

The Red Bank
Chamber Music Society

presents

Manhattan Chamber Players

Emi Ferguson, Flute
Brendan Speltz, Violin
Luke Fleming, Viola
Brook Speltz, Cello

Mozart • Beethoven • Haydn

Concert Available for Viewing

Sunday, September 20, 2020 • 4:00 PM

This concert was pre-recorded because of COVID-19.

Brookdale Community College will air it on its community access TV channel (Comcast 21 and FiOS 46) on Sunday, September 20th at 4:00 PM, and again on Monday, September 21st at 2:30 PM and 8:00 PM. We thank them for their kindness in doing so.

The concert will also be available online via the Society's website,

<http://www.rbcms.org>,

at your convenience starting at 4:00 PM on September 20th.

Recorded at Glass Bottom Studios, Tinton Falls, New Jersey on

September 2, 2020.

Video production by Wavelight Studio LLC.

PROGRAM

Flute Quartet No. 4 in A major, K. 298 (1787) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–1791)

(~11 minutes)

- I. Andante, Theme and variations
- II. Menuetto
- III. Rondieaux: Allegretto grazioso, ma non troppo presto, però non troppo adagio. Così-così—non molto garbo ed espressione

String Trio in C minor, Op. 9 No. 3 (1798)

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

(~25 minutes)

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Adagio con espressione
- III. Scherzo – Allegro molto e vivace
- IV. Finale – Presto

Flute Quartet in G major, Op. 5 No. 2 (1767)

Franz Joseph Haydn

(1732–1809)

(~15 minutes)

- I. Presto assai
- II. Menuetto
- III. Adagio
- IV. Presto assai

Flute Quartet No. 1 in D major, K. 285 (1777) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–1791)

(~14 minutes)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Rondeau: [Allegro]

Notes on the Program

When one refers to pre-twentieth century Western “Classical” chamber music as a whole, one can generally place any chamber work into one of three periods roughly defined by these dates: Baroque (1650 – 1750); Classical (1750 – 1825); and Romantic (1825 – 1900). While in the Baroque and Romantic periods major differences in style and approach from country to country and region to region are readily apparent, as starkly contrasting uniformity can be observed in the Classical period. Whether in France, Prussia, Italy, or England, compositional forms such as sonata form, rondo, and the minuet/trio format were widely adopted, and one can rarely detect differences in compositions during this time (other than their quality) from country to country.

Because this certainly cannot be said of the Baroque and Romantic periods (for example, one instantly can tell the difference between a piece written in 1890 by a French composer versus a Viennese composer), the Classical period occupies a brief, rather unique time in the history of tonal Western music. Today’s program explores the music of arguably the three greatest Classical period composers: Franz Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven. While written over a period of only 31 years during the aforementioned period of such relative uniformity of approach, these works nevertheless contain a great deal of variety and personality, and speak to their respective composer’s ability to weave his own special touches into music that was governed by no small amount of constraints when it was written.

By the mid-1700s, the values of Classicism in art and literature had found their way, as during the Baroque period before it, into musical composition. For all his brilliance and genius as the consummate master of high Baroque composition (albeit unrecognized in his own lifetime), J.S. Bach, who died in 1750, was already considered quite old fashioned years before his death, prompting one of Bach’s employers at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig to remark when he died, “Thank God his is dead; now we can hire a real musician.” The values of the emerging early Classical style (of which *galant* and *Rococo* can be considered sub-genres) were the opposite of the dizzying complexity and harmonic tensions of the

Baroque. Above all, simplicity, clarity, balance, and beauty were of greatest worth in determining a work's quality.

One of the earliest Classical masters to emerge was Haydn, particularly as the composer of the earliest string quartets and string trios ever written. The string quartet was a new instrumental combination, having taken over from the dominant genre of chamber composition during the Baroque period: the trio sonata. A bit of a misnomer, the trio sonata actually involved four players: two treble instruments (usually two violins but occasionally flutes, oboes, or recorders); a cello or other continuo instrument; and a harpsichord. But because the harpsichord was not very portable for events where the music needed to be more mobile (such as parties, social occasions, coronations, etc.) the viola replaced it as a way to fill out the inner harmonies and still be easily carried from place to place, thus creating the modern string quartet.

Having a flute replace the first violin, as is the case in three of the pieces on today's program, was an easy and natural substitution, even if it was one that Haydn probably did not choose to make. Haydn's Op. 5 is, as was common at the time, comprised of six works. Four of these (Nos. 3-6) are now known to be falsely attributed to Haydn, and the first two, while without a doubt Haydn's music, are probably arrangements of other chamber compositions. The **Flute Quartet in G major, Op. 5 No. 2** (1767) nevertheless works well in this instrumental combination, and is the most successful of the six Op. 5 compositions.

Very similar in style and movement structure to Haydn's set of six Op. 9 String Quartets, Op. 5 no. 2 begins and ends with short, quick movements in binary form. The brief minuet that comes next is customary in works like this, and the slow movement, while longer and more melodic than the other three, contains no emotionally charged passages or truly dramatic gestures. And indeed, one should not expect this; in the 1760s, the string quartet (and by extension the flute quartet) was meant to be portable party music, nothing more. Thus, Haydn's Op. 5 no. 2 is a fine example of extremely skillfully crafted light entertainment.

By the 1790s, however, things had changed considerably. Haydn had elevated the string quartet to the most serious genre of chamber music, having by 1798 composed over 60 works in this genre, many of which were over 25 minutes long and contained highly emotional, extremely virtuosic writing. It is no exaggeration that Haydn is commonly known as “The Father of the String Quartet.” One can understand why a young Ludwig van Beethoven would have been intimidated to venture into a genre so dominated by the genius and innovation of Haydn, who was also his teacher. Indeed, Beethoven waited until his set of six Op. 18 works to tackle the string quartet, dedicating the works to Haydn.

But Beethoven also learned well from his teacher. Haydn was the master at taking a simple rhythmic figure or short motive and skillfully turning it, however simple, into an entire composition, and Beethoven emulated this compositional process brilliantly in his Op. 1 Piano Trios and numerous other early chamber and solo works. But he also injected a hefty dose of stormy intensity into these early compositions, particularly those in a minor key, and even more particularly those in the key of C minor. Beethoven’s **String Trio in C minor, Op. 9 no. 3** is a perfect blend of Haydn’s formal discipline, balance, and craftsmanship and Beethoven’s own something-to-prove, chip-on-the-shoulderism. Its sprawling, brooding opening movement contrasts beautifully with the lengthy slow movement – lush, calming, and timeless, traversing the emotional extremes. The two relatively brief closing movements are virtuosic and stormy in comparison, but the whole work concludes with a very Haydnesque playful tongue-in-cheek gesture.

While flautists have to chalk it up to bad luck that a composer so prolific as Haydn rarely wrote anything for their instrument (indeed, not a single flute concerto or flute sonata in all his output), W.A. Mozart was a huge fan of the flute, and his four flute quartets are only a small part of his output that features this instrument (the modern version of which was still relatively new at the time). Though Beethoven met Mozart only briefly, Haydn and Mozart were best friends, and frequently would “try out” each other’s chamber music playing together, with Haydn on violin and Mozart on viola. It is no surprise, then, that most of Mozart’s mature chamber music features the viola far more prominently than that of other Classical

composers (remember, the viola was originally just supposed to fill out the missing harmonies from the absent harpsichord), and Mozart's flute quartets are no exception.

Also apparent throughout these works is Mozart's gift for composing melodies of exquisite beauty. While Haydn and Beethoven undoubtedly came up with some unforgettable melodies of their own, they more frequently relied on skillfully crafted and developed musical motives (think the beginning of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony!) to get their point across. For Mozart, everything is opera—even a flute quartet—and in both works on today's program one can imagine numerous little scenes unfolding onstage.

Spaced apart by about 10 years (despite the relatively close Köchel numbering), Mozart's **Flute Quartet No. 1 in D major, K. 285** (1777) is bursting with youthful effervescence and vigor while his **Flute Quartet No. 4 in A major, K. 298** (1787) is a model of mature (if the age of 31 can be considered mature) restraint and subtlety. Pure joy dominates the active outer movements of the earlier work, with the flute clearly asserting the dominant melodic role (as would the first violinist in a string quartet). The last movement contains particularly busy passagework for the violist, as well as a playful dialogue with the flute in the carefree middle section. But the striking slow movement is an aria, pure and simple, with the three stringed instruments plucking throughout under a poignant flute melody – as though a melancholy opera scene were transported right to the living room where this quartet would be performed.

It is rumored that a recent trip to Ireland inspired Mozart in writing the opening melody of the Flute Quartet No. 4 in A major – one which is certainly reminiscent of a Celtic folk tune. In this theme and variations, everyone gets a turn, but the viola undoubtedly gets to have the best time, with a virtuosic, champagne-popping variation that Mozart undoubtedly played with great relish. Because its main theme is so mellow and is repeated at the movement's end, a slow movement is apparently not needed, and a very brief, light minuet gives way to the impressively titled *Finale: Rondieaux: Allegretto grazioso, mà non troppo presto, però non troppo adagio. Così-così-con molto garbo ed Espressione.*

There is a lot to unpack here. First of all, the word *Rondieaoux* is apparently making fun of all the different forms of the word Rondo (a common closing movement form and title) that were being thrown around at the time depending on one's country, region, and preference: Rondo, Rondeau, Rondeaux, etc. So Mozart just used EVERY vowel, plus the "x." The translation for the rest of the title is literally: "Graceful and a little moderate, but not too exceptionally fast, with so-so politeness and great expressiveness." He seems to be trying to confuse the performer into not knowing exactly how fast he wants the piece played or what mood he desires, perhaps poking fun at the increasingly specific indications composers of Mozart's day had begun to give for the playing of their music (Mozart's own indications on his music are usually very broad and infrequent). In any case, it's a complicated title for an uncomplicated movement: the best solution seems to be to play it with a good-natured aloofness—just pure happiness and contentedness, which is likely the result Mozart intended in the first place.

Program notes by Luke Fleming



Artists

The **Manhattan Chamber Players** are a chamber music collective of New York-based musicians who share the common aim of performing the greatest works in the chamber repertoire at the highest level. Formed in 2015 by Artistic Director and violist Luke Fleming, MCP is comprised of an impressive roster of musicians who all come from the tradition of great music making at the Marlboro Music Festival, Steans Institute at Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festival and Perlman Music Program, and are former students of the Curtis Institute, Juilliard School, Colburn School, and the New England Conservatory.

MCP has been praised in *Strings Magazine* for "A fascinating program concept...It felt refreshingly like an auditory version of a vertical wine tasting." The article went on to applaud MCP for "an intensely wrought

and burnished performance...Overall, I wished I could put them on repeat." At the core of MCP's inspiration is its members' joy in playing this richly varied repertoire with longtime friends and colleagues, with whom they have been performing since they were students. Its roster allows for the programming of the entire core string, wind, and piano chamber music repertoire—from piano duos to clarinet quintets to string octets. While all its members have independent careers as soloists and chamber musicians, they strive for every opportunity to come together and again share in this special collaboration, creating "a mellifluous blend of vigorous intensity and dramatic import, performed with enthusiasm, technical facility and impressive balance, relishing distinctions...a winning performance." (*Classical Source*)

Members of MCP are current and former members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Ensemble Connect, and the Aizuri, Attacca, Dover, Escher, Vega, and Ying Quartets, the Aletheia, Appassionata, and Lysander Piano Trios, and Imani Winds. They are top prizewinners in the Banff, Concert Artists Guild, Fischhoff, Melbourne, Naumburg, Osaka, Primrose, Queen Elisabeth, Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Tertis, and Young Concert Artists Competitions, and are some of the most sought after solo and chamber performers of their generation. The Manhattan Chamber Players have been featured multiple times on NPR's Performance Today, and is the Ensemble-in-Residence at both the Festival de Febrero in Mexico and the Crescent City Chamber Music Festival in New Orleans. In addition to its numerous concerts across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, MCP regularly tours in Asia and the Middle East, and has led chamber music residency programs at institutions throughout the U.S. and abroad.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, MCP launched an ongoing online concert series, CO-VIDeo Concerts, which has raised over \$20,000 for performing artists recently rendered unemployed due to the devastating effects of this virus. (manhattanchamberplayers.com)

Manhattan Chamber Players is represented by Arts Management Group.

Manhattan Chamber Players is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Hailed by critics for her “tonal bloom” and “hauntingly beautiful performances,” English-American flutist and composer **Emi Ferguson** stretches the boundaries of what is expected of modern-day musicians. Ms. Ferguson can be heard live in concerts and festivals around the world as well as at home in New York City where she is a member of the New York New Music Ensemble, NYBI, Argento Ensemble, and New Vintage Baroque. This season, she is producing two albums: a flute and piano album highlighting Cesar Franck’s Sonata in A major; and a cross-genre “baroque-pop” album that takes 16th and 17th century French texts and motifs and spins them into 21st century indie-pop songs.

Ms. Ferguson was a featured performer alongside Yo-Yo Ma, Paul Simon, and James Taylor at the 10th Anniversary Memorial Ceremony of 9/11 at Ground Zero, where her performance of “Amazing Grace” was televised worldwide. Her performance that day is now part of the permanent collection at the 9/11 Museum. Ms. Ferguson is passionate about developing new music and has premiered works by Wayne Oquin, Kendall Briggs, Elliott Carter, and even C.P.E. Bach. She has been a featured performer at the Marlboro Music, Lake Champlain, and Lucerne Festivals, June in Buffalo, Twickenham Fest, and Chamberfest Dubuque, and has been featured as a soloist and ambassador for Elliott Carter’s music in China and Japan. Having passions for both “new” and “old” music, Ms. Ferguson is the only flutist to have worked simultaneously with conductors James Levine, Pierre Boulez, and William Christie on modern and baroque flutes in Lucerne, New York, and France.

Ms. Ferguson is the First Prize winner of the National Flute Association’s Young Artist Competition, of the New York Flute Club Young Artist competition, the Mid-Atlantic Flute Competition, the Juilliard Concerto Competition, and the J.C. Arriaga Chamber Music Competition and was a recipient of the 2014 Salon de Virtuosi grant. She is currently on the faculty of the Juilliard School teaching Ear Training in the Evening and Pre- College divisions and has taught on the faculty of the University of Buffalo. Born in Japan and raised in London and Boston, she now resides in New York City. (www.emiferguson.com)



NYC-based violinist **Brendan Speltz**, second violinist of the world renowned Escher String Quartet, has toured the globe with groundbreaking ensembles such as Shuffle Concert, the Manhattan Chamber Players, A Far Cry, and the Harlem Quartet. As founder of FeltInFour Productions, Mr. Speltz has produced innovative concert events across the New York City area that have been described by *The New Yorker* as “Thrilling, poignant, unexpected, and utterly DIY.” Most recently, Mr. Speltz co-created a cross-disciplinary presentation of Steve Reich’s *Different Trains* with aerial dance troupe ABCirque which was sponsored by Meyer Sound Labs. In NYC he has performed as guest with the New York New Music Ensemble, Mark Morris Dance Group, American Ballet Theatre, the American Symphony, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and as a founding member of the conductorless string orchestra Shattered Glass. He received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern California and his Master’s degree from the Manhattan School of Music. Mr. Speltz plays a 1925 Carl Becker violin.



Praised by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for his “glowing refinement,” violist **Luke Fleming**'s performances have been described by *The Strad* as “confident and expressive...playing with uncanny precision,” and lauded by *Gramophone* for their “superlative technical and artistic execution.” Festival appearances include the Marlboro Music School and Festival, the Steans Institute at Ravinia, Perlman Music Program, the Norfolk and Great Lakes Chamber Music Festivals, the Melbourne Festival, Bravo!Vail, and Festival Mozaic. Formerly the violist of the internationally acclaimed Attacca Quartet, he has served as Artist-in-Residence for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and received the National Federation of Music Clubs Centennial Chamber Music Award. He was awarded First Prize at the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition and top prizes at the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition.

In 2015, Mr. Fleming became the Founding Artistic Director of both the Manhattan Chamber Players, a New York-based chamber music collective, and the Crescent City Chamber Music Festival. He is also a founding member of the Delaware-based Serafin Ensemble. He has

performed as a guest artist with the Escher, Pacifica, Serafin, and Solera String Quartets, the Eroica, Lysander, and Gryphon Piano Trios, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Decoda, Ensemble Connect, Sejong Soloists, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and the New York Classical Players, and has given masterclasses at UCLA, Louisiana State University, Ithaca College, Columbus State University, Syracuse University, Melbourne University, and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, among others. Mr. Fleming has served on the faculties of the Innsbrook Institute, Renova Music Festival, Festival del Lago, and Houston ChamberFest, and Fei Tian College and is Lecturer-in-Residence for the concert series Project: Music Heals Us.

Mr. Fleming holds the degrees of Doctor of Musical Arts, Artist Diploma, and Master of Music from the Juilliard School, a Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction from the Royal Academy of Music in London, and a Bachelor of Music *summa cum laude* from Louisiana State University. He is represented with the Manhattan Chamber Players by Arts Management Group. (lukefleming.com)



Praised for his "fluid virtuosity" and "soulful melodies," Los Angeles native **Brook Speltz** has been inspired since childhood by the long tradition of deep musical mastery of artists such as Jascha Heifetz, Pierre Fournier, and the Guarneri String Quartet. Mr. Speltz is the cellist of the internationally renowned Escher String Quartet—Quartet-in-Residence at Southern Methodist University in Dallas—and an artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

An extremely versatile cellist, Mr. Speltz has performed as a soloist, chamber musician, and recitalist throughout the US, Canada, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. First Prize winner of the prestigious Ima Hogg Competition, he has performed as a soloist with the Houston Symphony, Colorado Music Festival Orchestra and International Contemporary Ensemble, among others, and is a regular performer at England's IMS Prussia Cove and on tour with Musicians from Marlboro. An avid and sought after chamber musician, Mr. Speltz has been personally invited by musical giants such as Itzhak Perlman and Richard

Goode to collaborate in chamber music recitals and tours throughout the country. As a result of these collaborations, he has been nominated for the inaugural Warner Music Prize, a newly established prize presented by Warner Music and Carnegie Hall.

A lover of all facets of the music world, Mr. Speltz has enjoyed performing on extensive tours with the cello rock band Break of Reality, whose online video of the Game of Thrones cover immediately went viral and has already received over 8.5 million views. Their recent U.S. tour raised funds and awareness for music programs in public schools all around the country. Mr. Speltz studied at the renowned Curtis Institute of Music with Peter Wiley and at the Juilliard School with Joel Krosnick, after his formative years of study with Eleanor Schoenfeld in Los Angeles. He performs on a 1756 J.C. Gigli on loan from his father, a cellist and his first inspiration in a family of professional musicians.

