

COLORADO STRING QUARTET

JULIE ROSENFELD, Violin
DEBORAH REDDING, Violin
FRANCESCA MARTIN, Viola
SHARON PRATER, Cello

Quartet in F major, K. 590

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro moderato
Andante (Allegretto)
Menuetto: Allegretto
Allegro

Quartet No. 4

Bela Bartok
(1881-1945)

Allegro
Prestissimo con sordino
Lento non troppo
Allegretto piccato
Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Quartet No. 9 in C major, Op. 59, No. 3

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Andante con moto; Allegro vivace
Andante con moto quasi allegretto
Menuetto: Grazioso
Allegro molto

The F major is Mozart's last quartet, written in June 1790, a year and a half before his death.

The opening theme of the quartet can be simply described as an ascending arpeggio followed by a descending scale. Yet Mozart immediately transforms this basic material, changing the dynamics, the individual notes, and the scoring, thereby effecting a metamorphosis of the character it originally presented. To start the second theme the cello moves up in a broken chord from its very lowest note over two octaves to the new lyrical melody. The first theme returns to end the exposition. A concise development section leads to the recapitulation, which is little changed from the exposition. The coda starts just like the development but quickly winds down to a delightfully attractive, witty ending.

Alfred Einstein, the noted Mozart scholar, says of the Allegretto: "One of the most sensitive movements in the whole literature of chamber music, it seems to mingle the bliss and sorrow of a farewell to life. How beautiful life has been! How sad! How brief!" The basis of this movement is not so much a melody as a rhythm, a plain rhythmic figure played at the outset by the entire quartet. Mozart then reflects and meditates on this basic cell, plumbing its emotional depths and setting it forth in any number of different guises and postures, allowing it to permeate the entire movement.

The finale, a high-speed, vivacious frolic, unstintingly gives all four players flashy passages that test even the most secure techniques. Cast in a combined rondo and sonata form, this irresistible, appealing movement has intricate fugal and contrapuntal sections, unexpected pauses and silences, harmonic surprises, and even a brief imitation of a bagpipe, making it a brilliant cap to Mozart's tragically short string quartet-writing career.

From notes by Melvin Berger

Quartet No. 4

Bartok

Dedicated by Bartok to the Pro Arte Quartet, this work written between July and September 1928, received its first performance at Budapest on March 20th of the following year.

This quartet continues the style of its immediate predecessor, having the same violent dissonances, based on the use of small intervals, the same very taut, expressive tension - both of them are "black" works - and the same supreme concentration and economy. For many music lovers it is the supreme masterpiece of the series and one of the greatest quartets ever written. The five very concise movements of the fourth quartet reveal a formal plan which is both novel and audacious. This is the first appearance of the celebrated "arch" design. The keystone of the "arch" is the central *Non troppo lento*, the only slow movement in this irrepressively lively work, whilst the two scherzos (the second and fourth movements) are closely related in both theme and character. The same is true to an even greater degree of the two outer movements. An interesting influence in this quartet is that of Oriental (Arab) folk-music, in which Bartok had always been extremely interested.

Quartet No. 9 in C major, op. 59, No. 3

Beethoven

One of the earliest virtuoso ensembles in the nineteenth century was the Ignaz Schuppanzigh Quartet, founded and maintained by Count Rasoumovsky (Russian Ambassador to the Austrian Court), himself a fine violinist. The count commissioned Beethoven in 1805 to write several string quartets for him, and during the following year he received three large and impressive compositions. They daringly combined whatever Beethoven considered worthwhile in the Parisian 'quator brillant' (the first violin has the major role while the other three instruments support), with the characteristics of the 'quator concertant' (all voices are equally involved in representing the musical material), the latter which Beethoven found more challenging in the long run. One hundred and eighty years after the fact, we probably fail to appreciate the impact of the revolutionary ideas Beethoven presented in these quartets. However, the unprecedented removal of that pillar of eighteenth-century tradition, the double bar at the end of the exposition, is merely a symbol of the innovative spirit with which this composer melted down the old rules and reshaped them to suit and serve his personal demands.

Some of the more unusual aspects of this quartet are the slow, mysterious introduction to the first movement with its ambiguous tonality, the pizzicato cello effects in the meditative slow movement, the charming pauses scattered throughout the Menuetto and the swift, dance-like Finale in 6/8 meter.

Programme note by Erika Benedik

The Colorado Quartet attracted international attention in 1983 when, within ten days, it won both the Naumburg Chamber Music Award and First Prize in the Banff International String Quartet Competition. It made its New York debut at the Metropolitan Museum of Art the same year, and the following season made its Naumburg debuts in Alice Tully Hall and the Library of Congress. Since then this outstanding ensemble has performed on most of the major concert series throughout North America, and many in South America, Europe and the Far East. Everywhere it performs it is hailed as one of the outstanding quartets of our time.

In addition to its heavy performing schedule, the Colorado Quartet is the Quartet-in-Residence at the New School of Music in Philadelphia. During the summers it is in residence at James Dick's International Festival Institute at Round Top Texas.

The Quartet is active in commissioning and performing contemporary American music as well, having commissioned new works by Ezra Laderman, Karel Husa and George Tsontakis. The Quartet was awarded a Consortium Commission Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1985.

Before embarking on their professional career, the members of the Colorado Quartet were Teaching Assistants at the Juilliard School where they worked intensively with Robert Mann of the Juilliard Quartet. During that time the Quartet won First Prize in the Coleman Competition and was awarded a Fellowship to the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England, which subsequently sponsored the Quartet in a highly successful London debut at Wigmore Hall in 1982.

JULIE ROSENFELD, violin: A native of Los Angeles, Ms. Rosenfeld received her training at the Curtis Institute, the University of Southern California and Yale University. Her major teachers have included Szymon Goldberg, Nathan Milstein and Yukiko Kamei. Ms. Rosenfeld has appeared as recitalist and as soloist with orchestras throughout the United States and Europe. She joined the Quartet in 1982.

DEBORAH REDDING, violin: Born in New York City, Ms. Redding grew up in Colorado where she co-founded the Colorado Quartet in 1976. She received a Master of Music Degree as a student of Szymon Goldberg at the Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of Colorado where she studied with Oswald Lehnert.

FRANCESCA MARTIN, viola: Born in Los Angeles, Ms. Martin is a graduate of the California Institute of the Arts. Her studies include four summers in the class of William Primrose at the Banff School of Fine Arts and further studies with Louis Kievman, Alan Deveritch, Heichiro Ohyama and Donald McInnes. She joined the Colorado Quartet in 1982.

SHARON PRATER, 'cello: A native of Colorado and a founding member of the Colorado Quartet, Ms. Prater received her Master of Music Degree from the Juilliard School where she studied with Lorne Munroe and Joel Krosnick, and a Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of Colorado where she studied with Jurgen deLemos. Further studies have been with Paul Katz at the Aspen Music Festival.