



CONCERT PROGRAM I:

Dvořák in Context

JULY 19

Saturday, July 19, 6:00 p.m., The Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The 2014 season begins on a festive note, as Mozart's delightful *Serenata notturna* prefaces Dvořák's pastoral Opus 51 Quartet. Dvořák's powerful utilization of folk idioms cultivated a growing musical tradition, one subsequently inherited by such composers as Bohuslav Martinů and Béla Bartók, as evidenced by Martinů's *Three Madrigals* and Bartók's jubilant Divertimento for Strings. Indeed, the rich traditions represented by these works—Viennese Classicism on the one hand and Central European nationalism on the other—come together in the world of Antonín Dvořák, whose flowing lyricism, rhythmic flair, and singular accent characterize the best of the two worlds.

Fête the Festival

Join us for a catered outdoor dinner.
8:30 p.m., following the concert on July 19
Menlo School campus

Tickets are \$65. Please see the patron services team for availability.

SPECIAL THANKS

Music@Menlo dedicates this performance to Iris and Paul Brest and also to Joan and Allan Fisch with gratitude for their generous support.

Artist unknown.
Nelahozeves, Czechoslovakia. Engraving.
Alfredo Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Serenade in D Major for String Orchestra, K. 239, *Serenata notturna* (1776)

Marcia: Maestoso
Minuetto – Trio
Rondeau: Allegretto

Jorja Fleezanis, Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, Aaron Boyd, Sean Lee, Kristin Lee, Erin Keefe, Frederik Øland, Adam Barnett-Hart, Sunmi Chang, *violins*; Pierre Lapointe, Asbjørn Nørgaard, *violins*; Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin, Dane Johansen, *cellos*; Scott Pingel, *bass*; Wu Han, *timpani*

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

String Quartet no. 10 in E-flat Major, op. 51 (1878–1879)

Allegro ma non troppo
Dumka: Elegia
Romanza
Finale

Escher String Quartet: Adam Barnett-Hart, Aaron Boyd, *violins*; Pierre Lapointe, *viola*; Dane Johansen, *cello*

INTERMISSION

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890–1959)

Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola, H. 313 (1949)

Poco allegro
Poco andante
Allegro

Erin Keefe, *violin*; Paul Neubauer, *viola*

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

Divertimento for String Orchestra, Sz. 113, BB 118 (1939)

Allegro non troppo
Molto adagio
Allegro assai

Erin Keefe, Sean Lee, Kristin Lee, Frederik Øland, Adam Barnett-Hart, Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, Jorja Fleezanis, Sunmi Chang, Aaron Boyd, *violins*; Asbjørn Nørgaard, Pierre Lapointe, *violins*; Dane Johansen, Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin, *cellos*; Scott Pingel, *bass*

Program Notes: Dvořák in Context

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg; died December 5, 1791, Vienna)

Serenade in D Major for String Orchestra, K. 239, *Serenata notturna*

Composed: January 1776

Other works from this period: Divertimento in B-flat Major, K. 254 (1776); Quartet for Flute, Violin, Viola, and Cello, K. 285 (1777); Sonata in G Major for Violin and Piano, K. 301 (1778)

Approximate duration: 14 minutes

Mozart's delightful *Serenata notturna* belongs to a seemingly inconsequential literature. In the late eighteenth century, **serenades**—musical greetings cards, typically intended for outdoor celebrations—were penned quickly as the occasion arose and rarely with the expectation of a second performance. Regarded thus as ephemera, much of the Classical serenade literature does not survive: of the more than thirty serenades that Leopold Mozart composed, we only have one, not discovered until the twentieth century. Likewise, the composer Michael Haydn (Joseph's brother) churned out scores of serenades, often in just a matter of days, only four of which remain.

But while these pieces aspired neither to profundity nor to posterity, in the hands of such a creative genius as Mozart, even a genre approached so casually could be a vessel for exquisite music. Thankfully, quite a number of Mozart's serenades survive, including his famous *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, the *Haffner* and *Posthorn* Serenades, and the charming *Serenata notturna*.

On the surface, Mozart's serenades all share an immediately affable demeanor—but on a more intent listen, each possesses its own particular brilliance. In the case of the *Serenata notturna* (“notturna” signaling that the work was composed for a nighttime fête), the music's unique charm begins with its curious instrumentation of solo string quartet with string orchestra and timpani. The sonic contrast between the quartet and the mass of full strings creates a sense of space, amplified by the timpani's booming sound. There is, moreover, a lively dynamism at play between the solo strings and the full ensemble, recalling the dramatic energy found in the Baroque **concerti grossi** of Bach and Vivaldi.

The *Serenata notturna* comprises three **movements**. Following the stately first movement march, the second movement is a graceful **minuet**, a French dance form popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The work concludes with a cheerful **rondeau**, marked by a chuckling **theme** in the first violin.

All of the most cherished musical values of the Classical period are given their most perfect voice by Mozart, whether in his most majestic symphonic and operatic creations or in seeming **bagatelles** like the *Serenata notturna*. Viennese Classicism valued the primacy of melody; Mozart's melodies are poetic, expressive, and uncannily beautiful. His rich **harmonies** and instrumental textures, both on full display throughout this serenade, are equally seductive. And as Classicism moved away from the complexity of Bach's **fugues** towards more transparent forms, the effortlessness of Mozart's music belies its formal sophistication. In the characteristic balance of expressive beauty and formal elegance in his music—to be found without fail throughout his entire oeuvre and which is perhaps even more striking in such trifles as the *Serenata notturna*, when it seems like he's hardly even trying—we find the quintessence of Mozart's craft.

—Patrick Castillo

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

(Born September 8, 1841, Nelahozeves, near Kralupy; died May 1, 1904, Prague)

String Quartet no. 10 in E-flat Major, op. 51

Composed: December 25, 1878–March 28, 1879

Published: 1879, Berlin

First performance: November 10, 1879, Magdeburg

Other works from this period: Detailed in the notes below

Approximate duration: 29 minutes

The 1878–1879 season saw Dvořák enjoying the start of a flourishing career. He had scored recent successes with his Opus 45 *Slavonic Rhapsodies* and Opus 46 *Slavonic Dances* for Orchestra, as well as the Opus 48 String Sextet, and his star was quickly rising. These works and others caught audiences' attention for their integration of the Czech folk style into a **Classical** approach, which would become Dvořák's signature. Following this string of successes, the Florentine String Quartet approached Dvořák about writing a quartet in the irresistible Slavic folk style that characterized his other recent works. Dvořák obliged with the tenth of his fourteen string quartets, the Quartet in E-flat Major, op. 51.

The music that begins the quartet testifies to Dvořák's gifts as a melodist: after a warm introduction, ascending from the cello up to the first violin, the quietly radiant theme appears. The tranquility of this music quickly intensifies into a lively dance, from which a thoughtful second theme emerges, reverting to the even temper of the opening measures. But this music, too, Dvořák manages to transform, with exquisite subtlety, from a pensive utterance into a light, carefree polka.

The movement's central development section focuses on the exposition's first theme, which Dvořák weaves through a wide range of keys and expressive characters, starting in the moody key of e minor. The theme soon assumes a prayerful aura in the luminescent key of A major, as Dvořák slows the tempo to a hymn-like stillness. A joyful G major outburst follows.

The music returns triumphantly to the home key of E-flat major—but, in a dramatic coup, instead of reprising the first theme as expected, Dvořák proceeds right to the second theme. This playful transgression from the Classical sonata-form model of Haydn and Mozart might have startled listeners at the time; it is a subtle compositional choice, but one that signals an unbridled exuberance. Dvořák saves the restatement of the first theme in the home key for the movement's contented **coda**.

The second movement is a **dumka**, a traditional folk lament that would serve Dvořák frequently throughout his compositional career. Above strummed chords in the cello, the first violin and viola intone the dumka's plaintive melody in dialog. A key characteristic of the dumka form is its extreme expressive contrast between heavy-hearted melancholy and high-spirited vim. The contrasting middle section of the quartet's slow movement resembles another traditional Czech form: the **furiant**, a swaggering folk dance.

Dvořák departs from the realm of folk music for the third movement, an unabashedly sentimental romance, but returns to the Bohemian folk style for the finale. The first violin begins with a rustic, happy-go-lucky tune. The rest of the quartet joins in, running this easygoing tune through expertly crafted **polyphony**; again, we hear Dvořák's characteristic blend of simplicity and sophistication. A second melody appears, a flowing, subdued foil to the main dance melody.

Dvořák's powers of invention are on full display throughout the finale, as he develops these two themes in a variety of ways, from hard-hitting **counterpoint** to a tranquil statement of the second theme in spacious **octaves** between the first violin and cello, set to a soft **drone** in the inner strings. Finally, the original melody reappears, its guileless simplicity

*Bolded terms are defined in the glossary, which begins on page 100.

transformed into euphoric glee, and what started off as a rustic folk dance races to a blazing finish.

—Patrick Castillo

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ

(Born December 8, 1890, Polička, Bohemia; died August 28, 1959, Liestal, Switzerland)

Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola, H. 313

Composed: 1949

Published: Boosey & Hawkes, 1949

Dedication: Lillian and Joseph Fuchs

Other works from this period: Detailed in the notes below

Approximate duration: 15 minutes

Of the generation following Dvořák, Bohuslav Martinů is widely regarded, second perhaps only to Leoš Janáček, as the most significant Czech composer of the twentieth century. Martinů also ranks among his generation's most prolific composers, writing in virtually all genres of vocal and instrumental music.

Born in 1890 in Polička, a small town just on the Bohemian side of the Bohemia-Moravia border, Martinů showed great promise as a youngster on the violin and was sent, with the help of funds raised by his local community, to study at the Prague Conservatory. He performed poorly at school but was enthralled by the cultural life of the big city (which perhaps distracted him from his studies). Martinů's access to a broad range of music during these years was formative—he attended the Prague premiere of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1908, which had an especially significant impact on him—and by 1910, the twenty-year-old Martinů was earnestly focused on developing his voice as a composer.

In 1923, he moved to Paris, a city he had long been drawn to. Though he would frequently visit Prague and Polička, he never resided in his homeland again. When the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, Martinů was instrumental in facilitating the emigration of a substantial number of Czech artists to France; as the Nazis approached Paris the following year, he fled with his wife to the south of France and then, in 1941, to the United States, where he would spend most of the following decade.

In the summer of 1946, while teaching at Tanglewood, Martinů fell and fractured his skull. His long recuperation, during which he suffered from severe headaches, tinnitus, and bouts of depression, disrupted his work for the next two years. As he gradually returned to composing, Martinů focused for a time on chamber music, which he could better manage during his recovery than large orchestral and operatic scores; during this period, he composed, among other works, his Sixth and Seventh String Quartets, his Second Piano Trio, and the *Three Madrigals* for Violin and Viola.

In addition to being one of the twentieth century's most prolific composers, Martinů also possessed one of the most distinctly personal styles of his generation. He was influenced early on by his teachers, the Czech composer Josef Suk and then the French composer Albert Roussel, with whom he studied in Paris. Since hearing the Prague premiere of *Pelléas*, he was deeply influenced by Debussy, and while in Paris, he also encountered the music of Stravinsky and the composers of *Les Six* and discovered jazz. Alongside this broad palette of musical tastes, Martinů's output from the 1930s onward also reveals a growing interest in Czech folk music and culture—in this regard, he greatly admired Dvořák and Janáček. Finally, Martinů also took a deep interest in music from the Renaissance and the Baroque period and drew frequently from forms and conventions of early music in his own work. All of these ingredients coalesce in the piquant recipe of Martinů's compositional language.

The designation of his Duo no. 1 for Violin and Viola as *Three Madrigals* offers a case in point: the **madrigal** is a fourteenth-century musical form; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term came to specifically

describe secular, polyphonic vocal works and then, in later periods, it was loosely appropriated for instrumental works, as well. Martinů applied the term to more than twenty pieces over his career. But despite this evocation of an earlier era, the *Three Madrigals* have an unmistakably modern perspective.

One immediately striking characteristic of the *Three Madrigals* is the strength of Martinů's writing for both the violin and the viola: the two instruments are given equal roles, at times lyrical and at other times rhythmically charged. Also, the sonic breadth that Martinů achieves with just these two instruments rivals the sound of many string quartets. These qualities are in evidence from the outset of the first movement, throughout which the duo shuttles back and forth between big, unified sounds and playfully trading **phrases** with one another. Following the rhythmic vigor of the opening measures, Martinů introduces a long-breathed melody, first in the violin above sixteenth-note figurations in the viola and then vice versa. The remainder of the *Poco allegro* relies on the melodic and rhythmic ideas introduced in its first few bars, but Martinů conjures a thrilling dramatic arc by developing those ideas and by varying textures.

The second movement, marked *Poco andante*, introduces a new palette of textures: both instruments play with mutes, dulling the brilliance of the string sound, and evocative harmonies and murmuring **trills** create an aura of mystery. Other ornamental techniques further enhance the music's enigmatic mood, from flowing sixteenth- and thirty-second-note runs to wide **tremolando** in the violin accompanied by strummed chords in the viola, evoking a troubadour singing a plaintive ballad. The concluding *Allegro* returns to the playful repartee of the first movement.

—Patrick Castillo

BÉLA BARTÓK

(Born March 25, 1881, Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary; died September 26, 1945, New York)

Divertimento for String Orchestra, Sz. 113, BB 118

Composed: 1939

First performance: June 11, 1940, in Basel, Switzerland, conducted by Paul Sacher

Other works from this period: Detailed in the notes below

Approximate duration: 26 minutes

"Yes, those were horrible days for us, too, those days when Austria was attacked," Bartók responded from Budapest on April 13, 1938, to his loyal friend in Basel, Switzerland, Mrs. Oscar Müller-Widmann. "The most frightful thing for us at the moment is that we face the threat of seeing Hungary also given over to this regime of bandits and murderers. I cannot imagine how I could live in such a country...Strictly speaking, it would be my duty to exile myself, if that is still possible. But even under the most favorable auspices, it would cause me an enormous amount of trouble and moral anguish to earn my daily bread in a foreign country...All this adds up to the same old problem, whether to go or stay."

Given the unsettled and frightening political situation under which all Eastern Europeans found themselves during the terrible days of 1938 and 1939, it is little wonder that Bartók's creativity was undermined. He managed to complete the Violin Concerto no. 2 in December 1938 but then found himself too preoccupied to undertake any further original work. Paul Sacher, the conductor of the Basel Chamber Orchestra and a close friend who had commissioned the *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* two years before, recognized that Bartók needed to leave Budapest if his creativity was to be revived. Sacher invited the Bartóks to spend the summer of 1939 at his chalet at Saanen in the massif of Gruyère in Switzerland and commissioned a new piece from him for his orchestra. Bartók accepted both of the invitations and arrived at Saanen in July. Even in Switzerland, however, Bartók could not escape the ominous European political situation. "The poor, peaceful, honest Swiss are being compelled to burn with war-fever," he wrote to his son Béla in Hungary on August

18th. "Their newspapers are full of military articles, they have taken defense measures on the more important passes, etc.—military preparedness. I saw this for myself on the Julier Pass; for example, boulders have been made into roadblocks against tanks and such like attractions. It's the same in Holland. I do not like your going to Romania—in such uncertain times it is unwise to go anywhere so unsafe. I am also worried whether I shall be able to get home from here if this or that happens."

Once installed at Saanen, Bartók retreated into a welcome isolation to undertake Sacher's commission. He continued in his letter to Béla:

Fortunately I can put this [war] worry out of my mind if I have to—it does not disturb my work. Somehow I feel like a musician of olden times—the invited guest of a patron of the arts. For here I am, as you know, entirely the guest of the Sachers; they see to everything—from a distance. In a word, I am living alone—in an ethnographic object: a genuine peasant cottage. The furnishings are not in character, but so much the better, because they are the last word in comfort. They even had a piano brought from Berne for me...The janitor's wife cooks and cleans, and my wish is her command. Recently, even the weather has been favoring me. However, I can't take advantage of the weather to make excursions: I have to work: a piece for Sacher himself (something for a string orchestra); in this respect also my position is like that of the old-time musician. Luckily the work went well, and I finished it in fifteen days (a piece of about twenty-five minutes). I just completed it yesterday.

The work was the *Divertimento* for String Orchestra, one of Bartók's most immediately accessible compositions. The halcyon Swiss interlude during which he produced this piece was not to last, however. Almost as soon as he had begun the Sixth Quartet at Saanen, word came from Budapest of his beloved mother's death. He returned home immediately and spent the winter in Hungary, but in April 1940 he sailed to America for a concert tour with Joseph Szigeti. After an arduous journey home that summer to settle his affairs and collect his wife, he went back to New York in October and never again saw his native Hungary.

Bartók left no specific indication concerning his use of the eighteenth-century appellation for the **divertimento**. Since the piece does not include the dance forms characteristic of that genre in Mozart's day, perhaps he meant the title to denote the music's predominantly high-spirited emotional content or its use of the old concerto grosso technique of opposing a group of soloists with the larger body of the orchestra or simply the situation in which it was composed, as he noted in his letters. At any rate, the only information that he gave about the *divertimento* was a laconic response to Sacher's question about its form: "First movement, **sonata form**; second movement, approximately **A-B-A**; third movement, **rondo-like**."

The main theme of the opening sonata-form movement is a lively violin strain in swinging **meter** given above a steady accompaniment in the lower strings. The complementary melody, ushered in by widely spaced octaves, is presented by the soloists with interjections from the ensemble. The **development** section is intricately imitative and spills over into the **recapitulation**, where the themes are subject to still further elaborations. (Concerning the extensive thematic working-out that marks so much of his music, Bartók once admitted, "The extremes of **variation**, which are so characteristic of folk music, are at the same time the expression of my own nature.") The somber nature of the second movement, which stands in strong contrast to the surrounding music, may well have been influenced by the tragic events of 1939. It is in a three-part form (A-B-A), whose outer sections, based on a restless, **chromatic** theme, enclose highly charged music that grows from a dramatic, repeated-note outcry from the violas. The joyous finale, which resumes the high spirits of the opening movement, is disposed in several sections, with the principal theme, first presented by the solo violin, returning to mark the movement's progress.

Halsey Stevens wrote that Bartók's *Divertimento* for String Orchestra is "almost Mozartean in its buoyancy. It is the most spontaneous and carefree work of Bartók since the *Dance Suite* and is without question the least problematical. The idiom is straightforward, the harmonies are simple and preponderantly triadic, the **contrapuntal** outlines clear, the structural patterns free from complexity."

—Dr. Richard E. Rodda

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