

**Quartet for Oboe, Violin, Viola and Cello  
in F major, K. 370 (K. 368b)  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

*Composed in 1781.*

For all the reflected glory that the ancient city of Salzburg enjoys from the universal renown of its most famous son, it is perhaps ironic to note that Mozart hated the place. He felt demeaned by the servant's treatment that he had to endure as a member of Archbishop Colloredo's musical staff, he chafed under the constantly watchful presence of his father, he sniped at the conservative provincial taste of the town's inhabitants, and he longed to be summoned to some glamorous city with an opera house whose stage he could fill with his music. He tried to escape his "Salzburg captivity," as he rather injudiciously referred to his employment, from at least the age of fifteen, but failed for over a decade to find a better job. It is therefore not difficult to imagine his excitement at receiving a commission from the Elector Karl Theodor to compose a large-scale grand opera for the 1781 Carnival season of the Court Opera in Munich.

Though Mozart's chief effort in Munich was the creation of *Idomeneo*, he was eager to show the music lovers of that cultured and influential city other aspects of his genius as well. The most important satellite works circling *Idomeneo* were the superb Serenade for Ten Winds (K. 361) and the Quartet for Oboe and Strings (K. 370), which were written for the excellent wind players of the court orchestra, many of whom Mozart had met on his tour to Paris four years before, when they were still stationed in Mannheim. The Oboe Quartet was composed for the renowned virtuoso of that recalcitrant instrument Friedrich Ramm, who had fallen so in love with Mozart's Oboe Concerto (K. 314) in Mannheim that he played the work five times within two weeks of discovering it. Mozart tailored this Quartet to the finest elements of Ramm's playing: fiery virtuosity in the finale; grace and agility in the opening *Allegro*; sweet cantilena in the *Adagio*; difficult challenges to technique, range and musicianship throughout. Given the soloistic nature of the wind part and the manner in which the instrument's plangent sound naturally differentiates it from the strings, this Quartet is essentially a miniature concerto for oboe.

The sunny opening *Allegro* follows traditional sonata form, though, uncharacteristically for him, Mozart reused the principal theme, differently scored and in a new key, as the secondary theme rather than devising a new melody. The development section begins with a pedantic, slow-motion canon tenuously related to the earlier material which soon lapses into the playfulness that characterizes the rest of the movement. The brief minor-key *Adagio* is an instrumental aria of almost operatic pathos. The finale is a chuckling *Rondeau*.

**Two Songs for Alto, Viola and Piano, Op. 91  
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

*Composed in 1884.*

In 1863, Brahms' old friend and musical ally, the violinist Joseph Joachim, married the talented contralto Amalie Schneeweiss. The following year, Brahms stood as godfather at the christening of their first child, an event that inspired in him the idea for a song based on the ancient German lullaby-carol associated with the Nativity, *Josef, lieber Josef mein* ("Joseph, my dear Joseph"). The familiar and beloved tune had been part of the German Christmas tradition since it appeared with Sethus Calvisius' words (one of Bach's distant predecessors as music director at Leipzig's Thomaskirche) in Corner's *Gross-Katholisches Gesangbuch* of 1631. Brahms' realization of the plan was not fulfilled for twenty years, however, when he used *Josef, lieber* as a viola obbligato for a setting for alto and piano of *Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen* ("You that hover over these palm trees"), a German translation of a poem by Lope de Vega that appeared in Geibel and Heyse's *Spanisches Liederbuch*. As a companion piece, Brahms prefaced this *Geistliches Wiegenlied* ("Holy Cradle Song") with a setting of Rückert's *Gestillte Sehnsucht* ("Stilled Longing"), whose imagery complemented it nicely. Brahms published the two songs for alto, viola and piano as his Op. 91 in 1884; they were dedicated Amalie Joachim.

The dark, burnished sonorities of alto voice and viola, complemented by a piano part that seldom rises above the middle of the keyboard, are essential to the sweet calm that lies at the heart of this music. Only in the central stanza of *Gestillte Sehnsucht*, where the music serves both to mirror the longing sentiments of the text and to provide a contrasting structural paragraph, is the halcyon mood of the Op. 91 Songs ruffled.

***The Appointed Time for String Quartet***  
**James Lee III (born in 1975)**

*Composed in 1999.*

*Premiered on August 4, 2002 at the Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts.*

"I want to compose music," says James Lee III of the deep spirituality of his creative work, "to reach into the inner soul of listeners and elevate them regardless of race and religious affiliation." Lee was born in 1975 in St. Joseph, Michigan, on the southern Lake Michigan shore, and holds bachelor's (1995), master's (2001) and doctoral degrees (2005) in piano and composition from the University of Michigan, where his teachers included William Bolcom, Bright Sheng and Michael Daugherty. Lee was also a Seiji Ozawa Composition Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center during the summer of 2002, when he studied composition with Osvaldo Golijov, Michael Gandolfi, Steven Mackey, Kaija Saariaho and Augusta Reed Thomas and conducting with Stefan Asbury. Lee has taught at Marygrove College in Detroit and the Village Music School in Plymouth, Michigan, and since 2005 has been on the faculty of Morgan State University in Baltimore, where he is now Assistant Professor of Composition and Theory. In addition to his fellowship at Tanglewood, Lee has also received the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Rackham Merit Fellowship from the University of Michigan, and First Prize in the Leigh Morris Chorale Choral Composition Competition. His works, for orchestra, chorus, solo voice, chamber ensembles, organ and piano, have been performed across the United States and in South Africa, Austria and Japan; Leonard Slatkin conducted the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. in the premiere of Lee's *Beyond Rivers of Vision* in October 2006 and led the work again with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in January 2010.

The composer writes, "*The Appointed Time for String Quartet* was composed as a musical commentary on Jesus Christ's temptations by the devil in the wilderness. This story comes from Matthew 4:1-11. I use this title because God has an appointed time for everything. There was an 'appointed time' for Jesus' baptism, which was followed by another 'appointed time' for His trials in the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights before the devil tempted Him. This is significant because right after Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, the Gospel of Matthew says, 'Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.' It is important to note that Christ was fasting for those forty days and nights. The devil came to Him at His weakest point. We see in this story that He was tempted just as we are, yet remained without sin. He had to go through these temptations in order to gain the victory over the devil and begin His earthly ministry. Immediately afterwards, Christ began to call His twelve disciples to follow Him.

"*The Appointed Time* is in four movements: *As He Was Led Into the Wilderness, Stones and Bread, Throw Yourself Down* and *This Could Be Yours If You Bow*. The first movement explores the interval of empty-sounding perfect fifths, which convey the idea of vagueness as Christ was temporarily weakened from a lack of food for forty days. *Throw Yourself Down* includes a 'dance of the devil' in 5/8 meter that ends in a kind of Lydian D major sonority, as well as sound effects using natural and artificial harmonics along with light *glissandi*. These techniques evoke the scene of being elevated to a mountaintop and enduring the pressure to yield to temptation. *This Could Be Yours If You Bow Down* comprises quasi-fugal passages in 7/8 meter and thematic materials from the previous three movements that return. The work ends with a C major triad with a raised fourth scale degree hinting at the Lydian scale and a raised tonic in the first violin. This evokes the truth of the immortality of Jesus Christ."

**String Quartet No. 2 with Soprano Solo, Op. 10**  
**Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)**

*Composed in 1907-1908.*

*Premiered on December 21, 1908 in Vienna by the Rosé Quartet and Marie Gutheil-Schoder.*

Across its "Crimes and Accidents" column for December 22, 1908, the *Neue Wiener Abendblatt* ran the headline: "Scandal in the Bösendorfer Hall!" The reporter went on to denounce a local miscreant who "had already created a public nuisance with other of his products. But never has he gone so far as he did yesterday." Most observers of the event subscribed to the *Abendblatt's* estimation of the situation, and vented their anger by whistling on door-keys, jeering, shouting and confronting the perpetrator and his few supporters. The writer even suggested that the offending article "be declared a public nuisance, and its author brought to trial by the Department of Health." Thus was Arnold Schoenberg's Second String Quartet welcomed into the world.

Schoenberg, 34 years old in 1908, had been the subject of considerable controversy for the daring audacity of his music ever since the stormy premiere of *Verklärte Nacht* in 1902. With the works that followed (*Pelleas und Melisande*, the First Chamber Symphony, the First String Quartet), he had begun the evolution of a style that drifted further and further from the accepted modes of conventional expression, slipping perilously close to an unknown, moorless nether world that was nothing less than the negation of centuries of historical development in music: the abolition of tonality. The process of challenge to the traditional tonal center had been underway for decades: as early as the time of Chopin, composers had mounted chromatic assaults upon the key of a work to heighten the sense of fulfillment at its inevitable return. Brahms, Wagner, Strauss, Mahler and others continued the quest for heightened expressivity through chromatic innovation, until, by the turn of the twentieth century, the specter of music without a fixed tonality — i.e., music shorn of its traditional system of harmony and form building — hovered above the musical world. Brahms and Wagner died before the crisis was reached; Mahler treaded just to its edge in his Ninth and Tenth Symphonies before his life was cut short at the age of fifty in 1911; Richard Strauss faced it head on in *Elektra*, but then retreated into convention (albeit a most productive and satisfying convention) with *Der Rosenkavalier*, and wrote music rooted in the practices of the 1890s until he died in 1949. It fell to Arnold Schoenberg to shine his creative torch into the stylistic darkness. It was the flame that kindled the Second Quartet.

The Second Quartet was a product of one of the most turbulent times of Schoenberg's life. The score was begun in March 1907, just a month after the premieres of his Quartet No. 1 and First Chamber Symphony had been greeted with all the delicacy of a cock fight. Early the next year, while he was still at work on the first movement, his wife, Mathilde, ran off to live with the painter Richard Gerstl, from whom both of the Schoenbergs had taken art lessons. It was during her absence that the rest of the Second Quartet was conceived, a chronology that some commentators have used to explain the extra-musical references in the score: the quotation in the scherzo of *Ach, du lieber Augustin, Alles ist hin!* — "Everything is lost!" — and the poems used in the last two movements, one praying for relief from passion and the other a transcendent answer to that prayer. Through the mediation of his student and colleague Anton Webern, Schoenberg pleaded with Mathilde to return for the good of their daughter and infant son. Later in 1908, she did. They were reconciled, after a fashion, and he dedicated the new Quartet "to my wife." Gerstl, 25 and full of promise, killed himself. One month later, the Second Quartet was premiered.

This Quartet is the last of Schoenberg's compositions to use a key signature, though its harmonic style throughout is as unsettled as was Schoenberg's life at the time it was written. The finale eschews both key signature and functional tonality. The Quartet is, however, unquestionably sprung from the great German tradition. The forms of the work's movements are clear, concise and cyclically interrelated, and are fundamentally grounded in the technique of motivic development that was the basis of the art of Beethoven and Brahms. The overall structure of the Quartet also follows the familiar path of "apotheosis," of struggle to triumph that characterized so many Romantic works, "a very characteristic Schoenbergian emotional progression," wrote Malcolm MacDonald. "The experience and exploration of

fear, disorientation, near-despair; the cry for strength to endure these trials; and then fulfillment — awakening from the nightmare, the tortured self emerges into mental clarity, consolation, union with God.” The emotional goal of the Quartet is given verbal definition in the settings for soprano of two verses by the German poet Stefan George (1868-1934), *Litanei* (“*Litany*”) and *Entrückung* (“*Enraptured*”), a device of incorporating the voice into instrumental forms whose lineage traces back to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

The Quartet’s opening movement is in sonata-allegro form: two themes in the initial section (violin with a dotted-rhythm figure; viola a dozen measures later with a lyrical, vaguely waltz-like motive), and two in the secondary section (a falling phrase of wide steps initiated by the violin; a strong motive presented in unison by second violin and viola). The development section begins with the main theme repeated in a glassy sonority and goes on to elaborate the other earlier material. The recapitulation gives condensed versions of the exposition’s themes.

The second movement is a fully worked-out scherzo and trio. Inserted before the return of the scherzo section is the quotation of *Ach, du lieber Augustin*, whose empty-headed naiveté has an almost garish surreality in this context. The music becomes fragmented and seems about to disintegrate (“Everything is lost!”) when the cello and viola stumble upon some bits from the first part of the movement so that the scherzo can be restated. The third movement, *Litany*, is a set of variations on a theme comprising motives from the two earlier movements. The variations are carried out by the instruments while the soprano overlaps their formal divisions, almost in the manner of the old passacaglia. (“*Dido’s Lament*” from Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* uses a similar technique.) The closing movement is music of great calm in which Schoenberg does not so much leap as float into the treacherous realm of atonality with the words, “I feel the air from another planet.” With his Second String Quartet, Arnold Schoenberg broached the world of truly modern music — the art could never be the same again.

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