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Chamber Players

*Mozart
Chamber
Music for
Winds and
Strings*

Clarinet Quintet,
K.581

Horn Quintet,
K.407

Oboe Quartet,
K.370

Flute Quartet,
K.298





Mozart in a detail from Johann Nepomuk della Croce's 1780/1781 oil painting of the Mozart family



Cover photo: (from left) John Ferrillo, Haldan Martinson, Steven Ansell, Elizabeth Rowe, Cathy Basrak, Malcolm Lowe, William R. Hudgins, James Sommerville, and Jules Eskin

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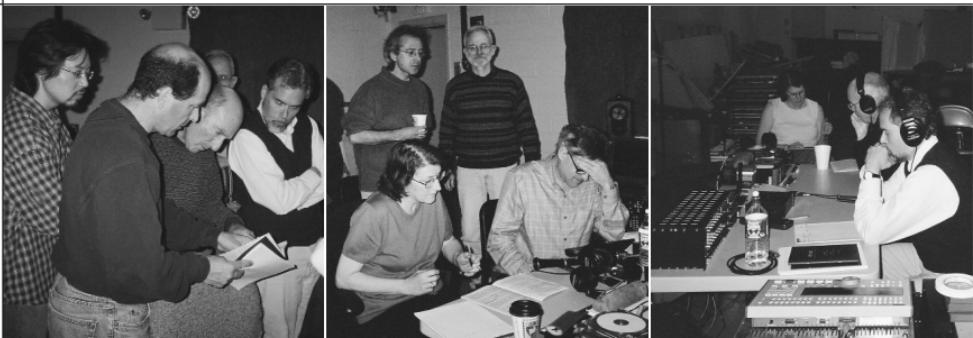
Photos: Michael J. Lutch (Boston Symphony Chamber Players);
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WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART (1756-1791)

Chamber Music for Winds and Strings

BOSTON SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS

Malcolm Lowe, violin Elizabeth Rowe, flute

Haldan Martinson, violin John Ferrillo, oboe

Steven Ansell, viola William R. Hudgins, clarinet

Jules Eskin, cello James Sommerville, horn

with Cathy Basrak, BSO assistant principal viola

Quintet in A for clarinet, two violins, viola, and cello, K.581

[1]	Allegro	9:43
[2]	Larghetto	6:45
[3]	Menuetto; Trio I; Trio II	7:09
[4]	Allegretto con Variazioni	9:54

Quintet in E-flat for horn, violin, two violas, and cello, K.407

[5]	Allegro	6:14
[6]	Andante	6:27
[7]	Rondo. Allegro	3:46

Quartet in F for oboe, violin, viola, and cello, K.370(368b)

[8]	Allegro	7:03
[9]	Adagio	2:55
[10]	Rondeau. Allegro	4:32

Quartet in A for flute, violin, viola, and cello, K.298

[11]	Theme (Andante) and Variations	6:28
[12]	Menuetto; Trio	2:25
[13]	Rondeau. Allegretto grazioso	3:10

TOTAL TIMING: 76:39

BSO Principal Second Violinist Haldan Martinson plays second violin in the Clarinet Quintet, K.581.

BSO Assistant Principal Violist Cathy Basrak plays second viola in the Horn Quintet, K.407.

WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART

Chamber Music for Winds and Strings



An 1819 oil portrait of Mozart by Barbara Kraft

Composers frequently write for musicians whose artistry they know, and such was the case for three of the works by Mozart on this disc. Composed in early 1781 in Munich, where Mozart was busy finishing up his opera *Idomeneo*, the F major Quartet for Oboe and Strings was written for the oboist Friedrich Ramm (1744-?1811), who had become a member of the Mannheim court orchestra at fourteen. When Mozart first encountered him there in 1777, Ramm was already using Mozart's Oboe Concerto as something of a calling card; according to a letter of Mozart's, he played it five times in Mannheim in 1778.¹ That same year, Ramm and other members of the Mannheim court orchestra relocated to Munich, where Mozart later encountered him in 1781 and wrote the Oboe Quartet. In letters to his father Leopold, Mozart praised the oboist particularly for his "pleasingly pure tone" as well as for his "decent, cheerful, and honest" character.

The Quintet in E-flat for Horn and Strings was composed in Vienna, probably toward the end of 1782, for the horn player Joseph Leutgeb (1732-1811), for whom Mozart also wrote his horn concertos. Leutgeb had become a member of the Salzburg court orchestra by 1763 and in 1777 moved with his wife to Vienna, where, besides continuing his musical career, he ran a cheese shop (perhaps inherited from his father-in-law). He and Mozart remained close friends to the end of the composer's life, Leutgeb often serving as the butt of Mozart's jokes, as reflected, for example, in the composer's oft-quoted inscription on the manuscript of his Horn Concerto, K.417: "Wolfgang Amadè Mozart has taken pity on Leutgeb, ass, ox, and fool, at Vienna, 27 March 1783."²

It was for Anton Stadler (1753-1812) that Mozart wrote his Quintet in A for Clarinet and Strings, as well as his Clarinet Concerto (K.622) in the same key, and the clarinet and basset horn solos in his opera *La clemenza di Tito*. Stadler—a member of Mozart's circle of friends, and, like the composer, a Freemason—was renowned for his playing of both the clarinet and the basset

BOSTON SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS



One of the world's most distinguished chamber music ensembles sponsored by a major symphony orchestra and made up of that orchestra's principal players, the Boston Symphony Chamber Players include first-desk string, woodwind, and brass players from the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Founded in 1964 during Erich Leinsdorf's tenure as BSO music director, the Chamber Players can perform virtually any work within the vast chamber music literature; they can expand their range of repertory by calling upon other BSO members or enlisting the services of such distinguished artists as BSO Music Director James Levine (as both pianist and conductor) or pianists Emanuel Ax and André Previn. The Chamber Players' activities include an annual four-concert series in Boston's Jordan Hall at the New England Conservatory of

Music, regular appearances at Tanglewood (summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra), and a busy touring schedule. In addition to appearances throughout the United States, the group has performed in Europe and Japan on numerous occasions and has also toured to South America and the Soviet Union. Among the Boston Symphony Chamber Players' many recordings are the Beethoven Septet and Schubert Octet; Smetana's G major Piano Trio and Dvořák's String Sextet; the Brahms string quintets; music of John Harbison with soprano Dawn Upshaw, baritone Sanford Sylvan, and pianist Gilbert Kalish; a Copland album with Gilbert Kalish, and a disc of music by Leon Kirchner, all on Nonesuch. For Philips the ensemble has recorded the quintets for clarinet and strings by Mozart and Brahms with former BSO principal clarinet, the late Harold Wright. Deutsche Grammophon has reissued, on a single compact disc, the Chamber Players' recordings of Stravinsky's Octet for Winds, *Pastorale*, *Ragtime*, and *Concertino* for Twelve Instruments, along with Johann Strauss waltzes as arranged for chamber ensemble by Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern.

The Clarinet Quintet of 1789—from two years before the composer’s death—conjures an entirely different world: Mozart is so ideally attuned to the clarinet’s sound (less physically tangible and somehow more disembodied than the oboe’s or horn’s), and to the clarinetist’s seemingly uncanny ability to engender sound from silence. The emotional affect and depth of this prevailingly soft-spoken work are fully apparent throughout the course of all four movements. Strings are muted for the long-breathed Larghetto, after which we get a minuet with two Trios. The first Trio is for strings alone (reminding us, should we need reminding, what equal and active participants the strings are throughout this piece); the second clothes the clarinet in rustic garb. For the finale, Mozart writes a theme and variations in which he fashions his variations as much on the purely expressive

potential of the Allegretto theme as on its contours, rhythms, and harmonies—a far cry indeed from the decidedly simpler theme-and-variations that opens the A major flute quartet. Following the minor-mode third variation and quicker-moving fourth, a gentle Adagio recalls the mood of the second-movement Larghetto; and then, to close the work, an Allegro coda strikes a perfect balance between eloquence and speed. In his classic *Mozart: His Character, His Work*, Alfred Einstein writes that “The key of A major is for Mozart the key of many colors. It has the transparency of a stained glass window.” Surely we get something of that here, in music that, even as it defies words, simultaneously confirms Mozart’s genius at its most subtle, disarming, and profound.

—Marc Mandel

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¹Though there remains some question as to its authenticity, the Oboe Concerto, K.271k, was written at Mannheim for the oboist Giuseppe Ferlendis, was for many years thought lost, and was ultimately recognized as the original version of Mozart’s D major flute concerto, K.314[285d].

²As Mozart himself once observed (in a letter of June 25, 1791): “it’s true, I always need to make a fool of someone.”

³Mozart’s “Als Luise die Briefe,” K.520, was one of several of these songs actually published under Jacquin’s name in March 1791.

horn, a lower-range cousin of the clarinet somewhat similar in tone and shape to the modern bass clarinet. He was regarded particularly for his playing in the clarinet’s low register (the so-called *chalumeau* register), which he augmented by devising a downward extension for his instrument. In 1781, Stadler and his brother (who also played clarinet and bassoon) were both employed in the Vienna court orchestra. “Stadler’s Quintet,” as the composer himself called it, is dated September 29, 1789, in Mozart’s own catalogue of his works. Stadler participated in the premiere on December 22 that year at the Burgtheater in Vienna, in a Christmas concert given by the Vienna Society of Musicians.

Mozart’s A major Quartet for Flute and Strings had a different kind of origin. Whereas Mozart had previously composed his three earlier flute quartets for the flutist Johann Baptist Wendling on commission from the Dutch physician and amateur musician Ferdinand Dejean (spelled “De Jean” in the composer’s letters), whom he had met at Mannheim in the winter of 1777-78, K.298 dates from late 1786 or 1787 in Vienna, where Mozart wrote it as *Hausmusik* to be used at gatherings of the Jacquins, a musical family he knew well. Gottfried Jacquin

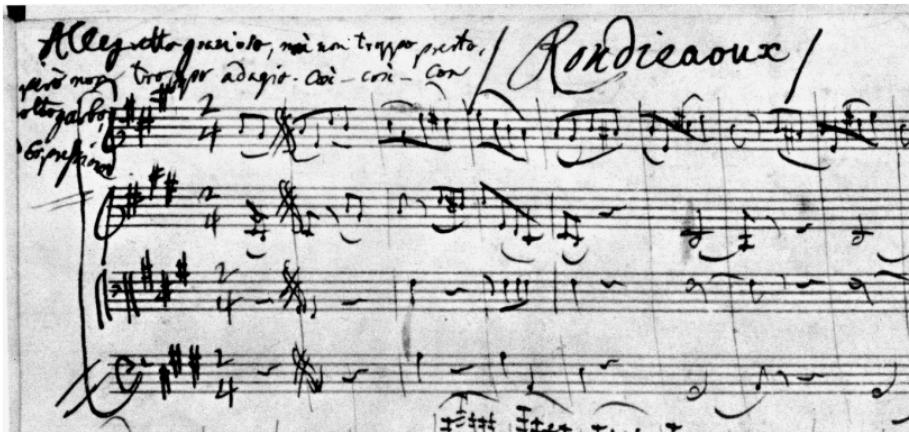
(1767-92), who sang bass, was one of Mozart’s closest friends; Gottfried’s sister Franziska, another singer, was also a piano pupil of Mozart’s. The music Mozart wrote for the Jacquins’ weekly gatherings, which encompassed not only music-making but also games and discussions, included instrumental works, arias, vocal ensembles, and even some love songs written for Gottfried Jacquin to use when wooing.³ Another of the instrumental works composed for the Jacquins was Mozart’s so-called *Kegelstatt* Trio, K.498, for clarinet, viola, and piano, which was likely performed with Anton Stadler as clarinetist, Mozart on viola (his preferred instrument when he played chamber music), and Franziska as pianist.

It is perhaps due to its origin as *Hausmusik* that the K.298 Flute Quartet is so different in character and thematic material from Mozart’s other works under consideration here. The first of the three movements is a straightforward theme with four elegant and lighthearted variations. Next comes an equally elegant minuet whose shape and content suggest yet another variation of the preceding material. Gracefulness remains a constant in the final Rondeau, but it is also here that Mozart’s sense of humor surfaces most overtly: he jokingly labels this move-

ment a “Rondieaux” with the tempo designation “*Allegretto grazioso, mà non troppo presto, però non troppo adagio. Così-così-con molto garbo ed espressione*” (“A graceful Allegretto, but not too fast, on the other hand not too slow. Like so-so—with much elegance and expression”). Still more specifically, the quartet as a whole is parodic in its use of themes by other Viennese composers: the first movement takes as the basis of its variations the song “An die Natur” by Frank Anton Hoffmeister; the minuet uses the French song “Il a des bottes,

des bottes Bastien,” and the final movement employs an arietta from Giovanni Paisiello’s opera *Le gare generose*, which had its first performance in Naples in early 1786 (thus dating Mozart’s K.298 to no earlier than that year), its first Vienna performance on September 1 that same year, and which we know from his correspondence that Mozart heard in Prague at the beginning of 1787.

Written some five or six years earlier than the A major Flute Quartet, both the Oboe Quartet and the Horn Quintet embody a three-movement structure that moves from



From the first page of the finale to Mozart’s K.298 Flute Quartet, from the composer’s autograph manuscript (Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)

an opening Allegro to central slow movement to closing rondo (“rondeau” in the work for oboe). But despite their similarities of form and Mozart’s typically inventive manner of making every moment “speak” (whether in slow- or quick-moving passages), each is specifically distinguished by the composer’s ability to exploit fully the particular timbre, range, and character of its respective wind instrument.

Particularly worth noting in the Oboe Quartet is its deeply expressive, aria-like Adagio in D minor—just 37 measures long, but clearly more than enough to display the extraordinary communicative depth for which Friedrich Ramm was famed: “no one has yet been able to approach him in beauty, roundness, softness, and trueness of tone,” observed one contemporary account. Also worthy of comment in this piece are the first-movement passage (mm. 37 ff.) in which the violin’s statement of the main theme provides a springboard for the oboe to jump to its topmost range (a passage with no parallel in the recapitulation); the quietly restrained opening gesture (already implicit in the exposition) of that same movement’s development section; the harmonic feints also to be found in the first-movement development; and the final movement’s startling central episode in

which the oboe seems almost to run rampant in cut time against the continuing 6/8 of the strings before finally realigning itself with its cohorts.

Though commentators have persisted in likening the Horn Quintet to a sort of miniature concerto—presumably due to the melodic and motivic content so familiar from Mozart’s horn concertos (a content determined not only by the horn’s particular character, but also by the technical limitations of the valveless instrument then in use)—this is unquestionably chamber music. Rather than use a standard string quartet or (were this a concerto) a string orchestra, Mozart here creates, by employing a second viola, a recognizably chamber-musical string texture that enables him quite specifically to enrich and complement the character and range of the horn. Following the instantly engaging Allegro with its wealth of thematic ingenuity, the middle movement, a gentle if not always unclouded Andante in B-flat, exploits the warm, richly romantic timbre of the instrument in tones that can turn plaintive and melancholy. To wind things up, the energetically good-natured finale includes the sort of contrasting minor-mode episode one expects in a rondo of this sort, as well as a not-so-expected turn to fugal texture near the very end.