



ArtPower! Presents:



DOVER QUARTET

Saturday, February 14, 2015 / 8pm

Department of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Sponsored by: Sam B. Ersan

Joel Link, violin
Bryan Lee, violin
Milena Pajaro-ven de Stadt, viola
Camden Shaw, cello

PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 20 in D major, K. 499, "Hoffmeister"

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
 (1756-1791)

Allegretto
Menuetto: Allegretto
Adagio
Allegro

String Quartet No. 7 in F sharp minor, Op. 108

Dmitri Shostakovich
 (1906-1975)

Allegro
Lento
Allegro - Allegretto

INTERMISSION

String Quartet No. 9 in C major, Op. 59, No. 3 "Razumovsky"

Ludwig van Beethoven
 (1770-1827)

Introduzione (Andante con moto) - Allegro vivace
Andante con moto quasi Allegretto
Menuetto (Grazioso)
Allegro molto

PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet No. 20 in D major, K. 499, "Hoffmeister" (1876) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

In between the six quartets dedicated to Haydn (Nos. 13-19) and Mozart's final works in the genre, the three "Prussian" quartets (Nos. 21-23), there stands an isolated quartet bearing the subtitle "Hoffmeister," composed in August of 1876 (a year and a half after the last of the "Haydn" quartets).

In 1785, Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754-1812) established a music-publishing shop in Vienna, supplying the city's musical amateurs with a constant flow of chamber music that they loved to play at home - music by such composers as Albrechtsberger, Beethoven, Clementi, Haydn, Pleyel and Vanhal. Hoffmeister eventually moved to Leipzig, where he established another firm that eventually became C.F. Peters, one of the leading music publishers in the world today. Hoffmeister was also a flutist and a highly prolific composer of music for his instrument (25 concertos, 46 quartets, 12 quintets and much else). The Mozart-Hoffmeister connection goes further: Mozart incorporated the tune of one of Hoffmeister's songs into his Flute Quartet K. 298. Moreover, the first two great piano quartets ever composed (K. 478 and G minor and K. 493 in E-flat major) went to Hoffmeister, though he published only the first of them (the G-minor quartet didn't sell, as it was deemed too difficult for the intended clientele). And finally, Hoffmeister was a close friend and benefactor to Mozart. In dedicating a quartet to him, Mozart was either repaying a debt or acknowledging a level of friendship he did not often cultivate among other composers.

The quartet opens in a somewhat jaunty mood that belies the degree of sophistication and seriousness that lie ahead. That initial unison motif outlining the D-major arpeggio pervades the entire movement, returning in varied form as it alternates with brief snatches of contrasting material that

never last long enough to establish a new tonality or to become full-fledged themes. Passages in B minor, E major, F-sharp minor and F major struggle for prominence with the "correct" contrasting tonality of A major, beguiling the listener with as rich a harmonic framework as Mozart ever compressed into the exposition of a quartet movement. The development section is no less entrancing. A prominent "tick-tock" accompaniment derived effortlessly from the inner voices of the exposition imposes its relentless presence as the movement's opening motif continues to evolve. When that motif slides unexpectedly into the recapitulation, the effect is as if the sun had returned from behind dark clouds.

The *Menuetto* has a good-natured charm to it while the contrasting central Trio is of more somber cast. The prominent use of triplets in the Trio looks backward to the triplets in the first movement and forward to the finale as a unifying device.

A sense of consoling warmth pervades the slow movement, music of ravishing sweetness and tender sentiment. The opening duet for two violins is later transferred to the viola and cello, whose fuller tone and darker color lends an even further measure of beauty to the very sound itself. To biographer Alfred Einstein, "the *Adagio* speaks of past sorrow with a heretofore unheard-of depth."

The light-hearted mood of the finale scarcely conceals its wealth of contrapuntal complexity. A frothy opening subject for the first violin consists of swirling triplets set to minimal accompaniment. Soon thereafter all four voices are merrily engaged in those swirling triplets. A strongly contrasting subject bears a somewhat martial tone; one almost expects to hear punctuations from trumpets and drums. But each reiteration of the ditty is quickly swept away in clouds of triplets. It's all good fun, right up to the surprise ending.

--Program note by Robert Markow



String Quartet No. 7 in F sharp minor, Op. 108 (1960) Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

By 1960 Shostakovich no longer had to fear persecution by the Soviet state. His main problem, beyond bouts of poor health, was the regime's fond embrace and attendant obligations. As the country's star composer, he now felt smothered by his honors and official duties. He told a friend, "I am frightened that I will choke in an ocean of awards." Appointed to government posts, he was put forward as a cultural figurehead and expected to attend plenary sessions, congresses, and peace conferences. He gave speeches and published articles using officially prepared texts. He was also requested to compose a steady stream of patriotic songs and film scores. In 1960 he was elected First Secretary of the Russian Composers' Union,

and later that year he was pressured to join the Communist Party.

The Seventh Quartet was composed in memory of Nina Vazar, the mother of his children whom he married twice and who died in 1954. As Judith Kuhn has observed, in addition to the formal dedication to her, the first and third movements of Seventh Quartet end in the key of F sharp major, the key of the 'love theme' in the composer's opera *Lady Macbeth*, which was also *Dover Quartet*, Williams College Music Department, November 5, 2014 3 dedicated to Nina Vazar. The shortest of Shostakovich's fifteen string quartets, the Seventh is written without pause between movements. Its brevity and the reappearance in the last movement of musical motifs from the first and second movements suggest a view of the entire quartet as a single movement in sonata form, with the first movement *Allegretto* as primary theme; the

second movement Lento as contrasting theme; and the last movement as development of the themes followed by recapitulation. This view is supported by the gradually increasing presence of Shostakovich's personal four-note "DSCH" pattern across the three movements as a unifying element. (The up-down pattern of the notes D E-flat C B spell DSCH for Dmitri SChostakowitsch in German musical notation.)

Two themes alternate in the first-movement Allegretto, a short, twisting three-note gallop and a contrasting rhythmic line in the cello. Unusually for Shostakovich, both themes are harmonically resolved when they reappear later in the movement. The grieving second-movement Lento is unsettled by a restless, weaving accompaniment and a startling glissando slide in the cello. The third movement explodes with a violent fugue based on the DSCH note pattern. The music builds to a soaring climax, and the quartet's opening theme returns, forcefully at first, then in the grieving voice of the second movement. The music gradually fades to a quiet pizzicato, and the quartet ends with a gentle cadence.

--Program note by Robert Strong

**String Quartet No. 9 in C major, Op. 59, No. 3,
"Razumovsky" (1806)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

In 1805 Count Razumovsky, Russia's representative to Vienna, returned from a trip back home with his new title of Prince, bearing a new, lavishly published collection of Russian folk songs which he gave to Beethoven. He requested that some of the songs be incorporated into the set of three string quartets he would commission from Beethoven. Beethoven wasted little time and in less than a year he had completed the three extraordinary works which changed the face of the string quartet. With these, Beethoven took a tangential leap into the future, forever ending the era of the Classical quartet, moving it from the palace to the battlefield of life. These were no longer

conversations among four civil gentlemen, but rather vigorous, occasionally strident, explorations into deep sensibilities, expanding all elements of performance – length, difficulty, sonic range – and employing technical devices that made new demands on the performer and the audience. Music critics and musicians alike were not pleased nor would they be for decades to come, for it was decades before these masterpieces finally achieved universal reception by a discerning public.

Opus 59, No. 3 is the only one of the three which makes no use of Razumovsky's collection. While it is the least complex of the three, the first movement nevertheless begins with an arresting introduction in the form of an astonishing harmonic maze. With each stately descending note played by the cello, a new harmonic region appears so that we have no idea what key we are in nor where we are going. Beethoven has gone beyond Mozart's *Dissonant Quartet*, K. 465 but in both, a slow, harmonically ambiguous introduction ends abruptly, spilling into the sunny landscape of a C major Allegro. And indeed, the rest of this movement is cheerful, well-knit and limpid.

The *Adagio quasi allegretto* which follows, is a *Barcarole* – that is, in the rhythm of the traditional Venetian boat song. It opens with that flowing beat accompanied somewhat mysteriously by the gloomy, steady beat of a plucked cello string. As the first movement began in mid air, so to speak, so too does this *Adagio* start on a note of uncertainty (the "dominant" region of the home key). And as in the introduction to the first movement, here too it is the cello's moving bass line which underpins the motion of the movement.

The third movement begins with a look back to old forms – an easy-going Minuet-Trio instead of the Scherzo which Beethoven himself had previously championed in its place. To underscore his intent he writes *Grazioso* into the score and produces a delicate Minuet embellished with a flowing *obbligato* and contrapuntal, beautifully intertwined

lines shared by all four voices. But he ends in a distinctly modern vein with an extended bridge which serves as the introduction to the *Allegro molto*, a final movement of tremendous vigor and momentum cast as a fugue in sonata form. This is one of Beethoven's most famous and memorable quartet movements, a virtual perpetual motion with the fugue theme served up at top speed while a jolly counter theme later joins the fray starting in the bass line then appearing at one time or another in all the voices, a constant motoric presence holding everything together. This movement demonstrates the power, inevitability and completeness that is a Beethoven trademark.

--Program note by Nora Avins Klein

BIOGRAPHY

The Dover Quartet catapulted to international stardom following a stunning sweep of the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, becoming one of the most in-demand ensembles in the world. *The New Yorker* recently dubbed them "the young American string quartet of the moment," and *The Strad* raved that the Quartet is "already pulling away from their peers with their exceptional interpretive maturity, tonal refinement and taut ensemble." In 2013-14, the Quartet became the first ever Quartet-in-Residence for the venerated Curtis Institute of Music.

During the 2014-15 season, the Dover Quartet will perform more than 100 concerts throughout the United States, Canada, South America, and Europe. Highlights include concerts for the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C, Schneider Concerts in New York City, and Wigmore Hall in London. The Quartet will also perform together with the pianists Anne-Marie McDermott, and Jon Kimura Parker; the violists Roberto Díaz and Cynthia Phelps; and the Pacifica Quartet. In addition, the Quartet will participate in week-

long residencies for Chamber Music Northwest, the Phoenix Chamber Music Festival, and the Chamber Music Society of Logan. The Quartet has been reengaged a remarkable number of times for return appearances throughout the United States, Canada, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Great Britain.

The Dover Quartet won not only the Grand Prize but all three Special Prizes at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition. The Quartet also won top prizes at the Fischhoff Competition and the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, and has taken part in festivals such as Chamber Music Northwest, Artosphere, La Jolla SummerFest, Bravo! Vail, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. During the 2013-14 season, the Quartet acted as the Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Festival. Additionally, members of the Quartet have appeared as soloists with some of the world's finest orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Tokyo Philharmonic.

The Dover Quartet draws from the musical lineage of the Cleveland, Vermeer, and Guarneri Quartets, having studied at the Curtis Institute and Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, where they were in residence from 2011-2013. The Quartet has been mentored extensively by Shmuel Ashkenasi, James Dunham, Norman Fischer, Kenneth Goldsmith, Joseph Silverstein, Arnold Steinhardt, Michael Tree, and Peter Wiley, and is dedicated to sharing their music with underserved communities and is an active member of Music for Food, an initiative to help musicians fight hunger in their home communities.

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