

The Red Bank  
Chamber Music Society  
*presents*

Omni Piano Quartet

Suzanne Ornstein, violin

Ronald Carbone, viola

Peter Sanders, violoncello

Thomas Schmidt, piano

ADVANCE NOTES

Mozart • Mendelssohn • Schumann

Sunday Afternoon

September 23, 2018 • 4:30 PM

Trinity Church Auditorium

Red Bank, NJ

## PROGRAM

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493 (1786)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

- I. Allegro
- II. Larghetto
- III. Allegretto

Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 1 (1822)

Felix Mendelssohn

- I. Allegro vivace
- II. Adagio
- III. Scherzo: Presto
- IV. Allegro moderato

## INTERMISSION

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47 (1842)

Robert Schumann

- I. Sostenuto assai; Allegro ma non troppo; Più agitato
- II. Scherzo: Molto vivace; Trio I; Trio II
- III. Andante cantabile
- IV. Finale: Vivace

## Notes on the Program

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)** **Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493 (1786)**

*(~28 minutes)*



As Haydn forged the Classical Period and Beethoven pushed it towards Romanticism, Mozart consolidated it in a way unmatched by any other composer. To it he brought not only the elegance and grace we associate with the earlier Baroque Period, but also the brilliance, power, and clarity that define the Classical Period. So, too, was Mozart a harmonic and melodic innovator.

His death at thirty-five has left us with endless unanswered questions of where he would have taken his profound effect on Western music. Despite the brevity of his life, he produced a catalogue of works that defined opera, the Mass, the symphony, the piano concerto, and the piano sonata. To chamber music he brought his rich array of sonatas, quartets and quintets that never dull in their many performances. Those who play his music will quickly attest to its singular virtuosic challenges based on a demand for absolute clarity coupled with a pervading operatic quality—even in his chamber music.

When Mozart submitted the G Minor Piano Quartet for publication in 1785, Hoffmeister, his publisher, demanded that he write something easier to play and with more popular appeal or he would not pay him. Fortunately, Mozart refused and Hoffmeister conceded. Mozart not only kept his money but also produced the E-flat Piano Quartet nine months later. A wiser publisher, Artaria, published both quartets the following year.

Hoffmeister's objections surely stemmed from the fact that the Viennese of 1786 had not yet heard this combination of instruments or such emotional intensity in their Hausmusik. Because Mozart's piano quartets are now such a revered part of the chamber music canon, we sometimes forget what

groundbreaking material they were. It took Beethoven to experiment further with the form and Schumann and Brahms to continue it.

The exploration of the concerto technique within the context of chamber music was simply too much for musically conservative Vienna. Earlier keyboard and string music had used the keyboard merely as the continuo or bass part to accompany solo string lines, but Mozart gave the piano a new and daring significance. Such a modern invention apparently rendered the Viennese impervious to the heavenly qualities of the E-flat Piano Quartet. While the palette of the E-flat Piano Quartet is sunnier than that of the Mozart's G Minor Piano Quartet, the work is no less subtle and complex. Many pianists, in particular, find it even more so.

A stark opening soon leads to the highly developed first and second themes of the first movement Allegro. A final coda wraps up the movement with a fugue based on the second theme.

The Larghetto is a crowning moment in this piece and even in Mozart's entire canon. In it, he combines his instrumental and vocal genius in an elaborate working out of themes in an operatic way. The piano is the diva of the movement.

The piano is no less virtuosic in the last movement Allegretto with its challenging runs. The movement is also an achievement in melodic development that supports its fame and admiration. Truly, Mozart cast the piano in a new light in the E-flat Piano Quartet.



**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**  
**Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 1 (1822)**

*(~30 minutes)*



Mendelssohn's few critics suggest that he missed the mark of greatness because of his birthright as a member of the wealthy bourgeoisie. That Mendelssohn was free of the impoverishment so often associated with musical careers and that he wore his genius lightly should not obscure his greatness. It would seem a harsh sentence for a composer whose particular talent is unmatched, so much so that Robert Schumann, in an 1840 edition of *Neue Zeitschrift*, called him the "Mozart of the 19th century."

Yet it was Beethoven that Mendelssohn most admired. He even expressed a concern to his composition teacher, Carl Freidrich Zelter, that he might be perceived as an imitator of the earlier master. Such was not the case with Mendelssohn who carried on the tradition of great music in his own way. By the time he was twenty, he would conduct the first performance of St. Matthew's Passion since Bach's death in 1750 as well as compose his famous Octet, the first two of his six great string quartets, the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the first of the two string quintets that would punctuate the beginning and end of his career.

Anti-Semitic trends already evident in the mid-19th century, including Wagner's notorious essay, *Judaism in Music*, limited the spread of Mendelssohn's music, and the Nazi era completely suppressed it. His memorial in Leipzig was destroyed in 1936 by the Fascists. Fortunately today his music has been restored to its rightfully high place in history. In his impressive book, *The Romantic Generation*, Charles Rosen calls Mendelssohn "the greatest child prodigy the history of Western music has ever known." Liszt compared him to Bach.

Mendelssohn's three piano quartets, composed between 1822 and 1825, were his first works to be published and clearly established him as a child prodigy. The Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 1, dedicated to Prince Antoni Radziwill, was completed in October of 1822 when Mendelssohn was a mere thirteen years of age.

Interestingly, all three movements of the Op. 1 Piano Quartet are in C minor except for the second movement Adagio. Mendelssohn also favored the minor key in all of his concertos, a fact that may reflect his inner life as well as his place in the Romantic spirit of the 19th century.

The first movement, despite its lively tempo marking of Allegro vivace, has its ominous moments. Along with the challenging piano part, each instrument clearly has its moments in the sun as Mendelssohn clearly establishes themes and elaborates upon them. The sweet sadness of the second movement Adagio grows profound yet lightens again from time to time. Brilliance and speed shape the third movement Scherzo with its virtuosic demands for all four instruments and notably for the piano. A quieter Trio section intervenes before a return to the lively tempo of the opening. The fourth and final movement, marked Allegro moderato, is a brilliant culmination of all forces in its fully developed themes and definitive ending.



**Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**  
**Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47 (1842)**

*(~55 minutes)*



Central to Schumann's music is the reflection of his so-called "split personality," that is, the free and happy Florestan side and the restrained and pensive Eusebius side, so named after the imaginary characters that Schumann created to express his life. How much this reflects his own mental illness resulting in his attempted suicide in 1854 by a leap into the icy Rhine and his death two years later in a mental institution, we shall leave to the psychiatrists. What we need to study is the glorious result of his compositional efforts despite, not because of, his sufferings. We might note, however, that Schumann was subject to the well-known conflict of two artists in a marriage, this time somewhat in reverse of Gustav and Alma Mahler or Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath.

Schumann was preoccupied with chamber music between 1841 and 1843. This period, following his marriage to Clara Wieck in September of 1841, was marked by the extremes of happiness and pain that beset Schumann all his life. He was aware of being in Clara's shadow but suffered much from any separation from her as she pursued her active career. When she returned from a month-long trip to Copenhagen in April 1841, he set to work on three string quartets followed in the fall by the Piano Quintet, the Piano Quartet, the Andante and Variations for two pianos, two cellos, and horn (published later as his Op. 46 piece for two pianos), and the Piano Trio in A Minor.

The Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47 was completed in October of 1842 and concluded Schumann's year-long creative burst of chamber music that also included his Piano Quintet and his three Op. 41 string quartets. It was written for Count Matvei, an obviously accomplished amateur cellist, but given its premiere by professional musicians in Leipzig on December 8, 1844. The pianist was Clara Schumann.

The brief but riveting Sostenuto assai that opens Schumann's Piano Quartet quickly gives way to the powerful and expressive Allegro ma non troppo that dominates the first movement with its recurring themes and pulsing rhythm maintained by the piano. We have a momentary return to the Sostenuto before the themes are restated and developed in a livelier Allegro section which, after a sustained moment, leads to the thrilling Più agitato that concludes the movement.

The staccatos of the second movement Scherzo are interrupted twice by two more sustained Trio sections before the movement wisps into thin air. Then we are taken into the heaven of the Andante cantabile with its moving lyricism for each instrument in turn. The opening cello song is unforgettable, but the violin, viola, and piano all have their special moments.

The wonderful Finale seems to combine the power of the first movement with the lyricism of the third movement and the liveliness of the Scherzo. The masterful writing of the Piano Quartet is some of Schumann's best.

*Program Notes Credits*

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*Lucy Miller Murray is the author of Chamber Music: An Extensive Guide for Listeners published by Rowman & Littlefield*

**Note**

As a favor to your fellow concertgoers, please remember to turn off your cell phones. If you feel you might have a cough coming on, please try to unwrap any lozenges before the concert begins or between movements.



## Artists

Since 2003 the **OMNI PIANO QUARTET** has brought extensive and diverse experience and expression to three centuries of chamber music literature while delighting audiences at the Canaan Chamber Music Festival, the Red Bank Chamber Music Society, CUNY/Staten Island, and other venues. Its members explore the wide variety of music in their medium with all its combinations and expressive possibilities.

Violinist **SUZANNE ORNSTEIN** is a graduate of the University of Michigan and the Yale School of Music. She is a founding member of the Arden Trio, a piano trio that has been performing concerts and residencies throughout the United States and Europe ever since its 1981 New York debut as a winner of Concert Artists Guild International Competition. Ms Ornstein's many musical interests have led her to tour with a variety of artists and ensembles, including as concertmaster of the Coffee Club Orchestra for Garrison Keillor's American Radio Company. This ensemble went on to become the resident orchestra for City Center's prestigious Encore Series and has been featured on the PBS series "Great Performances". Ms Ornstein has also served as concertmaster of New York City's Chorale Society, the New York Pops, the American Symphony Orchestra and the Little Orchestra Society among many others. She has an extensive discography as ensemble leader with Dawn Upshaw, Audra MacDonald and Barbara Cook among many others. She has also been a long-time substitute with the New York Philharmonic.

Violist **RONALD CARBONE** enjoys a diverse musical life encompassing Chamber music, recording, and solo performances. He is principal violist of The American Ballet Theatre Orchestra and an associate member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. He was the violist in the Portsmouth Chamber Ensemble, recipients of the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music Award, and the Griffes String Quartet and Lexington Trio, recipients of the Artists International Award. He was violist in the Composers String Quartet and is a frequent guest violist with Spectrum Concerts Berlin. He was a member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Barcelona City Orchestra. He is currently on the faculty of Smith College and has recordings on Naxos, CRI, Urlicht,

Albany, and Reference Records. Mr Carbone is also an ensemble member of the New York Chamber Music Festival and the Rose Colored Glasses Ensemble.

**PETER SANDERS**, cello, is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music. Mr. Sanders has been a member of the New York City Ballet Orchestra since 1999 (for which he has served as Acting Principal), performs with the Riverside Symphony, the Stamford Symphony and has performed and recorded as a guest artist with the Perspectives Ensemble. He has toured Southeast Asia twice with the New York Symphonic Ensemble and as concerto soloist with the group performed in concerts in Taipei and Singapore. He is Artistic Director of the Central Vermont Chamber Music Festival, which had its inaugural season in 1993. Mr. Sanders was a winner of the 1998 Artists International award as a member of the Hollaender Ensemble and is currently a member of the Ariadne Trio. He has participated in many summer festivals across the United States. As a studio musician Mr. Sanders has recorded for a variety of popular artists including Pat Metheny, Jewel, Kathie Lee Gifford, Andy Bey and Carlinhos Brown. He can be heard on the Delos, Muse, Bridge, RCA Victor-Red Seal, New World, On the Lamb and KOCH International Classics labels. Radio and television broadcasts include WQXR, APM's "Performance Today", PBS and Vermont Public Radio.

Pianist **THOMAS SCHMIDT** has had a multifaceted career as pianist, teacher, organist, conductor and composer. He is a founding member of the Arden Trio, which has toured the country and recorded extensively for over 30 years. He was professor of music at Concordia College in Bronxville, NY, for over twenty years until 1990. Since then he has been director of music at Saint Peter's Lutheran Church in Manhattan where is organist, choir director and composer of weekly liturgical music. His duties there include directing the annual Good Friday performances of Bach's St. Matthew and St. John Passions and organizing the Tuesday Classical Concert Series. He is the conductor of the Long Island Symphonic Choral Association and assistant conductor of the Gregg Smith Singers. His doctoral degree is from Yale, his master's from the University of Wisconsin.