



presents

Eric Hoeprich and The London Haydn Quartet

Eric Hoeprich, clarinet – Catherine Manson and Michael Gurevich, violins
John Crockatt, viola – Jonathan Manson, cello

January 14, 2017 (Saturday) at 7:30 pm
Schwan Hall – Wisconsin Lutheran College

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Clarinet Quintet in A, K581

Allegro – Larghetto
Menuetto – Allegretto con variazioni

The jewels in the crown of Mozart's *oeuvre* for clarinet are without question the Quintet for clarinet and strings K581, and the Clarinet Concerto K622, both composed for his friend, Anton Stadler. By 1789, Stadler had risen far above the station of "arme Schlucker," as Mozart described him in 1782, and become well established in Viennese musical life. In 1787, he and his brother were appointed to the *K.K. Hofkapelle*, where they received the considerable annual salary of 400 florins. From Mozart's entry in his "Verzeichnüss aller meiner Werke," we know that K581 was completed on September 29, 1789. Unfortunately the autograph has been lost, but various bits of evidence relating both to K581 and to K622 can be pieced together to produce a convincing version of what the composer intended.

Without question, Stadler possessed a special clarinet, a "basset" clarinet, capable of playing a third lower than a conventional clarinet. The shape and design of the instrument was revealed on discovery of programmes in Riga containing illustrations of Stadler's instrument. Mozart made liberal use of these low notes in both works, usually through extended arpeggiation, and occasionally in melodic figures. The range spans more than three octaves and allows the clarinet to act as a soprano as well as a baritone, often alternating between the two in a sort of uncanny operatic dialogue.

The Quintet was first performed on 22 December, 1789 in a concert for the *Tonkünstler Societät* in Vienna's *Hoftheater*, with Stadler playing his special clarinet. The work can certainly be included among the most beloved of Mozart's compositions. It manages to encompass everything that chamber music should. As the clarinet moves in and out of the ensemble, one minute a part of the "tutti" texture, the next, a glorious soloist, we listen to Mozart's unending inventiveness and complete mastery, a music that is intimate, varied, expressive, humorous, perfectly balanced and always engaging.

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
String Quartet, op 18 no 3 in D

Allegro – Andante con moto
Allegro – Presto

To begin his D major quartet, Beethoven makes use of the same trick as Haydn in the opening of op 50 no 1 by starting with one instrument playing alone for two bars. However, where Haydn had the lowest instrument repeating one note eight times, Beethoven has the highest instrument play two notes which introduce the interval from which the whole work finds its source; the choice of the ascending minor seventh as a starting point is a revolutionary stroke of genius. The conjunction of the question posed by this ambiguous interval together with the radiance of the ascending scale motif in the bass line is something which leaves its impression on us throughout the piece.

The choice of the key of B-flat for the *Andante* lends a suspended feeling to the movement as though it is taking place in a dream world. Certainly, its hugely expanded development with forays into the remote and rarely visited keys of D-flat major and E-flat minor creates a beautiful but highly unstable environment, with the original minor seventh from the first movement still making playing a strategic role.

Back in the daylight of D major again, the scherzo finds a quirky playfulness, amusing itself both with elements from the first movement and setting up new games to play in the finale. The high-spirited tarantella-style dance which finishes the work certainly shares plenty in common with Haydn finales (for instance op 33 no 2) but it concludes with a coda surely influenced by Mozart's 'Jupiter' symphony in its particular form of ingenuity. Here Beethoven devises a denouement in which all the elements of the work are combined; the original seventh is finally replaced by a triumphant octave and the original ascending scale is allowed to turn round and skip back down again providing resolution for every element with the best possible humour.

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Intermission

Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)

Clarinet Quintet, op 34

Allegro

Fantasia. Adagio ma non troppo

Menuetto. Capriccio Presto

Rondo. Allegro giojoso

Three pinnacles loom high above the range of the repertoire for clarinet & string quartet: the works by Mozart, Weber and Brahms. In each instance their inspiration came from an outstanding clarinetist who befriended the composer and motivated him to write a piece of unsurpassed beauty and expressiveness. In the case of Weber's op. 34, this was the Bavarian virtuoso Heinrich Baermann, court clarinetist in Munich and soloist extraordinaire. The two met in 1811, and Weber quickly conjured up a Concertino (op. 26) which so impressed the Bavarian monarch, that immediately he commissioned two full-length concertos (opp. 73 & 74). Such was the impatience of the local *cognoscenti* that both were completed and premiered in that same year. After some four years of concert tours and a variety of other commissions, Weber's Clarinet Quintet, op. 34 saw the light of day, a sort of mini-concerto embodying all the thrills and pathos of the concertos, and the depth and narrative detail of the operas for which the composer meanwhile had become so well known.

As is often the case with virtuoso repertoire from this period, much of the music requires great dexterity and utterly complete control of the instrument. And Weber, as usual, manages successfully to walk the fine line between

empty virtuosity and a depth of *sentimento* masterfully conjured that the listener is unavoidably, not to mention happily, swept along with the composer's musical programme. The Quintet follows the usual format of four movements, beginning with a dramatic *Allegro* in sonata form offering showy passagework and huge leaps, exploring the full three-and-a-half octaves of the instrument, followed by a truly operatic *Fantasia*, imbued with the pathos, terror and resignation of a staged tragedy. The third movement, a bucolic *scherzo* with a calm, pastoral trio precedes the work's rollicking *finale* in Rondo form, which also does not avoid a full-blown drama before its final outburst of contagious enthusiasm.

All evidence suggests that Baermann possessed phenomenal technical skill, and also an extremely nuanced sound. Praise for the artist was not in short supply; in Paris he was referred to as the "Rubini of the clarinet." (The Italian tenor was well known for his extraordinary high range and the ability to sing with extreme contrasting dynamics.) Mendelssohn wrote, "he is one of the best musicians I know; one of those who carry everyone along with them, and who feels the true life and fire of music, and to whom music has become speech." Weber's works would have been difficult to play on the ten-key clarinet, even for a Baermann, but herein lies much of the inherent beauty and the excitement. The Quintet relies on this special frisson between what is possible and what is nearly impossible. As the clarinet became the main vehicle of woodwind virtuosity in the early nineteenth century, Baermann and Weber were unquestionably at the forefront.

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The London Haydn Quartet

One of the world's leading period instrument string quartets, The London Haydn Quartet was born out of a passion for Haydn's string quartets. Highly acclaimed for their series of Haydn recordings on the Hyperion label (the op 9, op 17, op 20 and op 33 quartets to date) they have received invitations to many of the most important concert series in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Finland, North America and Australia. They have started several of their own concert series in which they have performed the complete cycle of Haydn quartets. They have given recitals at New York's Carnegie Hall, the Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Cheltenham International Festival, the Bath Mozartfest, Klara Festival, the Granada International Festival and at Haydn festivals in Esterházy, Lincoln and Lyon, and the English Haydn Festival.

In collaboration with period clarinetist Eric Hoeprich, with whom they also recorded the Brahms and Mozart quintets on the Glossa label, their recent concerts have included a tour of the USA and Canada including a recital at the Library of Congress, and appearances in Serbia, Switzerland, France, Germany and the Czech Republic.

Other recent highlights for the London Haydn Quartet have included the climatic extremes of a Winter tour across Canada with concerts in Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, preceded by a series of concerts in Australia with appearances at the Sydney Opera House and at the Melbourne Festival. Temperate London is the setting for the next event at Wigmore Hall on May 1st.