

# Program Notes: Calidore String Quartet

Notes on the program by Dr. Richard E. Rodda

## JOSEPH HAYDN

(Born March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Lower Austria; died May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria)

**String Quartet in G Major, op. 54, no. 1, Hob. III: 58**

**Composed:** 1788

**Published:** 1799

**Other works from this period:** Detailed in the notes below

**Approximate duration:** 18 minutes

By the 1780s, Haydn's fame in Paris was immense. His music first appeared there in January 1764, when the publisher de La Chevardière brought out *Six symphonies ou quatuors dialogués*, which were not symphonies at all but rather Haydn's **Opus 1** string quartets. Nevertheless, the vogue for the compositions of this "Maître de Musique à Vienne," as de La Chevardière's edition dubbed this Viennese master of music, grew rapidly. In March 1764, Venier issued Haydn's Symphony no. 2 in C Major, and six string trios were printed by de La Chevardière later that year. The demand for Haydn's music in Paris became so great that publishers procured pieces by some of his followers and passed them off as his original compositions. So pervasive was this practice that more spurious than authentic compositions appeared under Haydn's name in Paris between 1775 and 1780. By the time Haydn contributed his six *Paris Symphonies* to the Concert de la Loge Olympique in 1786 and 1787, his compositions had become some of the most sought-after music in the city.

Haydn capitalized on his Parisian notoriety by composing a half-dozen string quartets and two symphonies (nos. 88 and 89) in 1787–1788 to sate the French appetite for his works. He gave the scores of these new compositions to Johann Tost, the Principal Second Violinist in his orchestra at Esterháza from 1783 to 1788, who left his post in March 1788 to try his luck in Paris as a soloist; Haydn entrusted him with negotiating a deal for engraving the symphonies and quartets with the publisher Sieber. The sly Tost, however, sold Sieber not two but three symphonies, the third being a piece by Adalbert Gyrowetz that the violinist passed off as Haydn's. (Gyrowetz later had enormous difficulty persuading French musicians that this was, indeed, his work. When Sieber complained about this shady deal to Haydn, the composer, who had been systematically victimized by publishers throughout his career, replied without sympathy, "Thus Herr Tost has swindled you; you can claim your damages in Vienna.") Perhaps to augment their market value, the six quartets were issued in two sets of three compositions each as Opuses 54 and 55, a procedure that Haydn apparently approved since he permitted Artaria in Vienna to publish them in the same manner soon thereafter. Such entrepreneurial success encouraged Tost to try his hand at commerce, and by 1790, he had abandoned music as a career and settled in Vienna as a cloth merchant. During that same year, he married Maria Anna von Jerlischek, a wealthy lady attached to the household of Prince Nicholas Esterházy, and he used her fortune as collateral for his burgeoning business. It is unknown whether Haydn dedicated the Opus 54 quartets to "the wholesale merchant Johann Tost" out of admiration for his playing while in the Esterházy orchestra or for his assistance in the dealings with Sieber (Tost also helped with the Viennese publication of the quartets), but the *Tost Quartets* are among the most lustrous jewels in the diadem of the composer's chamber music.

The G Major Quartet, **op. 54, no. 1**, could well serve as *prima facie* evidence for British music scholar Bernard Jacobson's observation that "a lack of appreciation for Haydn is a species of the inability to

enjoy the good things in life." The work is delightful throughout, full of wit, surprise, and *joie de vivre*, with the moments that do imply some deeper emotion quickly banished by ingenious, just-kidding replies. The opening **Allegro**, like many first **movements** among Haydn's later instrumental compositions, is a **sonata** structure that uses one sunny, energetic **motif** for both the first and second **themes**. (Haydn's music is clearer formally than is our ambiguous jargon to describe it.) The **development** section uses both the first/second theme and a smooth, rising **phrase** presented along the way in the **exposition**. After a few attempts by the principal motif to find the proper key in which to begin the **recapitulation**, G major is eventually discovered and the movement bounds through the necessary formal requirements before reaching its curt close.

The **Allegretto** is relaxed, elegant, melodic, and a formal anomaly. The movement, largely led by the first violin, opens with a sweet, flowing theme above a quietly pulsing accompaniment (A) that finishes with a climb into the violinistic stratosphere. After a pause, the violin moves on to a complementary melody with a smooth but more disjunct motion (B). The movement's third thematic component begins with soft, slowly rising **chromatic** notes in the viola and cello (C). The disjunct melody (B) returns, followed by the opening theme (A), which again closes at the top of the violin's compass. The music then passes directly to the low strings' rising chromatic notes (C) and only hints again at the disjunct **motif** (B) just before the end. This construction is rooted in **sonata form**, but it took a genius the stature of Haydn to realize it in such an unconventional but logical and satisfying way. "I was cut off from the world," Haydn recalled of his many years working at the magnificent but isolated Esterháza Palace, sixty miles from Vienna and a hundred from Budapest. "There was no one to confuse or torment me, and I was forced to become original."

The **minuet** has the most symmetrical and predictable form of any symphonic movement. Haydn, **Classicism's** most adept musical humorist, gave this one a theme in decidedly unsymmetrical five-measure phrases. He also enjoyed featuring his fellow musicians in the Esterházy household in the presence of their employer, and it is likely that the solo turn in the central **trio** was written for Antonín Kraft, Principal Cellist at Esterháza from 1778 to 1790.

The **rondo**-form finale is what the Germans would call a *Kehraus*—the final dance, the "clearing out" of the last guests at a party. This one bubbles along until it seems to forget where it is (schnapps induced?) and tries a few tentative, separated notes before remembering exactly where the door is. The condition recurs, so it is perhaps not surprising that this delightful quartet ends not with an emphatic door slam but with a bemused question as to where the exit is at all. Haydn left it there.

## ANTON WEBERN

(Born December 3, 1883, Vienna, Austria; died September 15, 1945, Mittersill, Austria)

**Fünf Sätze (Five Movements) for String Quartet, op. 5**

**Composed:** 1909

**Published:** 1922

**Other works from this period:** Detailed in the notes below

**Approximate duration:** 11 minutes

During the fall of 1908, Webern composed the Opus 2, 3, and 4 songs, but in the spring he returned to instrumental music with the *Fünf Sätze* for String Quartet, op. 5. This score marked an important advance in Webern's style since it was the first work to use the concentrated,

\*Bolted terms are defined in the glossary, which begins on page 94.

aphoristic language that characterizes his later compositions, the music that was to have an enormous impact on composers during the mid-twentieth century. Though the *Five Movements* were the height of modernity when they were new, Webern still thought of them as old-fashioned in their ability to communicate emotions. He confided to Alban Berg that most of his works for the half-dozen years before 1912, including Opus 5, were related in their expression to the death of his mother in 1906. For the *Orchestral Pieces*, op. 6, composed later in 1909, he even offered a **programmatic** synopsis of the music: "Even today I do not understand my feelings as I walked behind the coffin to the cemetery. I know only that I walked the entire way with my head held high, as if to banish everything lowly all around...Three summers after that [i.e., 1909], I was at our estate in Carinthia again for an extended period. Daily towards evening, I was at the grave—often in deep dusk." He left no such verbal guide for the *Five Movements*, preferring to allow the music itself to express his searching introspection.

Despite their modernity of **harmony**, rhythm, and instrumental sonority, the *Five Movements* are formally indebted to traditional models. The opening movement is an enormously compressed sonata structure. The tiny main theme, heard immediately, comprises just the upward leap of a minor ninth, while the second subject is a slower, **legato** strain in the low strings. The development begins with a **pizzicato** passage; the recapitulation returns to a phrase reminiscent of the second theme and then the opening interval motive, inverted. The slow second movement follows an arch shape, starting at a whisper, rising through wispy melodic fragments, and ending in near inaudibility. The animated third movement is in the nature of a **scherzo**. The fourth movement matches the second in length and softness, though its mood is one of even greater mystery. The closing movement is divided into two parts: the first is built above an undulating melody in the low strings while the second murmurs tiny melodic fragments until the music fades into silence.

## ANTON WEBERN

### *Langsamer Satz (Slow Movement) for String Quartet*

**Composed:** 1905

**Published:** 1965, New York City

**Other works from this period:** Three Songs for Voice and Piano (1903–1904); *Sonatensatz* for Solo Piano (1906); Piano Quintet (1907); *Passacaglia* for Orchestra, op. 1 (1908); *Fünf Sätze* for String Quartet, op. 5 (1909)

**Approximate duration:** 10 minutes

The genesis of the *Langsamer Satz* is revelatory of the state of Webern's creative and personal thinking in 1905, when he was twenty-two years old. Three years earlier, on Easter 1902, he set eyes on his cousin Wilhelmine Mörtl, then sixteen, for the first time. They immediately became friends and then, during the following years, very much more. In the spring of 1905, he and Wilhelmine went on a five-day walking excursion in the Waldwinkel, a picturesque region in Lower Austria. Webern reveled in the beauty of the springtime countryside and the companionship of the woman who would become his wife six years later. "The sky is brilliantly blue," he confided to his diary. "To walk forever like this among flowers, with my dearest one beside me, to feel oneself so entirely at one with the universe, without care, free as the lark in the sky above—O what splendor! We wandered through forests. It was a fairyland!" In June, still suffused with the glory of the Austrian countryside and the soaring emotions of his young love, he composed his *Langsamer Satz*.

The piece occupies the same emotionally charged expressive and stylistic sphere as Schoenberg's programmatic string sextet of 1899, *Verklärte Nacht* (see Concert Program VII notes). Though firmly tonal

(E-flat major) in its harmonic idiom, the *Langsamer Satz* shows the sort of sophisticated thematic manipulation (especially in the inversion of its theme) that became an integral component of Webern's later atonal and **serial** music, though its lyricism and overt emotionalism find little equivalent in his precise and pristine later works. The *Langsamer Satz* is in traditional three-part form. The first (and last) section utilizes two themes: a melody of broad arching phrases that broaches an almost Brahmsian mixture of duple and triple rhythmic figurations and a complementary motive of greater chromaticism, begun by the second violin, that climbs a step higher to begin each of its subsequent phrases. The central portion of the work is based on a rhapsodic theme in flowing **triplet** figurations that works itself up to a climax of aggressive **unisons** to mark the midpoint of the movement. An epilogue of quiet, floating harmonies (*zögernd*, "lingeringly," Webern wrote repeatedly in the score above these measures) closes this touching souvenir of Webern's youth, which Hans and Rosaleen Moldenhauer, in their biography of Webern, called "pure and exalted love music."

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(Born Bonn, Germany, baptized December 17, 1770; died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria)

### *String Quartet in C Major, op. 59, no. 3, Razumovsky*

**Composed:** 1806

**Published:** 1808, Vienna

**Dedication:** Count Andreas Kirillovich Razumovsky

**Other works from this period:** Triple **Concerto** in C Major for Piano, Violin, and Cello, op. 56 (1804–1807); Symphony no. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 60 (1806); Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 61 (1806); Symphony no. 5 in c minor, op. 67 (1807–1808); String Quartet in E-flat Major, op. 74, *Harp* (1809)

**Approximate duration:** 30 minutes

Count Andreas Kirillovich Razumovsky was one of the most prominent figures in Viennese society, politics, and art at the turn of the nineteenth century. Born in 1752 to a singer at the Russian court, he ingratiated himself with a number of women of lofty station and entered the diplomatic corps at age twenty-five. 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 expenditures and his love affairs with ladies of the highest standing, not excluding the Queen of Naples." In 1788 in Vienna, Razumovsky married Elizabeth, Countess of Thun and sister of Prince Lichnowsky, one of Beethoven's most devoted patrons. Four years later, he was assigned as Russian ambassador to Vienna, whose sybaritic lifestyle perfectly suited his personality. Razumovsky 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, he took over from Prince Lichnowsky the patronage of the string quartet headed by Ignaz Schuppanzigh and commissioned Beethoven to write three new pieces that would be played in the grand palace he was building on the Danube Canal near the Prater. In honor of (or, perhaps, at the request of) his Russian patron, Beethoven included traditional Russian themes in the first two quartets of the Opus 59 set.

The *Razumovsky Quartet* no. 3, in C major, opens with an almost motionless introduction, influenced, perhaps, in its harmonic acerbity by the beginning of Mozart's *Dissonant Quartet*. The mood brightens with the presentation of the main theme by the unaccompanied first violin, and there ensues a powerful movement in fully developed sonata form. Dark currents of feeling pulse beneath the rippling surface of the **Andante**: "A lament [that] searches many shadowy cor-

ners," wrote Vincent d'Indy of this music; J. W. N. Sullivan thought that it presented "some forgotten and alien despair," and Joseph Kerman concluded it a "mystery of the primitive." The third movement, nominally a minuet, is of a **Romantic** sensibility that leaves far behind the elegance and simple grace of its model. The finale is a whirlwind blend of rondo, sonata, and **fugue** that demonstrates Beethoven's mastery of **contrapuntal** techniques and incomparable ability to drive a composition to its seemingly inevitable end.



**Stanford Live's 2018-19 season  
kicks off this September**

Highlights include the **Philharmonia Orchestra, London**; a striking new dance work by **Wang Ramirez & Nitin Sawhney**; author **Neil Gaiman**; the **Australian Chamber Orchestra**; pianists **Seong-Jin Cho & Yefim Bronfman**; and so much more.

Buy tickets at [live.stanford.edu](http://live.stanford.edu)



**RIDGE  
VINEYARDS**

Since 1962 traditionally-made wines  
from California's oldest vineyards

Monte Bello Ridge  
overlooking the peninsula

Open for tasting  
Saturday & Sunday, 11 - 5

408.867.3233  
[www.ridgewine.com](http://www.ridgewine.com)