



# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

*in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music present*

## Enso String Quartet

**MAUREEN NELSON, violin**  
**JOHN MARCUS, violin**  
**MELISSA REARDON, viola**  
**RICHARD BELCHER, 'cello**

2:30 PM, Sunday, April 21, 2013  
Faye Spanos Concert Hall  
University of the Pacific

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**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART QUARTET NO. 2 IN D MAJOR, K. 155**

(1756–1791) Allegro  
Andante  
Molto allegro

**BENJAMIN BRITTEN QUARTET NO 2 IN C MAJOR, OP. 36**

(1913–1976) Allegro calmo senza rigore  
Vivace  
Chacony: Sostenuto

—INTERMISSION—

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN QUARTET NO. 10 IN E $\flat$  MAJOR, OP. 74, "HARP"**

(1770–1827) Poco Adagio—Allegro  
Adagio ma non troppo  
Presto—Più presto quasi  
Allegretto con Variazioni

*FOCM gratefully acknowledges the C. A. Webster Foundation for its support of this concert.*

The Enso String Quartet ([www.ensoqueartet.com/](http://www.ensoqueartet.com/))  
appears by arrangement with Alliance Artist Management  
98B Long Highway, Little Compton, RI 02837  
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### ARTIST PROFILE



With a Grammy nomination for "Best Chamber Music Performance," the Enso Quartet has become one of the country's most exciting young ensembles. The group formed at Yale University in 1999, and had success at the Banff International String Quartet Competition, won the Concert Artists Guild International Competition, and has consistently received high praise for performances ever since. The quartet's release of the quartets of Ginastera was Grammy-nominated in 2010 and selected as one of MusicWeb's Recordings of the Year.

The Enso Quartet's live concerts have been highlighted by audiences and critics alike for their "edge-of-the-seat vitality few groups maintain throughout a performance" (Houston Chronicle), "thrillingly athletic performance" (Washington Post) and "neat, well balanced and lyrical...lively and intelligent" playing (Gramophone). The group is equally at home in many styles, and is committed to the classics of the string quartet repertoire as well as being strong advocates for new music. In 2009 they were the recipients of a Chamber Music America Commissioning Grant with composer Kurt Stallmann and they have premiered recordings of music by Karim Al Zand and Anthony Brandt.

The Enso Quartet's members are sought after as teachers and chamber music mentors. As well as giving countless outreach performances in schools, the quartet has held residencies with Boston University's Tanglewood Institute, and currently with the Interlochen Adult Amateur Chamber Music Camp and Connecticut's Music for Youth. They were also featured in the inaugural Young Artist Residency with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and in 2010 they received the prestigious Guarneri String Quartet award from Chamber Music America for outstanding outreach activity.

The Enso Quartet members hold degrees from Yale University, The Juilliard School, Curtis Institute of Music, New England Conservatory, Guildhall School of Music (UK) and the University of Canterbury (New Zealand). Together they held residencies at Northern Illinois University with the Vermeer Quartet and at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University.

Sometimes less is more.<sup>1</sup> The fewer musicians who perform the better each may be appreciated. This is one of the critical factors making chamber music distinctive, and that distinction reaches a zenith with the string quartet. There are several reasons for the past and continuing significance of this format. It was the development in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century string quartet repertoire that allowed composers to use all of the keys to create harmonic tension without sounding out of tune, which was the case with any ensemble that included a keyboard. The string quartet can play music at the limit of complexity that a trained listener can comprehend. Compare this with orchestras where wider dynamics, varying tone colors, or different sound impressions often replace complexity. Tension, part of this form's fascination, is achieved by juxtaposition of the possibilities for individual expression with a need for global coherence. Instruments of the string quartet cover the range from low male to high female voice and provide unlimited opportunities for counterpoint and harmony. It is reasonable to suggest that the masterworks starting with Beethoven and encompassing Mahler would have been unlikely without the continued development of the string quartet by Haydn through Mozart to Beethoven. Today it remains the continuation of an esteemed tradition and the format for modern expression of fresh ideas. Today we hear three composers' expression of this form.

#### MOZART–QUARTET # 2 IN D, K.155

It is thought-provoking to realize that 18 of Mozart's 23 string quartets were written in groups of six: the "Vienna" Quartets, the famous "Haydn" Quartets, and the "Milanese" Quartets. In fact, according to most sources, the last three ("Prussian") were also intended to form a group of six. Thus, only two of Mozart's string quartets are solitary: his very first (K. 80) and the #20 in D Major, K. 499, "Hoffmeister." The intention is most probably a tribute to Haydn, the father of the string quartet, who wrote so many six-part cycles.

The six early string quartets, K. 155-160, were composed by the 17-year-old Mozart in late 1772 and early 1773. Because five of the six were composed in Milan while he was working on his opera *Lucio Silla*, the set is popularly known as the Milanese Quartets. Before this set was composed, Mozart had

written his first string quartet in 1770, so these six quartets are notated #2–7. The quartets are written in a plan of keys that follows the circle of fifths: D-G-C-F-B $\flat$ -E $\flat$ . These quartets were outwardly written to the Italian taste, cast generally in three-part *sinfonia* form with light, lyrical slow movements and lighthearted, enthusiastic allegros. However, Mozart had already achieved significant development in both his craft and maturity since his earlier quartet and to this series he added the new aspect of much more essential the second violin and viola parts, especially in passages of contrapuntal development. The finales of all are generally lightweight, usually minuets or rondos.

Belonging to the period of Mozart's second stay in Italy during the winter of 1772-73, the D Major Quartet, K. 155 is relatively short and full of boyish charm, although occasionally, you will catch a foretaste of the unsurpassed maturity of a great musical genius. The second quartet is polished and exquisite, despite the fact that Mozart had written that it was composed "from the dreary town of Belzano" on the way to Milan.

This quartet's opening *Allegro moderato* presents with a refined demeanor and a cheerful dialogue. You will hear it begin with a straightforward and good-humored theme that leads to a more reflective second idea. Listen for some captivating and extensive harmonic turns that provide appeal in the codetta and in the beginning of the development where imitative treatment of the opening idea is featured. Listen also as the viola achieves melodic importance before the end of each half. Accompaniments often consist of repeated chords and sometimes of more recognizable motivic material.

The subsequent *Andante* begins with a lyrical theme that is launched in two voices over a repeated-note accompaniment. Some subsequent material features motivic figuration. The first violin begins the second half of the movement by itself, and eventually the other instruments provide a chordal answer. The accompaniment quickly livens up, and the melody is advanced as all the instruments join in.

The concluding *Presto* features a dynamic principal theme, a second idea with conspicuous triplets, and a contrasting subject that turns toward the minor mode. The movement features several virtuosic passages for the violins and concludes with a unison statement.

#### BRITTEN–QUARTET #2 IN C, OP. 36

Twentieth Century English music can be divided into two camps. On one side is the dreamy, pastoral, folksy style commonly brought to mind by Elgar, Delius, Vaughan Williams, and Walton. In the other camp is Benjamin Britten. Where his predecessors found inspiration within an English tradition, Britten looked ahead in time and outside of England to the modernists, especially Stravinsky, Bartok, Mahler, and Prokofiev.

This is the centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten who became England's most outstanding and original composer of the post-war era. In 1945 he composed his most famous work, the opera *Peter Grimes*, about a rough but poetic fisherman, an outsider who does not fit in with society, eventually resulting in his suicide. The fact that Britten saw himself in these same terms informed much of his creativity.

That the quality of so many of his works reached the acme of prominence places Britten in an exclusive position in 20<sup>th</sup> century music. During his lifetime, he was viewed as one of the exceptionally great creative titans, a musical artist admired, respected, and much honored in and out of his native England. Because of this distinction as a composer, pianist, and conductor, he is thought by many to have been one of the premier musicians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Queen Elizabeth II recognized his achievements in 1976 when she made him a Lord, the first composer to be so honored.

While luxuriating in the success of *Peter Grimes*, Britten set to work on several compositions of varying nature: a set of orchestral variations (*The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*), a song cycle (*Holy Sonnets of John Donne*), his first chamber opera (*The Rape of Lucretia*), and his String Quartet No. 2. All of these works had a single strong link: commemoration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the composer Britten revered above all others: Henry Purcell. Quartet No. 2 was premiered on the precise date of the Purcell anniversary, November 21, 1945.

The first movement is an intricate sonata form, but expanded and expansive, and although Britten does not directly quote from Purcell's music, he nonetheless borrows certain structures, rhythms and other foundational forms.

<sup>1</sup> Except, of course, when more is more...

But you will in no way hear a baroque appropriation. This is undeniably a comprehensively modern composition, as you will instantly detect in the edgy first movement with its opening tenth leap, sudden shifts in temperament, peculiar glissandos and other extraordinary sounds.

The strings are muted in the middle movement, which is short, brutal, and perhaps even malevolent. Listen for the musicians to attack the ensuing quick *scherzo* and to capture the oddly playful and eerily and slightly crazed quality of this peculiar movement. There are strident themes, subdued arpeggio accompaniments, high-pitched whispers, and a final return that reiterates the opening gesture.

But it is the final movement, the massive *Chacony*, which is the kicker: prepare to have your minds blown, socks knocked off, and gobs smacked! The chaconne, a style from Purcell's time, is a ground, a simple theme repeated over and over. He gave this movement the Purcellian title of 'Chacony' based on a chaconne's continuous variations on a noble theme. Britten devised twenty one variations of his theme, treating them with prodigious imagination as he usually did with this form. They are in three groups of six and a final group of three. The first group of six harmonic variations is divided by a cadenza for cello. The second six are rhythmic variations followed by viola cadenza, and the third group of six are melodic variations with first violin cadenza following. The final three variations reaffirm the theme and finally get us back to the home key of C Major and the ground. Listen for dramatic bite and deep feeling in this forlorn, dissonant, almost violent movement. The musical grandeur and the length of this movement attest to Britten's intent to venerate Purcell.

From what niche of Britten's mind does this work come? The respect for Purcell provides only the structure for the piece; the content is an entirely different affair. The answer lies in the aftermath of the war. In 1945, Yehudi Menuhin and Britten toured Germany to play for survivors of the camps. What he saw affected him deeply and the second string quartet was written upon his return. In a period dominated by the string quartets of Bartok and Shostakovich, Britten's No. 2 is an exceptional work of genius. This is as commanding, amazing, and expressively challenging as any work for this genre ever written.

## BEETHOVEN—QUARTET #10 IN E $\flat$

We could call 1809 Beethoven's E $\flat$  year, since it produced three major works in that key: the Piano Concerto No. 5, the piano sonata *Les Adieux*, Op.81a, and this superb string quartet. All three works are tranquil works of art, as if Beethoven felt himself to be on a plateau of confidence. He had ample reasons to feel this way and to throw himself into his music: for the first time in his life, he was free of financial worries, as three of his aristocratic patrons had pooled resources to provide him with a level of support permitting him to commit to composition fulltime. One of the results was this masterful string quartet dedicated to one of his three patrons, Prince Lobkowitz, the same prince to whom Op. 18 was dedicated. This allowed him to release this piece as a single event, rather than saving them until he had a set of six.

This quartet is felt by many not to be given its due. Although it is definitely a "middle period" work, it was preceded by the milestone "*Razumovsky*" quartets three years earlier, and it was rapidly succeeded by the more innovative Op. 95 "*Serioso*" quartet and the phenomenal late quartets. Nevertheless, Quartet No. 10 is a superb composition: sonorous, gorgeous, and very fitting of the middle or "Eroica" period. Each of the four movements is a distinctive benchmark of the multi-movement sonata form, and there is an all-embracing impetus that weds these movements into an extraordinary unity of determination, intention, and mien. Its energy, emotion, creativity, and approachability tempt some to call this Beethoven's most "perfect" quartet.

The quartet (labelled "Harp" on account of some arpeggiando pizzicato passages in the first movement<sup>2</sup>), opens with a *Poco Adagio* followed by an *Allegro* and is one of the best examples of Beethoven's management of musical tension. The sonata form movement presents the traditional two themes for development. You will hear the lyrical melody appearing several bars from the beginning, and the pizzicato arpeggios played by two instruments accompanied by repeating quavers played arco by the other two. There are splendid chordal passages, and, in the coda, we discover that his true purpose is for them to be played simultaneously while the solo violin breaks out into brilliant bravura (as if she were

suddenly the soloist in a concerto) on top of the "harping" of the other players to generate the climax of the movement.

The second movement, *Adagio non troppo*, is a rondo in A $\flat$ . Beethoven is even more casual here than in the first movement. There is a lovely theme that he elaborates and repeats three times, with two interludes that are essentially innocent and direct although tending to melancholy. Then there is a very strong C minor scherzo, its rhythm reminding us of the Fifth Symphony. The parallel with the symphony becomes even more conspicuous when the scherzo ebbs into a pianissimo that is reminiscent of the famous link into the symphony's finale.

The *scherzo* is abrupt, severe, brawny, and piercing, suggesting a fast, leaping gypsy or Russian dance. Listen to how Beethoven intensifies the temperament as simple scale motives combine in counterpoint to build peaks of music. This powerful leaping requires Beethoven (and the players) to arrest their momentum to manage a practically unbelievably smooth segue into the finale.

For the finale, after what he has just unleashed, Beethoven surprisingly resumes mannered graciousness. The *Allegretto con Variazioni*, returns to the home key of E $\flat$ , and is wistful, playful, and at ease. Beethoven is clearly making affectionate fun of the earlier drama, and instead of the expected tremendous finale we have charmingly ingenious variations on a deceptively accentuated theme. George Bernard Shaw remarked that Beethoven could make interesting music from bare sticks of themes and this may be one of the best examples. The variations can be fittingly compared with the finest of solo jazz pianists in that each new "chorus" is a miracle of invention and a transformation of mood and character. The theme is a full two-part binary form, an important guide to your listening: the "second half" of each variation is where expansion and creativity propagate each time. But the *sine qua non* of all this is his organization of the overall contour of the movement. A few almost manic, compacted final variations naturally generate a coda of flawlessly decisive effect. Shall we give the elusive "Harp" quartet its due?

—notes<sup>®</sup> Dr. Michael Spencer

<sup>2</sup> Like many nicknames for Beethoven's works, this was created by the publisher.

# 58<sup>TH</sup> SEASON

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