Incredible Decades (2019) Disc 2.

1–3 Piano Trio in d minor, Hob. XV: 23 (1795)
JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)
Molto andante
Adagio ma non troppo
Finale: Vivace

GILBERT KALISH, *piano*; ADAM BARNETT-HART, *violin*; BROOK SPELTZ, *cello*

4–6 Trio in B-flat Major for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, op. 11 (1797)
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Allegro con brio
Adagio
Tema con variazione: Allegretto
(on "Pria ch'io l'impegno")

TOMMASO LONQUICH, *clarinet*; DAVID FINCKEL, *cello*; WU HAN, *piano*

7–10 String Quintet in E-flat Major, K. 614 (1791)
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)
Allegro di molto
Andante
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Allegro

SOOVIN KIM, AARON BOYD, *violins*; PAUL NEUBAUER, PIERRE LAPOINTE, *violas*; BROOK SPELTZ, *cello*

Mozart's death in 1791 marked an abrupt end to one of history's most incandescent artistic careers. The following year, the twenty-two-year-old Beethoven traveled to Vienna, where, under Haydn's tutelage, he inherited—and then transformed—the Classical tradition. The second volume of Music@Menlo *LIVE* 2019 offers a snapshot of the eighteenth century's final decade, when Haydn, the elder statesman of the Classical era, gave way to the voice of a new century.

Liner notes by Patrick Castillo © 2019

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)
Piano Trio in d minor, Hob. XV: 23 (1795)

As with his influence on the symphony and the string quartet, Joseph Haydn played an important role in the piano trio's rise to prominence in Western musical culture, leaving a catalog of no fewer than forty-five such works. Haydn's piano trios reflect the heightened awareness of the nuances of writing for particular instruments that helped define the Classical idiom. At the time of his first trios, the combination of piano, violin, and cello had not yet become established as a standard chamber ensemble; some of the earliest piano trios have been accurately described as keyboard sonatas with violin and cello accompaniment. (In 1775, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach designated a set of his own trios "Sonatas for Piano, which may equally well be played solo, or accompanied by violin and violoncello.") But Haydn developed the piano trio into a sophisticated conversation among three voices. Consequently, the medium's popularity grew rapidly, with piano trio music becoming an essential part of any amateur musician's library by the end of the eighteenth century.

The Trio in d minor, Hob. XV: 23, dates from the mid-1790s, the late period of Haydn's career, by which time he had thoroughly transformed Western music and achieved international celebrity. Yet the immensity of his accomplishments notwithstanding, he continued, tirelessly, to innovate. Having already redefined the symphonic genre over the course of ninety-three symphonies, he composed his final twelve (the celebrated *London* symphonies) between 1791 and 1795, setting a new standard for orchestral writing yet again. The composer who could have laid claim as the "father of the string quartet" on the strength of his Opuses 20 (1772), 33 (1781), and 54 (1788) returned to the quartet medium throughout the 1790s, making arguably his most imaginative contributions to the genre (Opp. 64, 74, 76, and 77). Similarly, the D minor Trio reveals a composer, despite his having essentially patented the genre, unwilling to cease with experimenting.

The Trio begins not with a sonata-form movement (as Haydn's own body of work had established as the norm) but with a theme and variations. The theme begins with a striking gesture, as if putting the listener on notice of strange delights that lie ahead. An ominous tune slithers upward in quiet octaves, interrupted by a *forzando* exclamation, and then descends back to its starting point. After a pregnant silence, a consequent phrase, an utterly logical response to the opening, somehow with breathtaking nimbleness turns the theme from menacing d minor to a cheerful wink. Following a repeat, the second half of the theme counters the opening octaves with a richly nuanced dialogue between all three instruments, each contributing a distinct line to the overall texture.

Theme-and-variations movements typically diverge incrementally from the theme from one variation to the next. Haydn's first variation, instead, presents the ear with a startling departure from brooding d minor to resounding D major. The following variation returns both to d minor and to octaves. The storm clouds quietly gathered in the Trio's opening here give way to thunder and lightning; staccato droplets of rain persist even as the key turns to sunny F major. Next comes a triumphant return to D major. The remainder of the movement similarly vacillates between major and minor harmonies, spanning a variety of textures and expressive characters.

The Trio's second movement, marked *Adagio ma non troppo*, begins with a cantabile reverie in the piano, decorated with fanciful trills and turns, soon colored by hazy strings. The violin takes up the melody, supported by a warm cello line and surrounded by gentle piano arpeggios. In terms of character, this movement exhibits more concentrated focus than the first. Ten years earlier, on the occasion of the first performance of Mozart's six string quartets dedicated to Haydn, the elder composer famously remarked to Leopold Mozart, "Before God and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name; he has taste and, furthermore, the most profound knowledge of composition." If ever Mozart influenced Haydn, as Haydn so influenced him, its evidence is in such delicate marvels as this *Adagio*. It echoes those Mozartian slow movements that biographer Maynard Solomon described as "inhabit[ing] a world of plenitude, [in which] beauty is everywhere for the taking…[T]he beauties succeed each other with a breathtaking rapidity, their outpouring of episodic interpolations suggesting that we need not linger over any single moment of beauty, for beauty is abundant, it is to be found 'here, too,' and 'there, as well.'"

Following the celestial *Adagio*, Haydn giddily returns the listener to earth for the *Vivace* finale, a movement brimming with the composer's trademark humor. "Misplaced" accents, unexpected pauses, and harmonic chicanery abound. Complementing its buoyant good cheer, the movement offers an inside joke for future music majors too: here in the finale, rather than at the work's outset, Haydn at last presents (what would later be termed) a sonata-form movement.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Trio in B-flat Major for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, op. 11 (1797)

Ludwig van Beethoven's Clarinet Trio, op. 11, dates from the composer's early years in Vienna, where he had traveled in 1792 to study with Haydn. This period produced numerous early masterpieces that established Beethoven's reputation among the Viennese culturati. Between 1795 and 1800, he completed the Opus 1 Piano Trios; thirteen piano sonatas, including the iconic *Pathétique*; the Opus 18 String Quartets; and the First Symphony, among other important works. The Trio is one of several chamber works with winds that Beethoven wrote during this time: the Opus 16 Quintet for Winds and Piano; the Opus 25 Serenade for Flute, Violin, and Viola; and the popular Opus 20 Septet. Though not aiming for the same weight as the more major opuses of this period, these works nevertheless betray as skilled a hand as penned the seminal Opus 18.

This early set of chamber works reveals Beethoven still beholden to the Classical style inherited from Haydn and Mozart, which he would extend with his audacious later works. Haydn and Mozart catalyzed the evolution of chamber music in the eighteenth century from parlor meringue to a sophisticated dialogue between individual voices. These works reflect a similar aesthetic value, their conversational nature moreover enhanced by the contrasting timbres of different instrument families (keyboard, winds, strings).

While the impetus for scoring the Trio for what was, at the time, a peculiar combination of instruments remains unclear, it inevitably calls to mind Mozart's *Kegelstatt* Trio for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano. Beethoven likely intended the Trio for the Bohemian clarinet virtuoso Joseph Beer. At the urging of his publisher, Beethoven later prepared a version for the standard—and more salable— trio ensemble of violin, cello, and piano.

Beethoven's exploitation of the Trio's spectrum of timbral possibilities injects the *Allegro con brio* with a vitality arguably lost in the arrangement with violin. Following the opening declamation, stated in emphatic octaves by the full ensemble, the first theme group unfolds over a spirited exchange between all three instruments. The clarinet comes to the fore to croon the sweet second theme above a restless staccato accompaniment in the cello. A witty, syncopated exchange signals the conclusion of the exposition. The development section is compact but dense. Beginning quietly in the unexpected tonality of D-flat major, it proceeds to traverse broad harmonic terrain before a brilliant scale in the piano heralds the return to the home key.

The *Adagio* begins with one of Beethoven's most inspired cello solos and is soon given over to a tender operatic duet between the cello and clarinet. The rhetorical quality of each voice's melodic ideas further heightens the sense of their dramatic identity. The final movement is an affable set of nine variations on the aria "*Pria ch'io l'impegno*" ("Before I Begin, I Must Eat") from Joseph Weigl's opera *L'amor marinaro*. Largely forgotten today, Weigl was the composer of more than thirty operas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; Beethoven's selection of a Weigl theme for these variations attests to their popularity in their day.

Beethoven dedicated the Opus 11 Trio to Countess Maria Wilhelmine von Thun, a prominent arts patron who had supported Gluck, Haydn, and Mozart, and whom Mozart had considered "the most charming and most lovable lady I have ever met." Thun's son-in-law was the Austrian court official Prince Karl Lichnowsky, Beethoven's most important patron during his early Vienna period. The countess's weakness for Beethoven's music is recorded by a Lichnowsky acquaintance who observed Thun "on her knees in front of Beethoven who reclined on the sofa, begging him to play something, which he refused to do." Despite the young virtuoso's nonchalance on this occasion, the countess's enthusiasm was eventually rewarded with a delectable Trio whose lightheartedness belies its sophisticated craftsmanship.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)
String Quintet in E-flat Major, K. 614 (1791)

The String Quintet in E-flat Major, K. 614, marks the last of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's six viola quintets (that is, string quartets with added viola), a genre he chiefly innovated. (Haydn never composed such a quintet.) With the addition of a second viola broadening the range of sonic possibilities, the ensemble gives wing to the singular melodic beauty and textural clarity that distinguish Mozart's music. Having two violas moreover allows the instrument a turn in the spotlight, uncommon at this time for the string quartet's traditional middle voice. (Mozart, nota bene, was himself an avid violist, giving him keen insight into the family of instruments and a sensitive ear for inner voices; the string writing in these works is nonpareil.)

Mozart composed the Quintets in D Major, K. 593, and E-flat Major, K. 614, within eight months of his death. They were published posthumously, with the vague announcement upon publication that they were composed "at the earnest solicitation of a musical friend." The score was inscribed to "*un Amatore Ongarese*"—"a Hungarian amateur." The composer's widow surmised that this was the skilled amateur violinist Johann Tost, who had also commissioned a number of Haydn's quartets. Aside from these vague details, little is known surrounding the genesis of these final two quintets. No matter—they are impeccably crafted works whose music can speak for itself.

Though its date of completion—April 12, 1791—places the Quintet in E-flat Major as a "late work," Mozart could hardly have known at the time that he would not survive the year. Indeed, the work betrays nothing of the contemplative, autumnal nature found in the final works of Beethoven, Schubert, or Brahms. On the contrary, the Quintet illustrates the same high Mozartian spirits as found in *Die Zauberflöte*, the comedic singspiel that would premiere that September.

The Quintet's opening measures quickly celebrate the ensemble's distinctive instrumentation: first and second viola introduce the theme, a horn-like hunting call in 6/8 time. Such an unassuming theme—merely a succession of repeated notes, decorated with trills and punctuated by an easy descent—sets the tone for the carefree *Allegro di molto*. Rather than contest the opening melody's cheerfulness, the second theme deepens it, extending the same repeated-note figure into a smiling new legato tune. Throughout, Mozart places each voice, from the brilliant violins to the cello's burnished baritone register, in foreground and background in turn, which results in a broad palette of ensemble colors that belies the movement's thematic simplicity. The central development has new colors yet in store, as vigorous sixteenth notes in the middle strings galvanize wide ascending leaps in the first violin. But for all its textural contrast, the movement's prevailing atmosphere remains untroubled.

Neither does the *Andante* second movement, comprising a placid theme followed by four variations, challenge the work's agreeable tenor. Here, as in the first movement, Mozart's richly varied deployment of the ensemble's five voices fascinates the ear. The *Menuetto* likewise beguiles, featuring as its middle trio section an unpretentious ländler. Again, Mozart's orchestration is the star: first violin presents the melody, thereafter joined by first viola; then both violins and first viola play the tune across two octaves to close the trio. Through subtle but masterful instrumental shading, Mozart elevates simple material to music of exquisite charm.

The spirited *Allegro* finale is charged with an irresistible joie de vivre that masks its technical complexity. The theme, centered on repeated staccato notes, could be heard as a reincarnation of the first movement's opening melody. The movement's expert polyphonic writing is highlighted by a double fugato partway through—a consummate feat of craftsmanship that wondrously only heightens, rather than complicates, the work's disarming character.

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