

# SANIBEL MUSIC FESTIVAL PROGRAM NOTES

## **Emerson String Quartet**

Eugene Drucker, violin ~ Philip Setzer, violin

Lawrence Dutton, viola ~ Paul Watkins, cello

Saturday, March 28, 2020

~ PROGRAM ~

**Quartet in D major, Op. 71, No. 2**

**(H. III:70)**

*Adagio — Allegro*

*Adagio cantabile*

*Menuetto: Allegro*

*Finale: Allegretto*

**Joseph HAYDN**

**(1732-1809)**

**Quartet in D major, K. 575**

**“King of Prussia”**

*Allegretto*

*Andante*

*Menuetto: Allegretto*

*Allegretto*

**Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART**

**(1756-1791)**

~ INTERMISSION ~

**Quartet E minor, Op. 59, No. 2, Ludwig van BEETHOVEN**

**“Razumovsky”**

**(1770-1827)**

*Allegro*

*Molto Adagio*

*Allegretto*

*Finale: Presto*

## **About Emerson String Quartet**

The Emerson String Quartet has maintained its stature as one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles for over four decades. The Quartet has made more than thirty acclaimed recordings and been honored with nine Grammys® (including two for Best Classical Album), three Gramophone Awards, an Avery Fisher Prize, and Musical America's "Ensemble of the Year." The Emerson frequently collaborates with some of today's most esteemed composers to premiere new works, keeping the string quartet art form alive and relevant, and has commissioned new works from such composers as Thomas Adés, Kaija Saariaho, Wolfgang Rihm, Mark- Anthony Turnage, and Edgar Meyer. The ensemble has also partnered with such stellar soloists as René Fleming, Barbara Hannigan, Evgeny Kissin, Emanuel Ax, and Yefim Bronfman.

During the 2018-2019 season, the Emerson performed its 40th season as Quartet-in-Residence at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and returned to the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The group's other North American appearances included New York's Alice Tully Hall, Library of Congress, Denver, Vancouver, Seattle, Houston, Indianapolis, Detroit, Yale School of Music, and University of Georgia, among many others. The Quartet also embarked on two European tours, performing in major venues in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain. During summer 2019, the Emerson performed at the Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Aspen festivals.

The Emerson's other recent highlights include performances of Shostakovich and *The Black Monk: A Russian Fantasy*, a theatrical production co-created by acclaimed director James Glossman and the Quartet's violinist Philip Setzer. That music/theater hybrid, co-commissioned by the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Princeton University, and Tanglewood Music Festival, has been presented at the Ravinia Music Festival, Wolf Trap, Stony Brook University, Orange County Performing Arts Center, and in Seoul, South Korea. In the program, a bold intersection of chamber music and theater that has starred David Strathairn, Len Cariou, Jay O. Sanders, and Sean Astin with the Emerson Quartet, the audience witness the trials of Dmitri Shostakovich's forty-year quest to create an opera based on Anton Chekhov's mystical tale *The Black Monk*.

The Emerson's extensive recordings range from Bach to Harbison, including the complete string quartets of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Bartók, Webern, and Shostakovich, as well as multi-CD sets of the major works of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Dvořák. The ensemble has also recorded music by Tchaikovsky, Smetana, Debussy, Ravel, Barber, and Ives. In 2017, the Emerson released *Chaconnes and Fantasias: Music of Britten and Purcell*, the first CD issue on the new label Decca Gold.

Formed in 1976 and based in New York City, the Emerson was one of the first quartets whose violinists alternate in the first chair position. The ensemble, which took its name from American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, balances busy performing careers with a commitment to teaching and serving as Quartet-in-Residence at Stony Brook University. In 2013, cellist Paul Watkins, a distinguished soloist, award-winning conductor, and devoted chamber musician, joined the original members of the Emerson Quartet. The reconfigured group has been praised around the world by critics and fans alike. In spring 2016, full-time Stony Brook faculty members Philip Setzer and Lawrence Dutton received the honor of Distinguished Professor, and part-time faculty members Eugene Drucker and Paul Watkins were awarded the title of Honorary Distinguished Professor. The Emerson had previously received honorary doctorates from Middlebury College, College of Wooster, Bard College, and University of Hartford. In January 2015, the Emerson String Quartet received the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award, Chamber Music America's highest honor, in recognition of its significant and lasting contribution to the chamber music field.

### **Joseph HAYDN — Quartet in D major, Op. 71, No. 2, H. III:70 (1793)**

Haydn's first triumph in London ended in July 1792 and it took little effort for the venture's impresario, Johann Peter Salomon, to exact a promise from the lionized composer to return for another series of performances several months hence. The sixty-year-old Haydn spent the intervening time at home in Vienna, recouping his strength after the rigors of the London trip, composing, teaching a few pupils (including Beethoven), and attending to domestic matters, most pressingly seeing to the demand for new quarters of his shrewish wife (whom he referred to, privately, as the "House-Dragon"). Anna Maria had discovered a house in the Viennese suburb of Gumpendorf that she thought would be just perfect, she explained to her husband, when she was a widow. Haydn was understandably reluctant to see the place, but he found it pleasing and bought it the next year. It was the home in which, in 1809, a decade after Anna Maria, he died.

One of the greatest successes of Haydn's London venture was the performance of several of his string quartets by Salomon, whose abilities as an impresario were matched by his virtuosity on the violin. Such public presentations of chamber works were still novel at the time, and their enthusiastic reception made it easy for Salomon to convince Haydn to create a half-dozen additional quartets for his projected visit in 1794-1795. Though composed for Salomon's concerts, the new quartets were formally commissioned by Count Anton Apponyi, who had come to know Haydn and his music when he married one of the scions of the Esterházy clan, the composer's employer for a half-century. Apponyi was an active patron of the arts in Vienna (he was a subscriber to Beethoven's Op. 1 Piano Trios), owner of a fine collection of paintings, a good violinist, and a founder and president of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, the city's principal concert-giving organization. The six Quartets, divided into

two sets as Op. 71 and Op. 74 when they were published in London in 1795, were dedicated to Apponyi. Salomon had played them to great acclaim at his Hanover Square Rooms concerts the preceding year.

The Quartets, Opp. 71 and 74 occupy an important niche in the history of chamber music as the first such works written expressly for public performance. Haydn, who was always sensitive to accommodating his audiences, made the Quartets suitable for the concert hall by fitting several of them with introductions (to set the mood and alert listeners to the start of the music), providing them with ample dramatic contrasts, basing them on easily memorable thematic material, allowing a certain virtuosity to the first violinist in the fast movements (to show off Salomon's considerable skills), and giving them an almost symphonic breadth of expression. (In her study of the composer, Rosemary Hughes noted, "It is as if Haydn were pushing open a door through which Beethoven was to pass.")

The D major Quartet, Op. 71, No. 2, begins with a brief slow introduction that juxtaposes explosive isolated chords with quiet phrases in a decorated chordal texture. The main body of the movement commences with a principal theme built from leaping octaves shared imitatively among the participants. The second subject, presented without fuss, is a short stuttering motive. Some delicately spun passages and a quiet reference to the octave-leap main theme close the exposition. The compact development section deals with permutations of the main and closing themes and leads seamlessly to the full return of the earlier motives to round out the movement. The Adagio is a richly decorated instrumental song in free sonata form which explores distant harmonic areas that look forward to the heightened expressive style of the encroaching Romantic age. The Menuetto, more elegant than rustic, recalls the octave-leap motive of the first movement; a smoothly flowing trio occupies the center of the movement. The brilliant finale is a dashing rondo built on a theme of infectious jocularity.

### **Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART — Quartet in D major, K. 575, "King of Prussia" (1789)**

Given the steady deterioration in Mozart's health, finances, and prospects in Vienna at the beginning of 1789, it is not surprising that he eagerly accepted the invitation of a fellow Mason and former student, Prince Karl Lichnowsky, to assess the career possibilities in Berlin. Lichnowsky, an officer in the Prussian army, regularly visited the court at Berlin, and suggested that he could arrange an audience with King Frederick William II, nephew and successor of the immensely cultured Frederick the Great and an avid music lover and cellist of more than modest accomplishment. Mozart bade farewell to Constanze — it was the first time he had traveled without her since their marriage seven years before — and left Vienna with Lichnowsky on April 8th. Two days later, they arrived in Prague, where Mozart gave a concert and discussed the possibility (not realized) of writing an opera for Domenico

Guardasoni, the local impresario. On April 12th, the pair began a week's stay in Dresden, attending the opera and taking part in a busy round of musical evenings; the last portrait of Mozart from life, a drawing by Doris Stock, was done in Dresden on April 17th. After a stop in Leipzig, where Mozart improvised on the organ commanded a generation earlier by Johann Sebastian Bach at the Thomaskirche and marveled at the choir's performance of Bach's motet *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*, Prince and composer arrived in Berlin on April 25th.

In Berlin, Mozart met with the King's director of chamber music, the French cello virtuoso Jean Pierre Duport, and renewed his acquaintance with the oboist Friedrich Ramm, who had won the composer's friendship in Mannheim a dozen years earlier by performing the Oboe Concerto (K. 314) five times in ten days. Duport and Ramm were apparently not able to arrange a meeting with Frederick William for Mozart immediately (despite Mozart's thinly veiled bribe of writing a set of piano variations on a minuet by Duport [K. 573]), so he went back to Leipzig for a few days to give a concert of his own music at the Gewandhaus and jot down a little *Gigue* (K. 574) for Friedrich Doles, an aging pupil of Bach and the Cantor at the Thomaskirche who had directed *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied* for him two weeks before. Back in Berlin on May 19th, Mozart attended a performance of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at the Imperial Theater in his honor, and heard a concert by his student, the eleven-year-old Johann Nepomuk Hummel, whose ambitious father was then shepherding his prodigious child through an extensive concert tour of Europe. On May 26th, Mozart was finally granted an audience with the King, which went well enough for Frederick William to commission from the Viennese visitor a set of six string quartets for himself and a half-dozen piano sonatinas for his eldest daughter, Fredericka. (Many years later, Constanze claimed that her husband was also offered a lucrative position at court during that interview, but that story has never been corroborated, and is probably not true.) As down payment, Mozart was presented with 100 Friedrichs d'or in a fine gold box.

Mozart arrived home in Vienna on June 4, 1789, and immediately set to work on the commission for the Prussian court. Sometime in July (the manuscripts were not dated precisely), he completed the *Quartet in D major* (K. 575) and one of the piano sonatas (K. 576) — and then stopped. His health was poor that summer, his finances worse, and his worry about Constanze, pregnant for the fifth time in seven years, acute (in his sad letter of July 12th to his fellow Mason Michael Puchberg, he complained about “my unfortunate illness ... my wretched condition ... my poor sick wife”), and most of what energy he could muster was channeled into preparing the revival of *Figaro* ordered by Emperor Joseph II for the end of August. The commission for *Così fan tutte* followed that production, and Mozart could not return to the Berlin commission until May 1790, when the *B-flat major Quartet* (K. 589) was completed and offered with K. 575 at a chamber music party in his lodgings at which the composer probably played the viola. The Third “Prussian” *Quartet* (K. 590 in F major), Mozart's last work in the form, was finished in June. Unable to fulfill the balance of the

commission and desperate for cash, Mozart sold the three quartets to Artaria for a pittance later that year. Artaria waited, in vain, for the three quartets that would complete the set, and did not announce his publication until December

28, 1791, three weeks after Mozart died. Frederick William probably never saw or heard these works that his patronage had inspired. Artaria's announcement in the *Wiener Zeitung* still serves as an appropriate summary of Mozart's last string quartets: "These quartets are among the most estimable works of the composer Mozart, who was torn untimely from this world; they flowed from the pen of this great musical genius not long before his death, and they display all that musical interest in respect of art, beauty, and taste which must awaken pleasure and admiration not only in the amateur, but in the true connoisseur as well."

It is one of the miracles of Mozart's genius that he insulated his art so thoroughly from his life. None of the pain and frustration of the time of their creation mars the "Prussian" Quartets, nor is what he called the "troublesome" nature of their composition evident in their pellucid strains. (The manuscripts of Mozart's quartets bear more corrections than those of any other of his works.) "Few late works of Mozart's are as unburdened and free from doubt as these three quartets," wrote Homer Ulrich. As would be expected in a composition made to order for a cello-playing king, that instrument is featured throughout the D major Quartet, a technique that causes the viola and second violin to be thoroughly drawn into the music's unfolding argument in order to achieve tonal balance and textural homogeneity. The main theme of the first movement is built from some of the stock 18th-century figures — a slow rising arpeggio, a series of scalar appoggiaturas, a little cadential flourish — that Mozart was capable of touching with magic. The complementary theme, also based on an ascending arpeggio, is entrusted to the cello. The closing subject, a buoyant running-up-and-down the scale shared by first violin and cello, supplies much of the thematic material for the development section. The recapitulation proceeds in the conventional manner, maintaining the movement's sunny demeanor to its closing measures. The Andante is one of those characteristically Mozartian creations that elevates simplicity to high art. It is disposed in a compact ternary form (A-B-A) in which the tiniest shadow of deep emotion passes across the music only in its central section. The Menuetto is both elegant and perky and allows the cello an almost soloistic role in the central trio. The finale is a serene rondo whose principal subject, announced by the cello, is reminiscent of the theme that opened the Quartet.

### **Ludwig van Beethoven — Quartet in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2, "Razumovsky" (1806)**

Count Andreas Kyrillovitch Razumovsky was one of the most prominent figures in Viennese society, politics, and art at the turn of the 19th century. Born in 1752 to a singer at the Russian court, Razumovsky ingratiated himself with a number of women of lofty station and entered the diplomatic corps at the age of 25. He was assigned to several European capitals,

in which he made his reputation, according to one contemporary account, “less through his skill at diplomacy than through his lavish expenditure and his love affairs with ladies of the highest standing, not excluding the Queen of Naples.” In 1788 in Vienna, he married Elizabeth, Countess of Thun and sister of Prince Lichnowsky, one of Beethoven’s most devoted patrons. Four years later, Razumovsky was assigned as Russian ambassador to Vienna, who’s sybaritic life style perfectly suited his personality. “Razumovsky lived in Vienna on a princely scale,” wrote a contemporary named Schnitzler, “encouraging art and science, surrounded by a valuable library and other collections, and admired or envied by all; of what advantage this was to Russian interests is, however, another question.” He was also an accomplished violinist who indulged his interest in music by taking lessons from Haydn, playing in chamber concerts, and sponsoring the performance of works in his residence.

In the spring of 1806, Count Razumovsky took over from Prince Lichnowsky the patronage of the string quartet headed by Ignaz Schuppanzigh, and he commissioned Beethoven to write for the ensemble three new pieces that would be played in the grand palace the Count was building on the Danube Canal near the Prater. Beethoven, who had not composed a string quartet since the six numbers of Op. 18 in 1800, gladly accepted the proposal and immediately set to work. (Beethoven, always looking for new sources of patronage, did not

take lightly the fact that Razumovsky was an intimate of such powerful figures as Metternich.) In honor of (or, perhaps, at the request of) his Russian patron, Beethoven included in the first two quartets of the Op. 59 set traditional Russian themes. Such music was much on the mind of the Viennese at the time because many Russian soldiers had sought refuge in the hospitals, convents, and schools of the imperial city following their great battles with the French at Austerlitz at the end of 1805. After receiving Razumovsky’s commission, Beethoven determined, he said, “to devote myself wholly to this work,” and he wrote the three Op. 59 Quartets between May and October 1806 (a few sketches from 1804 were incorporated into the finished works) with the intention of having Schuppanzigh’s quartet perform them late in the year at Razumovsky’s new palace. However, the Count’s wife took ill that fall and died on December 23rd, and no music was heard in the house during the period of mourning. Schuppanzigh played the Quartets for the first time in February 1807 at some now unknown site in Vienna, and several months later repeated them at the Razumovsky palace.

The Op. 59 Quartets, though they later became some of Beethoven’s most popular chamber works, were greeted at first with some of the strongest antagonism his music ever excited. His student Carl Czerny reported, “When Schuppanzigh’s quartet first played the F major Quartet [No. 1], they laughed and were convinced Beethoven was playing a joke on them and that it was not the quartet he had promised.” “Surely you do not consider this music?” asked the bemused violinist Felix Radicati. “Not for you,” replied the confident composer, “but for a

later age.” When Beethoven was told that Schuppanzigh was complaining about the difficulty of the violin parts, he grumbled, “Does he really suppose that I think of his puling little fiddle when the spirit speaks to me and I compose something?” The powerful style of the “Eroica” Symphony of 1804 that also infused these scores, with their intense emotional expression and formal concentration, was still revolutionary and puzzling to Beethoven’s contemporaries in 1806. It would soon mark him as the most visionary musical artist of his time.

The second of the “Razumovsky” Quartets, in E minor, is made of the bold contrasts, formal concentration, and dramatic statement that came increasingly to mark the music of Beethoven’s maturity. The opening movement begins with abrupt, tossed-off thematic fragments that give way to various rhythmically syncopated figures and truncated scraps of melody, as though the essential nature of the music was its own indecision painted against some vaguely melancholy backdrop, a quality Joseph Kerman described as “more brusque than violent, more tense than angry, hypersensitive rather than actually in pain.” The Adagio, on the other hand, is music of a settled, almost transcendent mood, which the composer’s pupil Carl Czerny said, “occurred to him when contemplating the starry skies and thinking of the music of the spheres.” Beethoven wrote above this movement in the score, “This piece must be played with much feeling.” The third movement is more a character piece than a true scherzo. Its trio section (which Beethoven instructed to be played twice), written in honor of the work’s patron, is a fantasia on the patriotic Russian hymn Slava (“Glory”), which appeared later in the century in the coronation scene of Mussorgsky’s Boris Godunov as well as in works by Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov. The finale follows the curious harmonic progression of beginning a sonata-rondo form largely in the bright key of C major before passing under a minor-tonality cloud in its closing pages to end with a hint of the opening movement’s melancholy.

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