



**LES
DÉLICES**
DEBRA NAGY, DIRECTOR

November 1, 2019 at 7:30pm

Holy Trinity Lutheran, Akron

November 2, 2019 at 7:30pm

Lakewood Congregational Church, Lakewood

November 3, 2019 at 4:00pm

Plymouth Church UCC, Shaker Heights

MOZART & BEETHOVEN QUINTETS

PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Quintet for piano and winds in Eb, K. 452 (1784)

Ludwig van Beethoven: Seven variations on “God Save the King,” WoO 78 (1803)

Beethoven Quintet for piano and winds in Eb, Op. 16 (1796)

Artists:

*Debra Nagy, oboe | Colin Lawson, clarinet
Wouter Verschuren, bassoon | Todd Williams, horn
Sylvia Berry, fortepiano*

Program Sponsor: Charlotte & Jack Newman

Artist Sponsor for Wouter Verschuren: Ursula Korneitchouk

Artist Sponsor Colin Lawson: Arthur Rotatori

Les Délices is grateful for generous support from the residents of Cuyahoga County through grants from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, and to the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, The Akron Community Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, and others.



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Notes on the Program:

It makes sense: the more specialized your work, the fewer role models you'll have. In fact, you might have to look a bit farther afield (perhaps across an ocean) or even way back (historically speaking) to find examples of work that stands out, inspires you to think differently, challenges you to rise to a new level, or that you simply feel is really worth emulating.

That, in a nutshell, is the inspiration for tonight's program, *Mozart and Beethoven Quintets*. Not only did I want to bring several international guests (British clarinetist Colin Lawson and Dutch bassoonist Wouter Verschuren) to Northeast Ohio to share their incredible musicianship and deep experience with Classical repertoire, but I also wanted to shine light on the original, historical players who inspired Mozart and Beethoven to compose their respective masterpieces for piano and woodwinds. Those virtuoso players of the late 18th Century – figures like the oboist Friedrich Ramm, clarinetist Anton Stadler, bassoonist Georg Wenzel Ritter, and hornists Giovanni Punto and Joseph Leutgeb – were the very players for whom Mozart and Beethoven conceived their Quintets (among other featured works). Their individual musical voices (transmitted in the music they themselves wrote and that was written for them) also set the bar for what we hope to achieve when we play on instruments that they knew so well.

Mozart (1752-1791) was extraordinarily proud of his Quintet K.452. Composed during a particularly productive creative period, the Quintet echoes the sensitive, sophisticated approach to instrumental color, drama, and dialogue that we find in his mature piano concertos. Full of *concertante* elements, the *cadenza a tempo* for all five instruments in the finale is one of the Quintet's true highlights. Mozart event gloated to his father, "I myself think it's the best thing I've ever written. I wish you could have heard it!" (April 10, 1784)

This program also asks the broader question of whether Mozart inspired Beethoven. Beethoven (1770-1827) went so far as to visit Vienna in 1787 with the hope of studying with Mozart, but he had to return to Bonn to take care of his mother, who was seriously ill. Asking whether Mozart was "the great teacher that Beethoven never had" is particularly apt when one considers that Mozart and Beethoven's quintets are actually unique in the repertoire. That is, there are **no other pieces** that share the instrumentation of piano with oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn. Not only do the two quintets share the same unusual instrumentation and key (Eb), but Beethoven also adopted the same large and small-scale forms as Mozart. Both Mozart and Beethoven's Quintets are in three movements: each first movement is in sonata form with a slow introduction, both works have a slow movement in Bb, and both feature a rondo finale.

So where did Beethoven get the idea to compose his 1796 Quintet for winds and piano? After all, Beethoven would not have known Mozart's work from commercially available publications: though an arrangement for piano with violin, viola, and cello was issued posthumously in 1794, K.452 wasn't published in its original instrumentation until 1800. Was Mozart's Quintet somehow circulating in a manuscript copy? Mozart's wife Constanze related an anecdote in 1799 that her husband had sent his autograph score for K.452 to a Polish Count who, seething after a botched commission, shared it without authorization with the publishing house Artaria (who in turn published the 1794 arrangement). It's unclear who this so-called "Polish Count" was, but Mozart's autograph for the Quintet K.452 ended up in the possession of Baron Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz, a Hungarian civil servant living in Vienna. Incidentally, Zmeskall was an amateur cellist and a loyal member of Beethoven's inner circle of friends.



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So, Beethoven likely had a unique opportunity to encounter Mozart's autograph at Zmeskall's home. This would have allowed Beethoven to take note of the formal construction and compositional techniques in Mozart's work – the same elements that he borrowed for his Op. 16 Quintet. Composed while on tour in 1796, the premiere performances in Vienna in 1797 featured Beethoven as the pianist. An early review of Beethoven's Op. 16 quintet found it "brilliant, serious, full of deep expression and character, but sometimes too bold, with occasional rips in the framework." These "occasional rips in the framework," however, seem to have held open very specific opportunities for Beethoven, who was not only establishing his reputation in Vienna as an important composer but also as a virtuoso improviser. As an account of one performance of the Quintet attests, "Beethoven suddenly started improvising [in the last movement], taking the Rondo subject as his theme and entertaining himself and the others for quite some time. It did indeed look very droll to see [his accompanists] expecting to begin at any moment, raising their instruments to their mouths incessantly and then quietly putting them down again. At last Beethoven was satisfied and returned to the rondo. The whole society was enchanted."

When I think about Beethoven poring over the autograph score of Mozart's work for the first time and examining each melodic turn of phrase, I find it tempting to imagine not only what – but who – Beethoven would have heard in his mind's ear before he set out to write his own Quintet. This is particularly interesting when we consider that Beethoven knew the phrasing and individual voices of players like Ramm, Stadler, Ritter, and Punto intimately – and that all of them likely performed Beethoven's Quintet at some point as well.

Finally, a few words about our 18th Century role models and what sorts of sounds and expression their fine examples might encourage us to coax from our own (i.e., their) instruments:

Oboist Friedrich Ramm was the only player to inspire multiple works from Mozart's pen, including the famous Oboe Quartet K.371. Apparently, Ramm was one of Beethoven's irritated accompanists in the Op. 16 Quintet performance cited above.

The great clarinetist Anton Stadler similarly inspired multiple works from Mozart, including the Kegelstadt Trio K.498, the Clarinet Quintet K.581, and the Clarinet Concerto K.622. He also likely participated in the premiere for Mozart's K.452 Quintet in 1784. Here is but one of many rave testimonials about Stadler, "Never would I have thought that a clarinet could be capable of imitating a human voice as closely as it was imitated by you. Truly, your instrument has so soft and so lovely a tone that nobody who has a heart can resist it!" While it's tempting to imagine that Beethoven would have encountered Stadler's playing in Vienna or when they were both touring Europe around 1795, it was clarinetist Joseph Bähr who premiered Beethoven's Op 16 Quintet, the Op 20 Septet, and the Op 71 Sextet. Bähr's performances were described as "absolutely perfect; there will surely be few comparable masters of his instrument."

Not only Mozart would have known bassoonist Georg Wenzel Ritter from their time together in Paris in 1778, but Ritter also likely premiered Mozart's Quintet in Munich along with Ramm and Stadler in 1784. What's more, Beethoven may have encountered Ritter when he was on tour in Berlin in the 1795. Known for his expressive upper register, Ritter apparently brought "exceptional elegance and class" to his bassoon playing.

Hornist Giovanni Punto was an international phenomenon. He not only performed several of Mozart's horn concerti and his sinfonia concertante (now lost), but Beethoven also wrote his Op. 17 horn sonata expressly for him. Franz Joseph Fröhlich wrote that "what distinguished Punto, in a way



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that one has never heard in any other artist heretofore, was his most magnificent performance, the gentlest portrayals, the thunder of tones and their sweetest indescribable blending of nuances with the most varied tone production, an agile tongue, dexterous in all forms of articulation...but most important, a silver-bright and charming cantabile tone."

– *Debra Nagy*