Vienna and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, among many others. Mr. Coin teaches Baroque violin and viola de gamba at the National Conservatory of Music in Paris and at the Schola Cantorum in Bâle. He teaches annually at the International Academies of Granada and Innsbruck and gives master-classes throughout France.

Mr. Höbarth plays a Joseph Guarnerius violin made in Cremona in 1705. Ms. Bischof plays a violin made in France in the 18th century, maker unknown. Ms. Mitterer plays a Carolus le Pot viola made in Lille in 1725. Mr. Coin plays an Alessandro Gagliano cello made in Naples.

Sightlines

Quatuor Mosaïques
Wednesday, April 22, 2009, 7–7:30 pm
First Congregational Church

Pre-performance talk by Professor Nicholas Mathew, UC Berkeley Department of Music.

This *Sightlines* talk is free to event ticket holders.