



Houston Friends of Music  
*The* Shepherd School of Music

*Chamber*  
*Music*  
*Series*



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1995



## AMABILE PIANO QUARTET

Stude Concert Hall Alice Pratt Brown Hall Rice University

January 17, 1995

8:00 p.m.

### PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, K. 478

Allegro  
Andante  
Rondeau

Joaquín Turina  
(1882-1949)

Piano Quartet in A Minor, op. 67

Lento  
Vivo  
Andante

### INTERMISSION

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47

Sostenuto assai - Allegro ma non troppo  
Scherzo - Molto vivace  
Andante cantabile  
Finale - Vivace

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, K. 478 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Shortly before Mozart embarked on the composition of *The Marriage of Figaro*, the composer-publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister commissioned him to write three quartets for piano and strings. On completing the first quartet in October 1785, he plunged into *Figaro*, but managed to finish the second quartet (K. 493) by June of 1786. Unfortunately, the first quartet had proved too difficult for Hoffmeister's customers, and he withdrew from the agreement. The second quartet was later published by Artaria, but the third was never written.

Mozart's piano quartets were the first in this form to be real chamber music; the few previous works using these instruments tended to be scaled-down piano concertos. But Mozart established the model for what would be an important form in nineteenth- and twentieth-century music. The piano would sometimes accompany solo voices in the strings, sometimes take over solo passages on its own, and sometimes engage in dialogue or counterpoint with the strings. Often the piano could be considered a musical force equal to the three stringed instruments. The G-Minor Quartet is also notable because of its key. Just as C minor was a personally significant key for Beethoven, G minor seemed to call forth profound musical expression from Mozart; we need only recall the Symphony No. 40 and the Viola Quintet (K. 516) for further evidence. Although we need not go so far as Alfred Einstein and call G minor Mozart's "fate" key, or the opening theme of the Piano Quartet Mozart's "fate" theme, we can certainly tell from the opening bars that the work has serious intent.

Stern falling fourths in unison seem to rebuke the little answering run in the piano, for the motif is immediately repeated in falling fifths. A quiet transitional passage leads to a dialogue between the piano and strings using harmonized versions of the main motif, followed by contrapuntal variants of the motif in the violin and viola over accompanying runs in the piano. The second subject, introduced by the piano alone, is in B-flat major and sounds calmer, but it pulls rhythmically against the prevailing meter. A short third subject involves a light conversation between the violin and the piano. The development takes off from the falling fourth of the initial motif, first in the piano, and then in the violin and viola echoing each other above a rolling cello accompaniment. More recognizable variants on the main motif lead to the recapitulation in which the themes are further developed. The coda pounds away at the main motif and ends in thundering unison.

The second movement is a sweetly melancholy *andante* in B-flat major. The piano begins alone, and is soon joined by the strings. Flowing runs in the piano and then the violin lead to the second subject, first stated by the strings and continued in dialogue with the piano; this merges into a third theme begun by the violin above descending runs in the piano which are assumed by the viola when the piano takes up the melody. There is no development, though in the recapitula-

tion the viola gets to play the tune for the third theme.

The sternness of the first movement has lifted entirely from the richly tuneful rondo in G major. When a section in E minor appears, it does nothing to disrupt the sunny mood. Although there are some exceptions, the prevailing pattern in this movement is to pit the piano alone against the strings, with the piano given some virtuoso passages. A coda based on the rondo theme brings the quartet to a close.

*This is the third performance of this work in a Friends of Music concert; it was last played by the Los Angeles Piano Quartet in December 1992.*

### Piano Quartet in A Minor, op. 67 Joaquín Turina

Born in Seville in 1882, Turina studied there and in Madrid, where he met his lifelong friend Manuel de Falla. In 1905 he moved to Paris, where he studied with Moszkowski and Vincent d'Indy. He was also influenced by the music of Franck and Debussy, as can be heard in his first publication, a large-scale quintet for piano and strings. Falla and Albéniz, after hearing this quintet, advised Turina to use more coloring from Spanish folk music. Consequently, Turina combined Spanish melodic turns and rhythms with impressionist formal and harmonic elements. Many of Turina's subsequent compositions employed nationalistic programmatic themes, such as "La oración del torero" (the bullfighter's prayer), op. 34, one of his more frequently heard pieces for string quartet. But the Piano Quartet in A Minor, though it has much Spanish color, is absolute music.

Completed in August of 1931, the quartet is in three movements, each containing contrasting sections and thematic material repeated from other movements. After an opening statement by the strings in unison followed by the piano, the violin plays the main theme of the *lento* introduction, and shortly afterwards gives an altered version of it as the main theme of the *andante mosso*. Another *lento* section introduces a tranquil tune, followed by a return to the *andante*. Yet another *lento* allows the cello to sing a melody with a strong Spanish flavor, and the movement ends with a statement of the main *andante*.

The second movement, marked *vivo*, is a lively piece that opens with a hint of guitars and dances along to a brief contrasting *lento* that recalls the introduction to the first movement. The principal theme of the *vivo* returns to be contrasted this time with a faster *più vivo* passage.

After a short violin cadenza opens the third movement, the piano states a variation of the *andante* theme of the first movement, this time *allegretto*. The viola introduces a new, agitated theme marked *allegro molto*. This eventually subsides into a contrasting *lento* that recalls the tranquil second theme of the first movement. Other themes from the first movement return in various guises, and the quartet ends with a variant of its opening theme.

*This is the first performance in a Friends of Music concert.*



Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47  
Robert Schumann

1842 was Schumann's year for chamber music. Having tossed off his three string quartets in the summer and his magnificent Piano Quintet in September, he completed his Piano Quartet in November. Schumann wrote this work for Count Matvei Wielhorsky, an amateur cellist, who must have enjoyed playing the melodic part.

The quartet begins with a slow introduction that hints at the main motif of the first movement. When it arrives in the *allegro ma non troppo*, the motif appears in two forms: first, in the staccato chords played by the piano and strings, and later as a lyrical theme begun by the cello and taken up by the violin. The second subject is introduced in canon between the piano and unison strings. A closing section manipulates both themes until the return of the opening *sostenuto* leads to the development, which is dominated by the main motif in various rhythmic and harmonic variations. The recapitulation is intensified by motoric eighth notes in the piano and lower strings and swooping unison runs in the strings. A coda, marked *più agitato*, gives the cello a surprising new theme; brief references to the other two themes end the movement.

Schumann apparently liked Mendelssohn's light and airy scherzos, but gave more grit and weight to his own. The *molto vivace* begins with the piano and cello in low registers, and when the violin and viola enter, they also remain close to the ground. The first of two contrasting trios has two lyrical lines in imitation, the piano doubling the viola. The piano occasionally interrupts with a burst of the scherzo. After the scherzo returns, a second trio of syncopated chords is also punctuated with bits of the scherzo. At the end of the final statement of the scherzo, the piano plays a wisp of the first trio.

After a brief flourish on the violin, the cello takes up the lush, long-breathed melody of the *andante cantabile*. Eventually the violin takes a turn, with the cello singing obbligato. In a transitional passage, the viola and the piano, in a long chain of syncopation, take us to the middle section. This meditative, rhythmically hesitant, richly harmonized section leads back to the original theme, this time played by the viola under gentle meanderings of the violin. After the violin takes up the tune with the viola playing the counter-melody, they fall into quiet sustained notes over gently wavering sixteenths in the piano, while the cello plays the melody one last time. In the coda, which anticipates some of the material of the finale, the cello plays a low B-flat pedal; during the viola and violin duet, the cellist had been instructed to tune her C-string down a tone.

The Finale, a rousing *vivace*, opens with a unison statement of the main theme, after which the viola starts a fugato. Other voices enter until all join in a repetition of the opening unison. The cello immediately voices a lyric theme that is taken up by the viola and violin in octaves. Yet another theme appears in imitation, until a lyric version of the opening staccato chords provides still another theme. These themes are developed, often in passages of dense counterpoint, until a passage full of chromatic motion leads to a return of the lyric cello theme. The opening fugato material begins to emerge, and a coda combines this with an assertive theme

based on the opening chords, also in fugal counterpoint. A final hint of the cello tune comes before the concluding rush.

*This is the sixth performance of this work on a Friends of Music concert; it was last played in October 1993 by the Quartetto Beethoven di Roma.*

*Program Notes by Edward Doughtie*

Amabile Piano Quartet

The Amabile Piano Quartet was formed in 1985 when the string trio, Trio Cassatt, returned from Europe and received funding from National Endowment to add another player for one tour. That player was Marian Hahn, pianist. Since the repertoire for string trio is limited, the group decided to make the addition of the piano permanent and to change its name. Although the original members of the trio have since left the quartet to pursue other interests, Marian Hahn has been joined by violist Ah Ling Neu, cellist Lisa Lancaster, and violinist Kathleen Winkler. Marian Hahn was the winner of the 1976 Leventritt Competition, and has appeared in recitals and as a soloist with several major orchestras. She is on the faculty of Peabody Conservatory. Ah Ling Neu, formerly with the Ridge String Quartet and the San Francisco Symphony, now plays concurrently with the New York Philamusic Ensemble and the Brandenburg Ensemble. Lisa Lancaster also plays with the Brandenburg Ensemble, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and Music from Marlboro. Kathleen Winkler has toured widely as a soloist in recitals and with major symphony orchestras, and is on the faculty of the Shepherd School of Music at Rice. Members of the quartet still perform the string trio repertoire, as well as other chamber music combinations, and are active in residency and master class programs as well as concerts.

The violin on which Kathleen Winkler plays was made by Giovanni Battista Ceruti (1755-1817) of Cremona. Ah Ling Neu plays a viola by Giuseppe Guadagnini made in 1750. Her viola was enlarged and decorative inlay was added by the Hungarian maker Pilát in 1910. Lisa Lancaster's cello is a 1969 Carletti begun in Italy and finished in New York.

*As an educational outreach of the Houston Friends of Music, the Amabile Piano Quartet gave a master class for middle and high school string students at Memorial Middle School this afternoon.*

