



2020 - 2021
35TH SEASON

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
JOAN BLACKMAN

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STRING QUINTETS THAT ROCK

P R O G R A M

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756- 1791)
String Quintet No. 4 in G minor, K. 516 (1787)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Menuetto: Allegretto*
- III. *Adagio ma non troppo*
- IV. *Adagio - Allegro*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
String Quintet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 111 (1890)

- I. *Allegro non troppo, ma con brio*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Un poco Allegretto*
- IV. *Vivace ma non troppo presto*

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2:00PM PDT ON SUNDAY, APRIL 18TH, 2021

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PROGRAM NOTES BY JOAN BLACKMAN

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart *String Quintet No. 4 in G minor,* K. 516 (1787)

The Quintet in G minor, K. 516, bears the date 16th May 1787, when his father was on his deathbed. Mozart wrote to his father: "I have now made a habit of being prepared in all the affairs of life for the worst. As death, when we come to consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed, during the last few years, such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind, that his image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling." His father died in Salzburg on the 28th of May of that year.

The mood of the quintet is understandably dark and melancholic, typical of Mozart's G minor works, with a richer sonority and complexity than

a string quartet because of the extra viola. It is also rich in ideas which weave throughout the work and lend a sense of grand architecture.

The work begins with quiet but restless agitation with the upper three instruments untethered by a bassline. The dark "masculine" melody, first in the violin, and then in the viola, is a succession of sighing broken phrases punctuated by breathless rests. Then follows a more lyrical, "feminine" theme, which keeps trying to leap up in pitch only to fall back down. The third and last attempt is painfully dissonant. This dissonant leap returns as a repeated protest in the development. When this theme is restated in the coda, that last dissonant leap is there no longer, and the movement peters out with a poignant sense of resignation.

The Menuetto movement, normally a dance, is instead twisted and turbulent, with violent chords on what should

be a weak beat of the measure answered by silence. The contrasting trio imagines what the dance should be like, but is soon annihilated by the returning Menuetto, creating a vivid polarity between dark and light, despair and dream.

Tchaikovsky had these words to describe the third movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, “No one has ever known as well how to interpret so exquisitely in music the sense of resigned and inconsolable sorrow.” The entire movement is muted, and the main theme features four notes, sometimes operatic, sometimes traded seamlessly between instruments. At one point the second viola sounds a warning with a growl taken from the first movement theme, and at others the mood turns sentimental with an affectionate duet between the violin and viola singing love songs to each other. This is music of great beauty, but despair lies just beneath the surface.

Normally in a work by Mozart the finale would be a bright rondo. Instead, it begins with a tragic, slow aria, almost a dirge and certainly a lament that slowly builds in tension until an ominous pause. Suddenly, the violin launches into a galloping *Allegro* in 6/8 time, as bright and sunny as the rest of the work is dark. Some of the material is borrowed from previous movements, but transformed, now bubbly and buoyant. Is Mozart over his grief?

Is he escaping into his happy place? We will never know, but the joyousness is all the more welcomed after such an intense journey.

Johannes Brahms
String Quintet No. 2 in G Major,
Op. 111 (1890)

Composed while Brahms was vacationing in the Austrian Alps in the summer of 1890, Brahms sent the finished score to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, intending to make it his swan song at the ripe old age of 57. “It really is time to stop”, he wrote. Although clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld was able to convince him to write more, this G major quintet with its luxurious symphonic sonority and grand yet concise conception could surely stand in triumph as his last work. The first movement opens with a lush shimmering of the four upper instruments as the cello dives in with a heroic solo, springing across strings and registers. The 9/8 metre allows for plenty of rhythmic play including the hemiola, Brahms’ favourite. The next two themes are lyrical and charming. The development begins with a wondering question

and answer between viola and violin which develops into an athletic contrapuntal battle. The heroic theme returns in the highest register of the violin and the glorious coda shines with exuberance and joy.

The much more introverted adagio is introduced by a melancholy viola duet over a pizzicato base line in the cello. Four variations follow, from transcendent to passionately declamatory, rising toward a yearning climax that disintegrates into a lonely viola cadenza and a final statement of the wistful melody.

The third movement has a tentative, eery feel, with an ungroundedness created by an unsettled offbeat accompaniment. Even the melody stops and starts, unsure of where it is going. This “waltz misterioso” melts into a friendlier G major trio section, where pairs of violas and violins have conversations only to return to unsettledness.

Though all the movements hint at the Gypsy or Slavonic style that Brahms loved, the finale, after a brief anxious introduction in minor, launches into a raucous but joyful dance. The second theme, swirling around in triplets, is more of a folk dance. The interplay between the anxious element and the two dances eventually merges into a huge, unison running scale down and up, a pregnant pause and suddenly the group launches carelessly into a careening Hungarian czárdás which rips to a brilliant conclusion.



VIRTUAL CONCERT FIVE - JANE COOP & FRIENDS

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A fitting finale features Vancouver's own Jane Coop and the Vetta Chamber Players with elegant, effervescent Mozart and the dark broodiness of Franck. We invite you to mingle with Jane and Vetta artists in our live chat on Sunday, June 13th at 2 p.m. PDT.

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Joan Blackman
VIOLIN

Artistic Director of Vancouver's Vetta Chamber Music Society, Ms. Blackman enjoys a vibrant and varied musical life. She served as Associate Concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony for many years and has performed and recorded as soloist with the Vancouver Symphony, Victoria Symphony, CBC Radio Orchestra, Turning Point Ensemble and the Banff Festival Orchestra. She also teaches privately and has given masterclasses throughout B.C.

Ms. Blackman is known throughout Canada and the U.S. as a fine chamber musician and has performed with premier groups such as the Penderecki String Quartet, the Purcell String Quartet and the Gryphon Trio. Besides performing and curating the Vetta Chamber Music series in Vancouver, she works with the Canadian Music Centre in their Celebration concert series. Joan is also a member of the Sea and Sky collective which has released two CDs and performs throughout B.C.

Joan has appeared on numerous series including Music in the Morning, Music Fest Vancouver, the Jeffrey Concerts in London, Ontario, and the American String Project. She has also appeared at summer festivals including the Hornby Island Festival, the Pender Harbour

Chamber Music Festival, Kaimeraata, and the Victoria Summer Music Festival.

"Your heart would need to be made of stone not to have loved Joan Blackman's splendid solo". "Shapelier phrases and sweeter tone would be hard to imagine", "a ravishing tone", "first rate soloist", "exchanged lines meltingly in a flawless performance" "playing with lyricism, precision, and evident joy", are some of the accolades that have graced Joan's reviews.



David Gillham
VIOLIN

Canadian Violinist David Gillham regularly appears as chamber musician, in recital and as soloist in major cities and venues across four continents.

A sought after teacher, Mr. Gillham is an Associate Professor of Violin at the University of British Columbia School of Music and is the director of the Violin Programme at the Domaine Forget International Music Festival and Academy.

Mr. Gillham has given masterclasses throughout North and South America, China, Taiwan and South Africa.

Mr. Gillham was for many years a member of the acclaimed Arianna String Quartet (USA) and is a founding member of the Ridge Piano Trio and the violin and piano duo “Gillham-Iinuma”.

In 2002, Mr. Gillham received the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal in honour of his contributions to the arts in Canada.

Mr. Gillham performs on a Carlo Tononi violin made in 1725, Venice.



Yariv Aloni is the music director of the Victoria Chamber Orchestra, the Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra and the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also appearing frequently as principal guest conductor with the West Coast Symphony Orchestra in Vancouver and the Civic Orchestra of Victoria. He was the founder and music director of the Galiano Ensemble of Victoria for 18 years.

Former violist of both the Penderecki string quartets and the Aviv piano quartet, he has performed in many concert halls around the world, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Centre in New York, the Louvre

in Paris, Tonhalle in Zurich, and numerous concert halls in Europe, Canada and the United States. He has recorded for the United, Marquise, Tritonus and CBC labels as well as independent CD labels. He performs in numerous chamber music concerts, festivals and recital series.

He was a finalist at the François Shapira competition in Tel Aviv. His awards included the Israel Broadcasting Authority award for chamber music performance and numerous awards and scholarships from the American-Israel Cultural Foundation.

Born on a kibbutz in Israel, Yariv began studying the violin at the age of eight and turned to the viola when he was sixteen. He studied viola with David Chen at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, Daniel Benyamini, principal violist of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and Michael Tree and the Guarneri String Quartet. With an emphasis on chamber music, he also studied at the Jerusalem Music Centre with distinguished visiting faculty from around the world, including Isaac Stern, the Amadeus and the Guarneri String Quartets, and many others. He studied conducting under the tutelage of the Hungarian conductor János Sándor, former music director of the Budapest State Opera and the Győr Philharmonic Orchestra.



Emilie Grimes
VIOLA

Originally from Ottawa, Emilie Grimes holds a Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School, where she studied with Michael Tree and Steven Tenenbom. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Montreal under the tutelage of Neal Gripp.

As an orchestral and chamber musician, Emilie has performed in venues worldwide. She toured with the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra in Germany, and appeared on Hong Kong's Radio 4 with the

Vancouver based Koerner Quartet. She has also appeared on WQXR in New York, playing baroque viola with Juilliard's historical performance ensemble, Juilliard415, and was featured in the National Arts Centre's "My First NAC" showcase concert series.

She regularly takes part in series around Vancouver, including the VSO Chamber Players, UBC's Wednesdays at Noon, Classics at the Gordon Smith Gallery, the Vancouver Chamber Music Society, and has performed as a guest with the NU:BC new music ensemble. She was appointed Adjunct Professor of Viola at the University of British Columbia from 2017 to 2019.

Emilie joined the viola section of the Vancouver Symphony in 2012, and recently won the position of Assistant Principal Viola.

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Zoltan Rozsnyai
CELLO

Zoltan Rozsnyai was born into a musical family. Both his parents and grandparents were professional musicians. He studied piano and violin, before taking up the cello at the age of six. He joined the Windsor Symphony at 15, then left to attend the University of Toronto two years later.

While in Toronto, he studied with Vladimir Orloff and Daniel Domb. Zoltan also took masterclasses at the Banff School of Fine Arts, studying with Aldo Parisot, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, and Janos Starker. He played for many years in the Canadian Opera Company and National Ballet orchestras, as well as performing as soloist and chamber musician throughout Ontario. Zoltan also spent a year in India with his electric cello, traveling and collaborating with musicians. In 1999 he joined the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and has been the Assistant Principal cellist since 2001.

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