

Liberty University School *of* Music

presents

String Chamber Ensembles

**April 20, 2024
Macel Falwell Recital Hall
7:00 PM**

String Chamber Ensembles

Dr. Luca Trombetta, *ensemble director*

Program

Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K.581

W.A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

- I. Allegro
- II. Larghetto

Lilianna Yates, *violin*
Elizabeth Bell, *violin*
Elaine Krell, *viola*
Gavin Knolle, *cello*

Trio for Piano, Violin and Viola in C Minor, MWV Q3

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

- I. Allegro

Katherine Cornell, *piano*
Hannah O'Berry, *violin*
Susie Perez, *viola*

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

- I. Animé et très décidé
- II. Assez vif et bien rythmé
- III. Andantino, doucement expressif
- IV. Très modéré – En animant peu à peu – Très mouvementé et avec passion

Miriam Thompson, *violin*
Mary Ruth Williams, *violin*
Ariana Leggett, *viola*
Kellan Mozzone, *cello*

- PROGRAM NOTES -

Clarinet Quintet in A Major

“Never should I have thought that a clarinet could be capable of imitating the human voice as it was imitated by you. Indeed, your instrument has so soft and lovely a tone that no one can resist it,” wrote Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Anton Stadler, the renowned Viennese clarinetist and muse for Mozart’s most inspired works for clarinet, including the Clarinet Quintet in A Major of 1789.

Mozart and Stadler most likely met for the first time in 1781, shortly after Mozart moved to Vienna. Stadler, just three years Mozart’s senior, had already established himself in Vienna as a prominent woodwind player, whereas Mozart was a newcomer trying to find his footing. Hearing Stadler play his compositions, Mozart was struck by Stadler’s impeccable musicianship, and the two formed a musical and personal friendship, which was fortified by their membership in the same Masonic lodge. Stadler’s ability to make the clarinet sing inspired Mozart’s revolutionary way of writing for the clarinet. Prior to Mozart and the Stadler, the clarinet was rarely thought of as a solo instrument within an orchestra or chamber ensemble. With the Clarinet Quintet, Clarinet Concerto, and the stunning, ornamental obbligato parts in two arias from *La clemenza di Tito*, all written for Stadler, Mozart mined the full potential of the instrument, its mellow, earthy timbre providing a contrast to the higher, more ethereal voice of the violin and flute. Just as Mozart tailored the role of the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* to show-off the stratospheric agility of soprano (and his sister-in-law) Aloysia Weber, so did he compose his only clarinet quintet as a technical tour de force for Stadler.

The Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K. 581 premiered on December 22, 1789 at a benefit for the widows and orphans of musicians, with Stadler as clarinet soloist. The work was originally written for basset clarinet, Stadler’s main instrument, but is today performed on a modern B-flat clarinet. Soon after the premiere, Mozart began referring to the work as the Stadler Quintet, and presumably entrusted his friend with the original manuscript. After Mozart’s death less than 2 years later, his widow Constanze, the strong-willed, practical foil to her husband’s unbridled creative energy, asked Stadler for the manuscript to the Clarinet Quintet and Clarinet Concerto so she could sell them to a publisher and begin to pay off her husband’s massive debts. Stadler claimed that the manuscripts had been stolen, though Constanze suspected that he had pawned them to pay off his own debts. Whichever story you believe, the original manuscript of the Clarinet Quintet is considered lost. The work as it is performed today was reconstructed from fragments and first printings and published in 1802.

The Clarinet Quintet in A Major is considered a showpiece for the solo clarinetist, but the work is more than flashy pyrotechnics. The soloist is also given the opportunity to quietly dazzle the audience with their ability to shape Mozart’s long-breathed phrases, especially in the *Larghetto* second movement, and to navigate the expansive range of the first and final movements with finesse. Mozart infuses the work with drama and contrast in the unusual structure of the third *Menuetto* movement, which is divided into a minuet and two trios. The string quartet takes center stage for the minuet and the first trio, with the solo clarinet returning to the spotlight for the second trio, and the finale, of the movement, before the whole ensemble joins in an effervescent display of virtuosity and ingenuity in the final *Allegretto con variazioni* movement.

Trio for Piano, Violin and Viola in C Minor, MWV Q3

The majority of the literature for violin, viola, and piano comes from Germany and Austria during the Romantic era. The earliest known trio for violin, viola, and piano was composed in 1820 by Felix Mendelssohn. Piano Trio in C Minor, MWV Q3, was written when Mendelssohn was eleven, five years before his famous octet. Published by Edition Kunzelmann posthumously in 1970, the trio displays the composer’s youthful romanticism. The seldom-heard work was recorded by violinist Ana Chumachenco, violist Hariolf Schlichtig, and pianist Adrian Oetiker in 2011 on the Tudor label (Mendelssohn 2011). Mendelssohn’s Trio may have been written as an assignment from his composition teacher Carl Friedrich Zelter (Mendelssohn 1989). Melodic material is shared by all instruments. The trio, under sixteen minutes in length, is written in four movements with a scherzo replacing the minuet, appearing after the first movement. Of particular interest is that the theme of the first movement uses the rhythm of the words *Kyrie Eleison*, presented dramatically in unison by all three instruments.

by Penny Thompson Kruse

- PROGRAM NOTES -

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10

The 1890s rank among the most productive years of Debussy's life. From this decade date the *Suite Bergamasque* for piano (home of the ever-popular *Clair de Lune*), the seductive orchestral Nocturnes, most of his work on the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and the only string quartet he ever wrote. Debussy was 31 when the Quartet in G Minor appeared in 1893, a truly personal and original statement. His distinctive musical language would appear fully formed the following year with his quietly revolutionary *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*.

It was perhaps the premiere of César Franck's String Quartet in 1890 that encouraged Debussy to venture into the realm of chamber music. With an uncanny ear for attractive melodies and harmonies, he created an audaciously ultra-modern quartet with startlingly beautiful effects in lieu of sheer shock tactics. His fresh slant on musical architecture utilized the "cyclical" method advocated by Franz Liszt, and carried on by Franck and his disciples, a method characterized by the recurrence of certain themes or motifs throughout a work. Debussy combined this cyclical idea with a light-handed variation technique that carried his motto theme through subtle ongoing transformations — an approach that replaced the traditional contrast and development techniques, which had formed the crux of the Austro-Germanic thinking that had dominated European music since Haydn's time.

The vigorous motto theme from which Debussy fashions the entire Quartet appears at the outset, cast in Phrygian mode. The lyrical second theme turns out to be a close relative to the principal theme itself. Then, a mosaic of miniature variations, based primarily on the second subject, replaces a true development section, while the recapitulation delivers further variations cloaked in a rich texture of shifting harmonies.

Repetitious phrases lend a flavor of precocious minimalism to the beginning of the sonically stunning scherzo movement. A dusky viola solo intones the motto theme, recast now in rhythm, mode, and tempo. The backdrop for this rhythmic whirlwind runs the gamut from pin-prickly pizzicatos to shimmering trills. In a brief central episode, the first violin offers a more lyrical view of the theme.

The motto theme appears most drastically altered in the contemplative Andantino, which features muted soliloquies by viola and cello, an exotically distant key signature of D-flat major, and a decadently sensuous climax with hints of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, on which Debussy was concurrently working.

Then, a pensive preamble reflects on various metamorphoses of the germinal theme before plunging into the mainstream of the finale. During the movement, Debussy makes concessions to tradition as the motto theme appears in inversion, imitation, and the slightest hint of fugato. The work concludes with a potent sample of the powerful, colorful string writing that sparked contemporary complaints that this vital quartet was "too orchestral."

The piece made its debut on December 29, 1893 at the Salle Pleyel in Paris with the prestigious Ysaÿe Quartet, to whom the work is dedicated.

by Kathy Henkel

Liberty University School of Music Upcoming Events

Opera Workshop	Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Instrumental Classroom (Room 160) Sun, April 21, 4:00pm
*Wind Symphony	Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Mon, April 22, 7:30pm
*Honors Recital Gala	Academy Center of the Arts, Historic Theatre Tue, April 23, 7:30pm
*Commercial Music Showcase	Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Fri, April 26, 7:30pm
*LU Symphony Orchestra & Choirs	Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Tue, April 30, 7:30pm

**Ticketed Event. Tickets can be purchased at www.liberty.edu/tickets.*

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their faithful support of the School of Music.**

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