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in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music present

Quatuor Arod

JORDAN VICTORIA, violin

ALEXANDRE VU, violin

TANGUY PARISOT, viola

SAMY RACHID, cello

2:30 PM, Sunday, October 20, 2019
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific

FRANZ SCHUBERT **QUARTET NO. 4 IN C MAJOR, D. 46** (1813)

(1797–1828) Adagio—Allegro con moto
Andante con moto
Menuetto: Allegro—Trio
Allegro

ANTON WEBERN **LANGSAMER SATZ FÜR STREICHQUARTETT** (1905)

(1883–1945) Langsam, mit bewegtem Ausdruck

— *INTERMISSION* —

ALEXANDER ZEMPLINSKY **QUARTET NO. 2, OP. 15 IN D MINOR** (1913-15)

(1871–1942) (I) Sehr mäßig—Heftig und leidenschaftlich—
Moderato—Andante mosso—Etwas rascher—
(II) Adagio—
(III) Schnell—
(IV) Andante—Mit Energischer Entschlossenheit—
Allegro molto—Langsam—Andante

Quatuor Arod is represented by MKI Artists
One Lawson Lane, Suite 320, Burlington, VT 05401

www.quatuorarod.com
Recordings: Erato Records

Season Sponsor: C. A. Webster Foundation

ARTIST PROFILE



With all four members only in their early twenties, the Paris-based Arod Quartet has already dazzled chamber-music lovers in concerts at such prestigious venues as the Auditorium of the Louvre in Paris and the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. They record exclusively for Erato Warner Classics, which released their debut Mendelssohn disc in Fall 2017.

The Arod quickly came to international attention when they won the coveted First Prize of the 2016 ARD International Music Competition in Munich, having already taken First Prize at the Carl Nielsen Chamber Music Competition in Copenhagen. In 2018-19 the Arod makes its American debut, featuring its inaugural Carnegie Hall performance, following its North American debut premiere at the Festival Lanaudiere in July 2018. The 2017-18 season saw the Arod Quartet perform at the Auditorium of the Louvre, the Philharmonie de Paris, London's Wigmore Hall, Salzburg's Mozarteum, the Konzerthaus in Vienna, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Tonhalle Zurich, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal; and in Italy, Japan, Denmark, and Serbia, and saw the group join the prestigious BBC New Generation Artists' roster.

In addition, the Arod has been invited to perform at several major international festivals: Verbier, Montreux, Aix-en-Provence, Salon-de-Provence, Folle Journée de Nantes, the Pablo Casals Festival of Prades, and the Prague Spring Music Festival, among many others.

The group takes its name from Legolas's horse in J.R.R. Tolkien's epic *Lord of the Rings* trilogy; in Tolkien's mythic Rohirric language, Arod means 'swift.' Mécénat Musical Société Générale is the Arod's principal sponsor, and the ensemble is the 2016 HSBC Laureate of the Académie du Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. Jordan Victoria and Alexandre Vu are loan recipients of composite Stradivari and Guarneri violins through the Beare's International Violin Society.

Schubert: *Quartet No. 4 in C*

Franz Schubert is one of the most famous composers of all time and requires no introduction. However, his first six string quartets are virtually unknown, rarely heard, even more rarely played and do require some prologue.

Schubert started composing string quartets to play with his family when he was thirteen. The domestic ensemble comprised his two brothers on violin, his father on cello, and himself taking the viola part. It is generally accepted that during his short life he wrote 15 formal string quartets, if you consider the one movement *Quartettsatz* in c minor D.703 as counting for one quartet. Of these existing 15 quartets, few have been heard in concert other than the last four masterpieces: the above-mentioned *Quartettsatz* (generally going by the designation of Quartet No.12), Quartet No.13 in a minor D.804, Quartet No.14 in d minor D.810 (*Death & the Maiden*) and Quartet No.15 in G Major D.887 (*Titanic*). But the sole quartet published in Schubert's lifetime was No. 13, also his only quartet not trashed by the greatest string quartet player of the day, Ignaz Schuppanzigh. Ignaz told Schubert, after playing through *Death & the Maiden*, "*Bro... this is nothing! Forget it and leave well enough alone. Stick to your Lieder.*"¹

Had Schubert's early works received publication and performance during his lifetime (as Beethoven's Op. 18 were), they almost certainly would not have been dismissed and ignored by the critics who did their best to consign them to oblivion by disdaining them as "juvenile experiments full of aimless harmonic wandering."

But as Homer Ulrich, one of the most respected critics of modern times, has written, Schubert was not attempting to imitate "Classical Form, but his efforts served to develop in Schubert a surety of touch and the harmonic imagination that are such large factors in his later style." So, his so-called "errors of form" were an uncovering of a new tonal texture and lyricism. The diversity and even the lavishness of his modulations in his early quartets show the pathway he was traveling from Classicism to Romanticism. Schubert's early string quartet innovations will convince those listeners who take the care to become familiarized with them. Some of his most beautiful melodies are found in these 'novice' labors and one can clearly hear that the experimental underpinning on which he built his masterpieces lies in this early work.

And there is no better way to hear the character and scope of Schubert's experiments

than in the opening bars to Quartet No.4. He begins with an *Adagio* for the second time in four quartets—not for the entire movement, but as an introduction; this is both original and important. In 1813, with one exception—Mozart's K.465 'Dissonant' Quartet—there were no precedents of which Schubert could have been aware for beginning a quartet in this manner. This introduction is pensive, even threatening in mood. Listen for the daring use of chromaticism foreshadowing something ominous. The *Allegro* which ensues is a stormy one where you will hear that introductory theme as part of the structure of the main movement.

The opening to the second movement, *Andante con moto*, begins in typical early Schubert fashion with a simple pastoral melody played in the first violin to a pulsing accompaniment in the other voices. But in the middle section, which initially looks as if it will develop the main theme, he not only gives each instrument part of the harmonic support, but also uses the viola's special timbre to achieve a mellow result. He discards Sonata form, and the main theme becomes a march. That main theme reappears only at the end of the movement after an almost unnoticeable renovation of the second theme.

In the *Menuetto*, Schubert begins with a bombastic minuet but in the middle section, he creates a beautiful and rather haunting dance. The drama of this transition happens by easing dynamics to a hush while minutely shifting the harmony measure by measure. The ensuing trio contrasts with the minuet: after a two-measure fanfare in the lower three voices, the first violin evokes a classically charming Austrian folk dance. Part of this contrast is how Schubert uses the little trumpet-like fanfare; he integrates it into the first theme and creates a hybrid second theme by adding an attractive bird-like refrain that is clearly related to the first theme of the trio. This is identical to how Schubert restated the ominous chromaticism in the first movement. This seems to be a deliberate experimentation with form rather than some lack of familiarity with the classical rules of strict sonata form.

The optimistic main theme of the *Allegro* finale and the supporting accompaniment successfully create considerable excitement. Listen for the labour of a true master-in-the-making, the cohesive temperament of a genius about to burst into full bloom.

Nothing in this quartet suggests a neophyte at work. In method, manner, natural elaboration, dramatic pacing and emotive complexity, this is a work of genuine mastery.

Webern: *Langsamer Satz*

Anton Webern is, of course, another well-known composer who needs little introduction, being one of the founding fathers of the 'Second Vienna School' and leading proponent of the 12-tone system. What is not well-known is that he wrote two short tonal movements for string quartet. Acclaimed as he is for the immaculate, academically rigorous miniatures of his later life, bear in mind that even this most cerebral of atonal composers was once young...and in love. And to convey the anguishes and ecstasies of young love there is naught quite like the passionately longing chromatic tonality of the late Romantic period. Ah, youth...ah, amore!

Webern's gorgeous *Langsamer Satz* ("Slow Movement") is intensely romantic with a small r. Its June 1905 origin results from the 21-year-old composer escaping on a five-day hiking tour in the picturesque Austrian countryside with Wilhelmine Mörtl, his cousin, soon-to-be fiancée and later wife, with whom he was besotted.

Described by one wag as "*Tristan und Isolde* compacted into 11 minutes," this work still holds record as the longest that this legendarily concise composer ever wrote. Possibly because it was a student effort that had no opus number, it vanished along with much of his other early work during his own lifetime not to be performed publicly until 1962 and not published until 1965. Nearly two decades after his death, it was premiered by the University of Washington String Quartet at an international Webern festival in Seattle.

Langsamer Satz is built on a three-part A-B-A structure plus coda using three expressive themes that are deliberately stated, linked in diverse manners, and ingeniously yet forcefully borne to a finale of substantial power. This single movement dwells in an intense, passionately charged setting like that of his teacher Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* composed six years earlier. Its polyphonic lines show it to be clearly rooted in the romanticism and tonality that followed Brahms. It expresses a flood of emotions from longing to dramatic tumult to a tranquil, peaceful denouement. More than that, it shows Webern, like Schoenberg and Berg, was capable of writing very fine music in a tonal idiom if he so chose. However, using those enthralling, late romantic harmonies were a path that Webern would soon leave behind.

¹ It must be noted that Schubert dedicated No. 13 to Ignaz.

Zemlinsky: *Quartet No. 2 in d*

Alexander Zemlinsky, a not-so-well-known composer who may need a little introduction, was born in Vienna to a highly diverse family. His Hungarian grandfather married an Austrian woman. Alexander's mother was born to a Sephardic Jewish father and a Bosnian Muslim mother. Alexander's entire family converted to Judaism, and Zemlinsky was born and raised Jewish but converted to Protestantism in 1899.

Zemlinsky met Arnold Schoenberg when the latter joined the amateur orchestra Polyhymnia as a cellist. The two became close friends and later mutual admirers and finally brothers-in-law when Schoenberg married Zemlinsky's sister, Mathilde.

Inspired by this romance, Schoenberg composed *Verklärte Nacht* portraying Mathilde as the unmarried pregnant woman. The headstrong Mathilde ran off with a painter named Richard Gerstl, a close friend of the family. Schoenberg sent his colleague, the doubtful envoy Anton Webern, to convince her to return to her family, which she did for the sake of the children. Gerstl's response was to commit suicide after destroying his paintings.

Sound like a soap opera? Stay with me here.

Zemlinsky and Schoenberg shared a personal musical rapport, which translated into an unlikely bizarre reference system employing numerology. Zemlinsky gave Schoenberg counterpoint lessons, thus becoming Schoenberg's only formal music teacher. In 1897 Zemlinsky's Symphony No. 2 was a success when premiered in Vienna. His reputation as a composer was further boosted when Gustav Mahler conducted the premiere of his opera *Es war einmal* in 1900.

Also, in 1900 Zemlinsky met and fell in love with Alma Schindler, one of his Viennese-born composition students. Initially she shared his feelings but felt powerful pressure from friends and family to end the relationship. Of concern were Zemlinsky's lack of an international reputation and his "unlikeable physical appearance." Alma broke off the connection, flirted with Gustav Klimt whose love for her was unrequited, and in 1902 married Gustav Mahler, who did not approve of her continuing to compose music. Later, after having an affair with each, she married the architect Walter Gropius founder of the Bauhaus, and subsequently writer Franz Werfel an Austrian poet, novelist (*The Song of Bernadette*), playwright and a leading representative of the expressionist movement in Germany.² This spurned love affair prompted Zemlinsky to write the second string quartet.

In 1906 Zemlinsky was appointed first Kapellmeister of the new Vienna Volksoper. From 1911 to 1927, he was conductor at Deutsches Landestheater in Prague, premiering Schoenberg's *Erwartung* in 1924. He then moved to Berlin, where he taught and worked under Otto Klemperer as a conductor at the Kroll Opera. With the rise of the Nazi Party, he fled to Vienna in 1933, concentrating on composing and making an occasional appearance as guest conductor. In 1938 he moved to the United States settling in New York.

Although fellow émigré Arnold Schoenberg was celebrated and feted in 1930s and '40s Los Angeles, Zemlinsky was neglected and virtually unknown in his adopted country. He fell ill, suffering a series of strokes and ceased composing. He eventually married one of his students 19 years his junior and lived happily to the end of his life.

The Second Quartet marks a complete shift in Zemlinsky's writing. It is long and plays continuously, and although clear sections can be appreciated, the different record companies cannot agree how many there are. I have indicated four, but I am not quite convinced.

Normally, Zemlinsky produced music that reflected his pleasant nature in an art nouveau style unique to himself. This quartet, however, is akin to the first published quartets of Schoenberg and Berg and deals with hard memories, and is one of his most turbulent works filled with arcane references to tragic events that had taken place during the last fifteen years: his heartbreak over Alma, the crippling of his closest friendship with Schoenberg, and the recent passing of his mother, Clara.

These references to past trauma are conveyed by musical ciphers and numerological references. Viennese composers, including Schoenberg and Berg, were deeply involved in numerology. The quartet, in the composer's words, "would pretend to be in F sharp minor" though it is closer to D. Numerologically, the three sharps of F sharp major reflect the symbolism that the German word for sharp, Kreuz, is a synonym for cross, intended to look like a view of the crucifixion of Christ at Golgotha.

The quartet's Golgothic key signature refers to a tragedy, which was alluded to in a musical premonition by Schoenberg. In 1905, Schoenberg wrote his first string quartet involving a program of expressing regret for the

suffering he caused loved ones. The quartet was in D minor. In Later that year, Schoenberg wrote his second string quartet, which ends with two atonal movements but begins and, more or less, ends in F sharp. The F sharp and D keys that occupy Zemlinsky's Op. 15 refer to Schoenberg's quartets. By really being in D, the Op. 15 turns the confession of guilt for causing suffering upon Zemlinsky himself. His second quartet is, among other things, an apology to Schoenberg, couched in a very specific code expressed through its musical symbols.

Many of the phrases are constructed in lengths of thirteen or fourteen bars, numbers that had secret meaning for the composers. If you are exceptionally adept, you may hear these phrase lengths in this piece.

The large-scaled opening movement (very substantial—energetic and fervent) is a tour de force that evokes the passionate atmosphere of Schoenberg's string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*.

The lyric tradition of "Viennese espressivo" emerges in the lilting melodic lines of the Adagio, which suggests a Venetian barcarolle.

Schnell, is a metrically complex caricature that conjures shadowy satire, offering repetitions of the notes A and E-flat, which are the musical initials for Arnold Schoenberg. Only briefly divided by rests, the quartet's movements link to create a sense of emotive outburst.

The finale begins serenely but becomes stormy with spirited resolution (F-sharp major—six sharps forming two Golgotha crosses!). The movement concludes in a temperament implying quiet acceptance.

If Mahler had ever written a mature string quartet, would it sound something like this? Zemlinsky stays on the traditional side of tonality, yet this repeatedly emergent music plays with atonal discords in its musing, melancholy fashion. One's interest is held throughout because the music is always on the move—bounding from palpitating, impassioned sections that conjure Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, to yearning, dark lyricism and harmonic pulsation. Do you hear premonitions of Ligeti? Near the end of this long excursion, a theme of great romantic tenderness rises, and the music progressively winds down to a gentle, reassuring coda.

—notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

² Alma tell us /All modern women are jealous! /Which of your magical wands /Got you Gustav und Walter und Franz?

64TH SEASON

2019-2020

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