

Sunday, April 2, 2006, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

## Brentano String Quartet



Mark Steinberg, *violin*  
Serena Canin, *violin*  
Misha Amory, *viola*  
Nina Maria Lee, *violoncello*

*with*

Hsin-Yun Huang, *viola*



*This performance is made possible, in part, by the generous support of the members of the  
Cal Performances Producers Circle and Friends of Cal Performances.*

*Cal Performances thanks our Centennial Season Sponsor, Wells Fargo.*

Sunday, April 2, 2006, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

# Brentano String Quartet

with  
Hsin-Yun Huang, *viola*

## PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) String Quintet in B-flat major, K. 174 (1773)

Allegro moderato  
Adagio  
Menuetto ma allegretto  
Allegro

Mozart String Quintet in D major, K. 593 (1790)

Larghetto — Allegro  
Adagio  
Menuetto (Allegretto)  
Finale (Allegro)

## INTERMISSION

Mozart String Quintet in G minor, K. 516 (1787)

Allegro  
Menuetto (Allegretto)  
Adagio ma non troppo  
Adagio — Allegro

*The Brentano String Quartet appears by arrangement with  
David Rowe Artists, Marblehead, Massachusetts.*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

String Quintet in B-flat major, K. 174 (1773)

Mozart wrote his first Viola Quintet, K. 174, in December 1773, when he was barely 17 years old. Probably the very earliest works for which he is enduringly remembered date from around this time; his 25th (G minor) and 29th (A major) symphonies were written in 1773–1774, his motet *Exsultate, jubilate* in 1773, and the violin concertos were all composed in 1775. At this time the viola quintet as a form was in its infancy; Mozart may have written this work as a response, or reaction, to a group of viola quintets composed by Michael Haydn, Joseph's brother and Mozart's good friend. In a larger sense, classical-period chamber music had barely begun to emerge from its role as light entertainment, and to be treated as a serious expressive medium: Joseph Haydn composed his first great string quartets, opus 20, between 1772 and 1774, and Mozart's first quartet masterpiece would not be written until nine years later.

This viola quintet, on the one hand, bears the stamp of a light, genial divertimento; on the other hand one senses a brilliant young composer just starting to test his wings, to investigate his own potential for surprise and innovation. Consider the opening melody: cheerful and pleasant, it has its head bitten off after a few bars by a brusque tutti re-tort; after this, the first violin more tentatively finds its way to a more natural cadence, but that moment is simultaneously the re-launching of this melody, this time in the first viola. This dovetailing of beginning and end, which was to become a hallmark of Mozart's technique, is an effect we can too easily take for granted; in the hands of a duller composer, this moment would be padded out with an extra bar of filler to make the phrases more regular. Other striking moments in this movement include an absolute silence after the second theme, followed by ominous octaves in the lower voices, and a gradual, difficult return to a sunnier climate; and the teasing dialogue between the first violin and the supporting voices at the end of the exposition.

The slow movement is solemn and lovely, and is distinguished by the use of mutes and by a simple idea played in unison—first it is the melody, then it becomes the gentle accompaniment for a more expressive melody in the first violin. Especially noteworthy in this movement is a sudden, anguished outbreak in the second half of the movement, which

leads through a series of contorted suspensions before the music finds its way back to the moment of return.

The last two movements seem to have been more effortful in the writing, for we have earlier, rejected versions both for the Trio section of the *Minuet*, and for the entire Finale. In both cases, the replacement is a more successful and sophisticated composition; in the case of the Trio, the quintet divides up into a bright, strong group which is echoed teasingly by a shadow group. In the Finale, we have an especially interesting glimpse into Mozart's creative process: the bravura figure that opens the movement in the first draft survives in the final version, but is “demoted” to the role of a later transitional idea, and a more innocent, tripping melody becomes the first theme. This movement has an unusual number of carefree melodic ideas, and underscores more than the other movements the divertimento-like quality of the work as a whole.

© 2006 by Misha Amory

String Quintet in D major, K. 593 (1790)

Mozart's D-major Quintet, K. 593, opens with what might be a dialogue between Virtues, a back and forth exchange between Truth and Beauty. The cello alone sets forth the position of Truth, firm and regal, yet austere, and in response the upper four instruments offer a more sensual, elegant, and beguiling response on behalf of Beauty. The conversation continues throughout the *Larghetto* introduction, and the cello gradually gives up some of its certainty, eventually joining the upper parts. The introduction comes to a halt in an almost teasing manner and as the *Allegro* begins the music becomes Haydnesque in its wit and flourish. And in fact it is easy to imagine here that Mozart is both paying tribute to and aiming to delight the older composer whom he both revered and loved and who, it turns out, is known to have played viola in a reading of the piece. The theme here is derived from the initial response of the violin in the introduction, as if to suggest that Wit and Humor are closely allied with and contained within Beauty. When the cadence arrives, the first violin remains a beat behind the others, cheeky to the end. In fact, it turns out that this very firm cadence is not enough, perhaps because of this, to close the idea and an extra, quietly jocular four bars is added to punctuate the idea more appropriately. Surprisingly, these seemingly gratuitous,

tossed-in bars become vital to the spinning out of the movement's argument. Ingenuity abounds: the repeated notes that end the very first statement in the introduction completely take over the texture at times, and each of the opening phrases of the *Allegro* winds up interwoven with itself. The playful contrapuntal exchanges make this, in a sense, connoisseurs' music, and yet the character of elevated banter and general *joie de vivre* is easily captivating. As the music evaporates into stuttering repeated notes at what should be the end of the movement the *Larghetto* makes a reappearance and is further developed. The music threatens to get deeply serious, but the first phrase of the *Allegro* sweeps in again to toss all aside with a wink; here the loud cadence with the first violin limping behind serves to end, the "corrective" bars taken out, reminiscent of the ending of Haydn's "Joke" quartet.

The *Adagio* is filled with delicate grace, the main theme gently opening up to be answered by supple sighs floating downwards. These sighs then get adorned with ornaments and are accompanied by the same balletic rhythm that closes the introduction of the first movement. (The introduction turns out to contribute material to each of the other movements.) Unbidden and unexpected, a storm intrudes, with throbbing triplets in the inner voices. The first violin sings a dramatic, pained aria and the cello creates a turbulent underpinning with gasping trills. After the initial material reappears, the once gentle sighs become infused with the energy of the storm. This leads into one of the strangest and most affecting passages in all of Mozart's output, infinitely vulnerable and fragile. The violas cling together for comfort, tenderly pulsating and gliding back toward the tonic. The other three parts seem to float by each other, three wandering spirits clinging only to hope to find their way home. Yet, as if set right by a hand invisible to mortals, once the two violins cross paths all parts find themselves together again in the security of the opening music. The coda integrates the twice-heard storm music into the general affect of the movement; the triplets and trills, once so menacing, now glisten.

Genial and clever, the theme of the *Menuetto* teases by seeming possibly displaced by a beat. In a movement that should dance straightforwardly in three the sense of meter is obfuscated by figures in various voices starting on each of the three beats of the measure. This disorientation is heightened by repetition of accents on the off-beats which are only corrected at the very end of the phrase. The inher-

ent promise in this displacement is fulfilled in the second part of the dance when the theme is played in canon, the voices apart by one beat, with the second entrance now on the strong beat of the bar. The trio is almost naïve in character and hearkens back to the introduction of the first movement. The cello's earlier opening figure is expanded to become an effervescent arpeggio leaping over two and a half octaves, and the response could hardly be more charming in its plainness. Although there are tiny hints of chromaticism, the urbane wit of the *Menuetto* is completely absent, and the trio is, ironically, all the more humorous for it.

Although it was known for quite some time in a spurious version where its contour was altered from a chromatic descent to a zigzag pattern, the unusual, long, slippery upbeat to the theme of the last movement is integral to its character. It is derived from the first violin responses to the cello in the introduction to the first movement and gives the impression of a bird alighting upon the water, its nearly weightless landing setting off lively ripples on the surface. As in the first movement, the amiable character of the themes seems almost to belie the startling compositional craft and contrapuntal complexity of the movement. It is hard to decide whose joy might have been greater at that early reading of the piece—Mozart's at being able to flaunt his mastery and agility for Haydn, or the older master's delight at the genius before him.

© 2006 by Mark Steinberg

### String Quintet in G minor, K. 516 (1787)

Seventeen-eighty-seven, the year in which Mozart wrote the G-minor Quintet, K. 516, was marked for the composer by misfortune and frustration over his lack of success in Vienna, a relatively fallow period compositionally, and his father's serious illness. Mozart wrote to his father: "I have now made a habit of being prepared in all the affairs of life for the worst. As death, when we come to consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed, during the last few years, such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind, that his image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling."

Musical keys undoubtedly have strong psychological associations, and G minor for Mozart, as evidenced as well in his 40th Symphony, K. 550, and Piano Quartet, K. 478, suggests agitation, despera-

tion, and confrontations with anguish. Later in his life it is to be the key in *The Magic Flute* in which Pamina sings "Ah, I feel the joy of love has gone for evermore! Never will happiness return to my heart! See, Tamino, see these tears that flow, beloved, for you alone. If you do not feel love's yearning I must seek peace in the grave."

The G-minor Quintet begins with the upper three instruments untethered by the bass, ungrounded as well, full of a restless, yet quiet agitation; the main theme is punctuated by breathless rests, precariously balanced between song and speech. And, although it reaches upward several times, it is the pain of its falling that is its most salient characteristic. An even more brooding repetition is offered in the lower three instruments, the shadow version, even more deeply inward due to the darkness of the register. Classical-period tradition leads us to expect a contrasting second theme, by rights in the relative major. However, when the second theme arrives here the music remains in the tonic G minor at first, boxed-in, without relief. Although the theme does eventually find its way toward B-flat major, we can no longer trust the sense of opening up, tainted as it is by its initial failure to escape. This theme also has an interesting physiognomy, each of its component parts introduced by a dramatic leap upwards which then fails to take hold (accompanied by gasping repeated notes, even more unsettling than at the opening). The third of these is painfully dissonant, and yet Mozart indicates only a subdued accent on it (*mf*), less a crying out than a painful, yet necessary, sense of restraint. This dissonant leap evolves into a repeated protest in the development section, eventually letting go into a long and chromatic, yet completely inevitable, sequence over a prolonged pedal point in the cello back to the opening material. The coda of the movement contains what may well be the most poignant moment of all. When the second theme is stated now, that third, painfully dissonant leap is there no longer. There is a sense of defeat, of resignation, and the absence of protest hurts more than the struggle ever could have.

The *Menuetto* movement is no courtly dance, but rather a defiant proclamation. Although this type of movement is not unknown in other Mozart's works (for example, the *Menuetto* of the previously mentioned G-minor Symphony, or of the D-minor Quartet, K. 421), here violent chords on what should be a weak beat of the measure, answered by silence on the ensuing strong beats, add a sense of the terrible, of cruel and angry gods destroying the

possibility of any solace in dance. When the contrasting trio arrives it is based on the closing figure of the *Menuetto*, an imagined alternate version of where the music might lead us. As this tender theme plays itself out in the violas at the conclusion of each part of the trio it is paired with a musical ellipsis in the violins and cello, trailing off into the realm of dreaming. Reality reappears with the return of the *Menuetto* and the movement ends without ceremony, quiet and bleak.

The *Adagio ma non troppo* shifts into E-flat major, all the instruments muted for a translucent, silken timbre. An infinitely touching movement, it plays on the paradoxical beauty of sadness. In the poem "Sorrows of the Moon," from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire writes "And when she happens, in her somnolence, / to shed a secret tear that falls to earth, / some eager poet, sleep's sworn enemy, / cups his hand and catches that pale tear / which shimmers like a shard of opal there, / and hides it from the sun's eye in his heart." (Translation by Richard Howard.) Here, Mozart is that poet.

In a piece filled with extraordinary moments surely one of the most unexpected is the appearance of what appears at first to be another slow movement following the *Adagio ma non troppo*. The mutes come off the instruments, the pulsating repeated eighth notes from the opening movement return, and the first violin sings a tragic aria. It is a rhetorically rich outpouring, with the melody overlapping its own accompaniment, pauses in unexpected places, phrases extended nearly to the point of breaking. The aria goes on long enough that the listener almost gives up hope of there being any catharsis when at long last there is a reprieve, and a joyous, major-key *Allegro* finally arrives. We feel here the sort of rediscovery of possibility described by many who endure glimpses of the void beyond. The astute listener may recognize here themes which seem to look backward and borrow vocabulary from earlier, more troubled parts of the piece. Perhaps most telling among these is the revisitation of the second theme of the first movement, now buoyant, no longer weighed down, transformed. The change of perspective in this final movement is hard-won through examination of demons. And now, to quote Jorge Luis Borges (from a lecture on blindness), "happiness does not need to be transformed; happiness is its own end."

©2006 by Mark Steinberg

Since its inception in 1992, the **Brentano String Quartet** has been singled out for its technical brilliance, musical insight and stylistic elegance. Within a year's time, the Brentano String Quartet claimed the distinction of being named to three major awards, winning the first Cleveland Quartet Award, the 1995 Naumburg Chamber Music Award and the 10th Annual Martin E. Segal Award. For their first appearance in Great Britain at Wigmore Hall, the Brentano was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award for the most outstanding debut in 1997. The Quartet became the first quartet-in-residence at Princeton University in 1999, and served as quartet-in-residence at New York University from 1995 to 2003. In 1995, they were chosen by The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to participate in the inaugural season of Chamber Music Society Two—a program designed for outstanding emerging artists and chamber musicians. In addition, the Quartet had the honor of being quartet-in-residence at London's Wigmore Hall for the 2000–2001 season.

The Brentano String Quartet has appeared with pianist Mitsuko Uchida at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, at the Library of Congress, at Lincoln Center, and in major cities in Germany, Italy, and Japan. The Quartet has also collaborated with Jessye Norman in her 1998 Carnegie Hall recital, as well as in the ancient amphitheater of Epidavros in Greece. In fall 1998, the Quartet performed to great acclaim in various venues across Australia, including the prestigious Sydney Opera House, and were featured in a *Live from Lincoln Center* broadcast. The Quartet has made appearances in major musical centers in North America in New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, La Jolla, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Toronto, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Los Angeles, Berkeley, La Jolla, Baltimore, Dallas, Houston, New Orleans, Kansas City and Boston. The Quartet has also appeared in such European venues as Royal Festival Hall in London and the Accademia de Santa Cecilia in Rome, and in Madrid, Salzburg, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Cologne, Florence, Geneva, Stuttgart and Paris.

The Quartet's recent and upcoming festival appearances include the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, Festival Divonne in France, the Bath Festival in England, the Kuhmo International Chamber Music Festival in Finland, Aspen, Chamber Music Northwest, the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festi-

val, Chautauqua, Caramoor International Music Festival, the Taos School of Music and the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara.

Highlights of the Quartet's 2005–2006 season include appearances in New York (Carnegie Hall with Richard Goode and Lincoln Center), Houston (a continuing partnership with Da Camera of Texas), Berkeley, Honolulu, San Antonio, Amherst and Caramoor, as well as a residency at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The Quartet is named after Antonie Brentano, whom many scholars believe to have been Beethoven's mysterious "Immortal Beloved," and to whom he wrote his famous love confession. The Quartet maintains a strong interest in the music of our time and has commissioned and premiered works by Milton Babbitt, Chou Wen-chung, Charles Wuorinen, Bruce Adolphe, Steven Mackey, and Jonathan Dawe. In addition, to celebrate its 10th anniversary the quartet commissioned 10 composers to write brief companion pieces to Bach's *The Art of Fugue*. The Quartet has collaborated in recent years with Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mark Strand, commissioning poetry for performances of Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Christ*, and in the 2004–2005 season premiered a program combining Mr. Strand's poetry with works of Mozart and Webern.

Since 1993, **Hsin-Yun Huang** has been firmly established as one of the leading violists of her generation. Virtually simultaneously, in that year she won the top prizes at the ARD International Music Competition in Munich and the highly prestigious Bunkamura Orchard Hall Award, which included a scholarship grant and concerto and recital appearances in Japan. Ms. Huang was also the youngest-ever gold medalist in the 1988 Lionel Tertis International Competition on the Isle of Man. As a result of these and other successes, she has been telecast in concerto appearances with the Bavarian Radio Orchestra in Munich, the Zagreb Soloists in Paris and the Tokyo Philharmonic in Tokyo; other significant appearances include live broadcast performances with the Berlin Radio Symphony, the Russian State Philharmonic and the National Symphony of Taiwan among others.

A native of Taiwan, Ms. Huang currently resides in New York and is an active soloist and chamber musician in the United States, the Far East and Europe. She is in constant demand in her native Taiwan, appearing annually with the

National Symphony of Taiwan. Ms. Huang also recently appeared in a nationally televised solo recital for President Chen Shui-Bian. She has participated in various prominent chamber music festivals, including the Spoleto Festival; Chamber Music Northwest, the Marlboro Music Festival; Prussia Cove, England; the El Paso Chamber Music Festival; the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival, Festival de Divonne in France; the Newport Festival; and many others. She has collaborated with such artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Jaime Laredo, Joshua Bell, Joseph Suk, Menahem Pressler, Joseph Silverstein, Gary Hoffman and Michael Tree.

Ms. Huang was a member of the Borromeo String Quartet from 1994 to 2000. With the Quartet, she participated in such festivals as the Spoleto Festival in Italy; the Bravo! Festival in Vail, Colorado; the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival; the Prague Spring Festival; the Orlando Music Festival in the Netherlands; the Stavanger Festival in Norway and Chamber Music Northwest in Portland; and in such prominent venues as New York's Alice Tully Hall, London's Wigmore Hall, Berlin's Philharmonie, Japan's Casals Hall, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. In 1998 the

Borromeo String Quartet was awarded the prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award and was chosen by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to be members of CMS Two, in recognition of the Quartet's place in the next generation of world-class chamber musicians. As part of CMS Two, Ms. Huang and the Borromeo Quartet were featured in a *Live from Lincoln Center* telecast. Recent season highlights include a collaborative tour with the Orion String Quartet and the Bill T. Jones Dance Company (under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center); a performance of Hindemith's complete works for viola; and a European tour with the Brentano String Quartet.

Hsin-Yun Huang came to England at the age of 14 to study at the Yehudi Menuhin School with David Takeno. She continued her studies at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia with Michael Tree, where she earned her Bachelor of Music degree, and at The Juilliard School with Samuel Rhodes, where she earned her Master of Music. She currently serves on the faculties of The Juilliard School and the Mannes College of Music in New York.