

SOU Chamber Music Concerts
Thursday, October 30, 2003
Jacques Thibaud String Trio with Eugenia Zukerman, flute

JOHANN STAMITZ TRIO FOR FLUTE, VIOLIN & CELLO IN G MAJOR

Johann Stamitz ranks among the most important and influential mid-18th century composers. He held several musical positions (court composer, conductor, concertmaster) for the court at Mannheim, and turned its orchestra into the most influential ensemble in Europe. Like Mozart, he died at far too young an age (39), and the timing of his death in 1757 remains particularly unfortunate. He had just completed a very successful sojourn in Paris, including many performances of his works. As with Mozart (who did not live to benefit from the runaway success of *The Magic Flute*, which would have solved the financial problems that plagued his final years in Vienna), Stamitz died just as international fame and commissions came his way.

Stamitz was an extraordinarily versatile musician. In a 1742 concert in Frankfurt, he performed on violin, viola d'amore, cello and double bass. As a conductor he turned the Mannheim orchestra into "the most renowned ensemble of its time, famous for its precision and novel dynamic effects" according to Stamitz scholar Eugene Wolf. But his contributions to the symphony provided his greatest legacy. They achieved enormous influence, as he was the first to consistently write them in four movements (by adding the Minuet and Trio as the third movement). He also helped decisively move the symphony away from Baroque style by emphasizing the new technique of thematic contrast. He reinforced the effect of the secondary key with longer, more lyric themes, and reinforced its appearance by often scoring such passages for wind instruments. The use of contrasting dynamics - the Mannheim orchestra became famous for its crescendos - also became a prominent feature of his style. Such varied textures and dynamics, as well as the four movement cycle, played an important role in the development of later 18th-century classical style.

Though a violin virtuoso, wind instruments played a particularly prominent role in Stamitz' output. He used clarinets in his symphonies 35 years before Mozart and Haydn. While writing numerous violin concertos, Stamitz also produced concertos for oboe, clarinet and 12 (more than any other instrument) for the flute. It thus comes as no surprise that his most prominent chamber genre were the trios for Flute, Violin and Continuo. Tonight's Trio in G Major belongs to a group of six undated trios for that combination of instruments, his single largest chamber publication.

VILLA-LOBOS STRING TRIO (1945)

Heitor Villa-Lobos became "the most significant figure in 20th-century Brazilian art music" according to the 2001 New Grove. This achievement rested in part on his remarkable national and international stylistic eclecticism. Growing up in Rio de Janeiro, Villa-Lobos always favored the folk and dance elements of that city. Brazil also provides a broad and diverse texture of such regional styles throughout the country, and his 60-year career as a composer gave Villa-Lobos the time to incorporate many of those folk accents into his music as well. But his thirst for music - he said composing became a "biological necessity" - also took him far beyond the shores of Brazil. He refined his modernist techniques in Paris, meeting such luminaries as Ravel, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Varese. He also traveled extensively in America, meeting Copland, Toscanini and Ormandy. And given his affinity for Brazilian folk music, it's also no surprise that he spent time with such jazz artists and composers as Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman. A visit to America in 1945 resulted in the commission for this String Trio from the Coolidge Foundation.

His lifelong dedication to chamber music manifested itself in several different ways. Though not a gifted pianist, he nonetheless contributed influential modernist repertory for that instrument. And his skill as a cellist led him to favor string music throughout his life. He wrote chamber music in every phase of his career, with his seventeen string quartets comprising one of the largest 20th-century contributions to that genre. After a strongly avant-garde phase in the 1920s, tonight's String Trio (his only one) resembles the more accessible style of the later quartets written in the 1940s and 50s.

While his focus on string chamber music and folk elements reveals an affinity with Bartok, significant

differences emerge as well. They both incorporate dance and folk-like material, motivic continuity and imitation, modernist harmonies, and demanding virtuoso techniques. But while employing some dissonant and bi-tonal writing, Villa-Lobos writes in a more consistently accessible harmonic style. He also fashions longer melodic lines out of the constant fabric of motivic activity, as in the broad opening themes of the first two movements. Villa-Lobos presents the 1st-movement theme in a fugato passage of imitation, while the breadth and lyricism of the 2nd movement's opening theme is particularly lovely. He also highlights his themes by at times dramatically withholding them. He'll introduce new passages with the accompaniment, effectively setting the mood and expectation for the theme's arrival (as in the opening of the second and fourth movements). After the slow second movement, the Brazilian dance-like theme of the third movement sets a particularly sprightly tone with fast paced syncopations. Villa-Lobos closes with an energetic finale based in part on themes derived from the previous two movements. If this Trio provides your introduction to the chamber music of Villa-Lobos, you have a special treat awaiting you.

MOZART FLUTE QUARTET IN A MAJOR, K 298 (1786-87)

Mozart set out on a 16-month, ultimately unsuccessful search for a permanent music position outside of Salzburg in 1777. Settling in Mannheim for five months beginning in November that year, Mozart received a commission to write flute quartets and concertos from Ferdinand DeJean, a musical enthusiast. DeJean ultimately paid only about half of the 200 Florins, because Mozart supplied only a couple quartets and one concerto. When yet another flute quartet appeared in Mozart's collected works (tonight's quartet in A Major), later scholars assumed it was part of the DeJean commission and provided it with a Köchel listing from that era. They could not have been more wrong. The dating was off by a decade, and will provide one of the most radical changes when the current revision of the Köchel Catalogue of Mozart's works is finished. The correct (alternate) Köchel listing will be closer to K 500.

The problems begin early, as this work simply does not resemble the other flute quartets (or the oboe quartet of 1781) in forms, tempos, textures, and style. Mozart wrote it in a lighter, almost frothy style in comparison. He avoids the weighty sonata-form opening movements of the other quartets altogether. Instead he offers lighter sectional forms (Theme & Variations, Minuet & Trio, and Rondeau, respectively). Mozart omits the broader 4/4 time signature in favor of the lighter 2/2, 3/4 and 6/8 meters. He provides none of the Allegro or Adagio movements like the other quartets, again focusing on more moderate Andante and Allegretto tempos. Finally, coming after the texturally complex, equal-voiced imitation of the six string quartets he dedicated to Haydn in the mid-1780s, he opts for a much lighter, homophonic, melody-plus-accompaniment style throughout this quartet.

Mozart's playful humor in the tempo markings for the finale reveals the origins of this quartet. He labels the finale a "Rondieaux" (instead of a more pedestrian "Rondeaux"). And his seventeen-word tempo marking concludes with "...ma non troppo presto, pero non troppo adagio, cosi-cosi-con molto garbo ed espressione." Mozart is having a ball, as he composed this for one of the musical parties at the home of his Viennese friend Gottfried von Jacquin in 1786-87. The opening Variation movement sets the party-like tone, as he fashions a solo for each instrument in subsequent variations. Everyone gets to shine for a moment at this soiree! But this is a flute quartet after all, and he provides sparkling solo passages for the lead instrument in the Trio of the Minuet and throughout the "Rondieaux" finale. And he is Mozart after all - even in his lighter entertainment mode, he still fashions an artistic and compelling work.

DOHNANYI SERENADE IN C MAJOR, OP. 10 (1902)

The extraordinary range of Dohnanyi's musical accomplishments appears in the opening sentence of the 2001 New Grove article. It refers to him as "Hungarian pianist, composer, conductor, teacher and administrator...the first architect of Hungary's 20th century musical culture." By 1900 he had become Hungary's most prominent pianist and composer. In a rare achievement for an touring international pianist of the first rank, he championed chamber music. He was also among the first pianists to perform the entire cycle of Beethoven Sonatas and Mozart Concertos. From 1919-1944 he conducted the Budapest Philharmonic, championing such modernist Hungarian composers as Bartok, Kodaly and Weiner. He was

an influential teacher as well, with such students as Georg Solti, Annie Fischer and Geza Anda. Bartok once said of him that he “single-handedly established Hungarian music in this century.” Out of favor with both the Nazi and Communist regimes, he moved to America in 1949 and joined the music faculty at Florida State University.

All central-European composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries wrestled with the powerful German legacy of Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Wagner. Dohnanyi’s early works proved no exception, but tonight’s delightful “Serenade” first demonstrated his mature style in a more nationalist idiom. Though he promoted Bartok and Kodaly in his concerts, this self-effacing artist preferred a more popular style for his own works. Elements of Gypsy tunes and styles appear throughout the Serenade. He also intended it as an homage to the serenades of the 18th century. That homage even extends to the genre as well, as it fell out of favor in the 19th century. The last significant String Trios were written by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, before Dohnanyi placed a definitive Hungarian stamp on the genre.

Most of Mozart’s serenades open with a march, and Dohnanyi continues this tradition. However, a playful, folk-like phrasing surfaces immediately - the opening theme returns before expected, in the middle of the bar. The opening bar of this *A B A* movement also provides the rhythmic motive for the viola drone that accompanies the Gypsy tune of the “B” section. Perhaps to compensate for that drone, Dohnanyi gives the opening theme of the following Romanze movement to the viola. He provides a wonderful effect by accompanying the lyrical melody with string and cello pizzicato. Folk elements resurface with a vengeance in the Scherzo. The opening theme, treated in several fugato imitative passages throughout the movement, is set so fast that the playful syncopations never allow the listener to follow the meter for very long. The lyrical Trio theme offers a marvelous contrast (though listen for the Beethovenesque anticipations of the opening theme’s return near the end of the Trio).

Dohnanyi continues the 18th-century homage in the fourth movement Theme and Variations. The dignified G Minor theme shapes a movement of great warmth and poignancy, the true heart of this Serenade. He adopts the typical classic-era technique by providing each variation with a different figuration. A quick and sprightly Rondo then caps the Serenade, with a genial 20th-century nod towards the spirit of Haydn. The close is all Beethoven, however, as he reaches for cyclic continuity with a statement of the opening theme from the first movement. This serenade not only marks Dohnanyi’s mature style - it remains one of the most popular of all his works.

Program notes by Ed Wight