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*The Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation*

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## Mozart Piano Quartet

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*Friday, November 4, 2011*

*Coolidge Auditorium*

*Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building*

THE ELIZABETH SPRAGUE COOLIDGE FOUNDATION

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*The Library of Congress*

Coolidge Auditorium

Friday, November 4, 2011 – 8:00 pm

**MOZART PIANO QUARTET**

**MARK GOTHONI, violin**

**HARMUT ROHDE, viola**

**PETER HÖRR, cello**

**PAUL RIVINIUS, piano**

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PROGRAM

Quartet in G minor, K.478, *for strings and piano*

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART  
(1756-1791)

*Allegro*

*Andante*

*Rondo*

Quartet movement, *for strings and piano*

Gustav MAHLER  
(1860-1911)

Intermission

Quartet in B-flat Major, op. 41, *for strings and piano*

Camille SAINT-SAËNS  
(1835-1921)

*Allegretto*

*Andante maestoso ma con moto*

*Poco allegro più tosto moderato*

*Allegro*

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART : *Quartet* for violin, viola, cello and piano, in G minor, K.478 (1785)

Mozart's *Quartet*, K.478 is among the first works scored for three strings and piano. The idea for this particular combination of instruments was apparently the idea of noted Viennese composer and publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754-1812), who had established his own music publishing business in 1785. The unusual scoring of this *Quartet* was perhaps an attempt on Hoffmeister's part to distinguish himself from the several music publishers active in Vienna during that era – one that witnessed, incidentally, the emergence of the nascent music publishing industry. After having commissioned Mozart to complete three piano quartets for publication, and after Mozart had delivered the first of these (K.478), Hoffmeister reconsidered his plan, believing that a piano quartet would not sell, and released Mozart from his obligation to complete the remaining two quartets. (Mozart still completed a second piano quartet, K.493, the following year.)

The *Quartet*, K.478 was composed at a time when Mozart was performing as a pianist with increased frequency; the work's virtuoso piano part was therefore likely written by the composer with the anticipation of performing it himself. The strings themselves are, more often than not, treated as an ensemble to support the piano rather than being accorded soloistic opportunities of their own. The *Quartet* is also unusual in that it is one of only about two dozen works in Mozart's entire *œuvre* to be designated in a minor key, hence the unusually somber and pessimistic tone with which the work begins.

The work's first movement (*Allegro*) introduces a decisive rhythmic figure that reappears throughout the movement, much in the same manner that Beethoven's minor-key "fate" motto theme would permeate his *Symphony no. 5*, composed twenty years after Mozart's *Quartet*. Biographer Hermann Albert describes this movement as an "unmediated contrast between heroic defiance and pensive brooding," of "anguished lament" and "wild revolt" whose "opposites are never reconciled." Even the movement's usually contrasting second subject provides little relief, producing "a dark-toned picture that grows wild and demonic in the coda." At the movement's conclusion, Albert continues, "all the instruments join in a unison of almost spine-chilling force."

Respite from the bleakness of the work's opening first movement is found in the work's second movement (*Andante*), a tranquil, lyric statement in B-flat major exhibiting a nearly constant momentum of gently rippling figures in each instrument; and in its animated third movement *Rondo*, again in a major key (G Major). The central section of the *Rondo* adopts a more agitated mood, in the movement's relative minor key (E minor), characterized by triplet figures in the piano; the momentary darkness is soon dispelled by a seamless return of the movement's initial, light-hearted major-key music – but not before making a musical "detour" into an unprepared cadence on E-flat Major instead of the expected tonic of B-flat Major – a moment when one has the distinct impression that Mozart is enjoying a sly joke at our expense! – before the music regains its senses and proceeds directly to its high-spirited conclusion.

GUSTAV MAHLER : *Piano Quartet Movement*, for violin, viola, cello and piano, in A minor (1876)

Born of a Jewish petit bourgeois family in the town of Kalischt (now Kaliště), Bohemia in 1860, Gustav Mahler went on to establish his name as one of the most significant composers of the post-Wagnerian era. His career is defined by innovations both in composition – as evidenced by his *œuvre*, at the core of which are the immense orchestral canvases of his ten completed symphonies (nine numbered symphonies and the vocal *Das Lied van der Erde*, as well as an incomplete *Symphony no. 10*) – and as a conductor in Europe and in the United States (at the helm of New York's Metropolitan Opera and of the New York Philharmonic between 1907 and 1910).

Although Mahler's reputation rests primarily on his orchestral works, his earliest works – as befitting a young composer who is just beginning to define his individual voice – often manifested themselves in smaller scale genres, such as in his several early songs for voice and piano. The earliest known work of Mahler, as well as the earliest to have survived, is a single movement *Quartet* for violin, viola, cello and piano, likely composed in 1876, when Mahler was about sixteen years old, and had just completed his first year of study at the Vienna Conservatory. Only the first movement from this projected multi-movement *Quartet* was completed; an envisaged second movement *Scherzo* survives only as twenty-four bars of sketches. The single movement *Quartet* was first performed in 1876, with Mahler himself at the piano, but fell into obscurity until the centenary of its composer's birth in 1960 renewed enough interest in Mahler's works to warrant the publication (in 1964) of this unique document in its composer's creative legacy.

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS : *Quartet* for violin, viola, cello and piano, in B-flat Major, op. 41 (1875)

As a composer, pianist, organist and writer, Camille Saint-Saëns contributed significantly to the development of a French musical aesthetic beginning in about the latter quarter of the nineteenth century. A prolific and versatile composer, Saint-Saëns composed in almost every musical genre. His works are notable for their consistently high level of inspiration and craftsmanship; even eminent French composer Hector Berlioz is said to have praised Saint-Saëns by remarking, "the only thing that he lacks is inexperience." As a child prodigy who made his performing début at the age of ten at Paris's prestigious Salle Pleyel as the piano soloist in concerti of Beethoven and Mozart – performing from memory, no less – Saint-Saëns's career and accomplishments have indeed been remarkable in the history of music.

Although having composed nearly two hundred works – including thirteen operas, dozens of stage, orchestral and vocal works – Saint-Saëns appears to have a special affection for chamber works, which in terms of opus numbers, account for nearly half his output. The *Quartet* for strings and piano, op. 41, of 1875 was composed during the same year when the composer married the nineteen-year-old Marie-Laure Truffot; the success of the *Quartet* and its continued popularity during its composer's lifetime was unfortunately not shared by his marriage itself, which due to obstacles posed by Saint-Saëns's mother (who disapproved of the marriage) as well as by the often prickly personality of the composer himself, was unfortunately to prove short-lived.

Adhering to a traditional four-movement form, the *Quartet* exhibits the composer at his most original, combining a Classical clarity of form (inspired by his beloved Mozart) with the wide range of moods and textures that characterizes Romantic era music. The work's opening *Allegretto* introduces an elegant, placid lyric figure in B-flat Major which is continually developed throughout the movement, itself notable for its remarkable transparency and mood of lightness. In contrast, the second movement of the *Quartet*, unfolding squarely in G minor, exhibits denser contrapuntal textures, a predominance of rhythm over melody (as defined by the sharp, dry *staccato* figures that may be heard in the piano at the beginning of the movement), and in its rather more serious tone overall, as exemplified in the austere Bachian chorale first stated in the movement by the strings in unison. The movement's animated motion belies its rather slow tempo marking (*Andante maestoso ma con moto*); the fugal treatment of its musical material only enhances its feeling of tightly controlled dramatic intensity.

The mood of the third movement, marked *Poco allegro più tosto moderato*, is one of sly humor, as playful as it is menacing; it belongs to the same sound world as the composer's popular *Danse macabre* (op. 40), composed just prior to the *Quartet*. This quicksilver *Scherzo* movement, in a 6/8 meter, begins in D minor, and after a brief exposition and development of its musical material, arrives at a *cadenza* for solo violin which signals a return to the movement's main theme. Further development of this theme follows before the unexpected appearance of a central, lyrical major-key section in a duple (2/4) meter. This lyrical section culminates in another *cadenza*, this time for solo piano, which leads to the return of the movement's main material, in D minor, stated in progressively faster tempos (*Molto allegro, Presto, Prestissimo*) before it mischievously evaporates into a hushed conclusion, marked triple *piano*.

The *Quartet's* fourth movement (*Allegro*), retaining the D minor key of the preceding movement, introduces a syncopated, restless theme which is developed extensively (and including not one, but two fugal treatments) in the pages that follow. At the height of this almost Beethovenian struggle, a ray of light dispels the movement's somber mood with a sudden shift of key to B-flat Major, and in a glorious restatement of the first-movement theme that opened the *Quartet*. The second movement's chorale is also heard, now in a radiant major-key setting. The struggles represented by the fourth movement's main theme nevertheless continue even until the work's final pages, where it emerges at last into the triumphant tonic major key, bringing the work to a valedictory conclusion.

Kevin LaVine  
Senior Music Specialist  
Library of Congress, Music Division

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Since its founding in 2000, the Mozart Piano Quartet has numbered among the world's leading piano quartets. Since then, the ensemble has received awards at numerous international competitions such as the ARD Competition in Munich and the Naumburg Competition in New York. The group regularly performs for festivals and concert performances in Germany, England, Italy, Switzerland, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and the United States. The Quartet's members, all of whom hold teaching posts at the world's leading universities and conservatories, regularly present master classes and perform concerts at universities throughout the United States and in Germany. Last year, the Quartet's tenth anniversary year, the group performed in Berlin (Konzerthaus), Basel, St. Gallen, Zürich (Tonhalle), Madrid, Barcelona, and Stuttgart (Liederhalle), and accepted invitations for concert tours in Brazil, Mexico, the Netherlands, and the United States.

Since 2004 the Mozart Piano Quartet has recorded exclusively with Dabringhaus & Grimm (MDG), having made a number of highly acclaimed recordings, including arrangements by Ferdinand Ries of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Quartet, op. 16*, and the *Symphony no. 3, "Eroica," op. 55*; quartets of Strauss and Dvořák; and the première recordings of the piano quartets of Mélanie Bonis and Camille Saint-Saëns, which met with superlative reviews, including having received the "Editor's Choice" award by *Gramophone* magazine in 2009. The ensemble's latest disc (released in October 2011), a high resolution SACD recording of piano quartets of Robert Schumann's op. 47 and Johannes Brahms's op. 25 and op. 60 (*Andante*), is the first recording to be released under the MDG label's "Live" series.

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Violinist **Mark Gothoni** started his musical training at the age of six at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and subsequently became a pupil of Ana Chumachenco in Munich. Additionally, he received important impulses from Shmuel Ashkenasi in Chicago and Sándor Végh in Salzburg. A major prizewinner at a number of international competitions, including the Johannes Brahms Violin Competition in Hamburg in 1990, Gothoni was honored in 1991 as "Debut-of-the-Year" at the Jyväskylä Arts Festival, Finland. Since then he performs extensively worldwide as a soloist and chamber musician at numerous European festivals (Kuhmo, Pesaro, Ravello, Aschau, Salzburg, Vienna, St. Gallen, Charleston, Newbury, Brussels, Bratislava, Biarritz), as well as in Israel, the United States and the Far East.

Mr. Gothoni presently holds the post of first violinist of the Orpheus Quartet as well as of the Mozart Piano Quartet, and as concertmaster of the Zürich and Munich Chamber Orchestras. He is also the permanent guest conductor of the European Union Chamber Orchestra, and the artistic director of both the Festivo Music Festival in Rauma, Finland, and the chamber music classes of the Savonlinna Music Academy. Mr. Gothoni is also a composer whose works have been receiving increasing performances in concerts and festivals in Europe and in Japan. In addition to giving master classes around the world, Mr. Gothoni teaches violin at McGill University in Montréal and at Berlin's Universität der Künste. For several years, Mr. Gothoni has also been actively organizing projects with the purpose of bringing chamber music to youth prisons.

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Violist **Hartmut Rohde**, a founding member of the Mozart Piano Quartet, holds a professorship at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, and also teaches at the Royal Academy of Music in London where, as a visiting professor, he regularly provides classes in chamber music and master classes in viola performance. Mr. Rohde also gives regular master classes throughout Europe, the United States, Australia and Asia. Since 1997, he has also served as the artistic director of the International Max Rostal Competition in Munich as well as of the Tertis Viola Competition on the Isle of Man. He presently also serves as a publisher and editor for the music publishers Partitura and Hofmeister Publishing Leipzig.

Mr. Rohde began his studies in Vienna and Hannover, under the guidance of Hatto Beyerle. After having received awards in various international competitions (first prize winner of the Deutschen Musikwettbewerb, the "Konzerte junger Künstler" program in 1990, and prize-winner in the International Naumburg Competition in New York in 1991), Mr. Rohde's performing career has blossomed ever since through international tours as a soloist and as a chamber musician. As a soloist Mr. Rohde has performed with major orchestras of the world, including the Staatkapelle Weimar, the Beethovenhalle of Bonn, the Bremer Philharmoniker, NDR Hannover, the Nordwestdeutschen Philharmonie Rostock, and the Kapellsolisten of Dresden.

As a chamber musician, Mr. Rohde has performed with, among many others, Heinrich Schiff, David Geringas, Lars Vogt, Daniel Hope, Nobuko Imai and Jörg Widmann, as well as guest artist with ensembles such as the Talich, Vogler and Vermeer Quartets. Mr. Rohde's interest in contemporary music has led to his collaborations with composers such as Aribert Reimann, Wolfgang Rihm, Krzysztof Penderecki, Jörg Widmann and Brett Dean. His performances have been recorded by the EMI, Decca, BMG/Sony, MDG, and Naxos labels.

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Cellist and conductor **Peter Hörr** is renowned as one of the most versatile German musicians of his generation, who enjoys an international career both as soloist and as chamber musician. An early interest in early music led to seminal studies with Heinrich Schiff and Christophe Coin at the Basel Music Academy. After having been named a prize winner of the 1989 Schevenigen International Cello Competition, Mr. Hörr has since performed in the leading concert halls of the world, including at Lincoln Center (New York) and at Suntory Hall (Tokyo), with the Berlin Philharmonic, and at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Ludwigsburg Festival, and Lucerne Festival.

After becoming artistic director of the Hofkapelle Weimar in 2008, Mr. Hörr assumed the position of music director the following year. With the Hofkapelle Weimar, he made his first, critically successful SACD recording as both soloist and conductor, which won an Echo Prize in 2010. In October 2011, he conducted the Kobe City (Japan) Chamber Orchestra in a tour of Germany's major concert halls (Konzerthaus Berlin, R. Schumann-Saal in Düsseldorf).

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Pianist **Paul Rivinius**, a graduate of the Musikhochschule München, is a prize winner of several international competitions, among them the Munich ARD competition. Mr. Rivinius has appeared in performance with his brother, cellist Gustav Rivinius, in recordings, on television, and on tours throughout North America and Japan. As a soloist, Mr. Rivinius has performed under a number of well-known conductors, such as Claudio Abbado. Since 1986 he has been a member of the Clemente Trio, which won the chamber music competition of

Caltanissetta (Italy); he subsequently embarked on a performing tour with that ensemble which brought them to Vietnam, Japan (Suntory Hall), Thailand, Australia and the United States. Between 2002 and 2008 Mr. Rivinius was an instructor in chamber music performance at both the Universität der Künste Berlin and at the Musikhochschule "Hanns Eisler" Berlin. In 2004 Mr. Rivinius joined the Mozart Piano Quartet.

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UPCOMING CONCERTS AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Saturday, November 5, 2011 - 2 p.m.

ROBERTO DÍAZ, *viola* and KWAN YI, *piano*

Performing works of Liszt, Brahms and Bach

Saturday, December 17, 2011 - 8 p.m.

BORROMEIO STRING QUARTET  
*with SEYMOUR LIPKIN, piano*

Performing works of Schuller, Beethoven and Schubert

Saturday, January 28, 2012 - 2 p.m.

PAOLO PANDOLFO, *viola da gamba*

Performing works of J. S. Bach and C. F. Abel

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