

Mandelring Quartett

Sebastian Schmidt, violin • Nanette Schmidt, violin
Andreas Willwohl, viola • Bernhard Schmidt, violoncello

Programs 2016 • 2017

Program I – Genius and Insanity

W.A. Mozart string quartet in B flat major KV 458 "The Hunt"
Viktor Ullmann string quartet No. 3 (1942)

Robert Schumann string quartet in A minor op. 41/1

A programme full of contrasts. After Mozart's bucolic, playful "Hunt Quartet", with its wonderful duet between first violin and cello in the slow movement, comes the impact of the only surviving string quartet by Viktor Ullmann, written in 1943 in the Theresienstadt concentration camp (the composer was murdered a year and a half later in Auschwitz). Expressive and tonally resourceful, this quartet reflects the "passion for culture which is tantamount to the will to live" (Ullmann), but also exudes his despair and foreboding, particularly in the bleak slow movement. Finally the dreamy, melodious lines of Schumann's first string quartet, reminding us that he was also a composer of lieder, blend together with succinct, robust motifs and highly virtuosic cascades of sound to form a uniquely individual work.

Program II – Vienna, Musical Capital

Joseph Haydn string quartet in F major op. 50/5 "A Dream"
Franz Schubert string quartet in A minor D 804 "Rosamunde"

Ludwig van Beethoven string quartet in E minor op. 59/2

Vienna breathes musical history like no other city - and in the quartets of Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert this history comes alive in the traces it left both of its brilliant imperial court and its homely folk music. Haydn's op. 50/5 is a sunny piece full of little surprises, with a lyrical Adagio to which it owes its nickname, "A Dream". Schubert's "Rosamunde" quartet comes across as exceptionally melodious and immediate in its appeal; not by chance was it the only one of his quartets to be appreciated by his contemporaries. By contrast, it is hard to believe, from today's standpoint, that Beethoven's second Rasumovsky quartet had audiences shaking their heads in bafflement over its "bizarre sounds", since it has long been seen as the epitome of the classical string quartet for its perfect craftsmanship and expressivity.

Program III – Mandelring plus

György Kurtág Six Moments Musicaux op. 44 for string quartet
Johannes Brahms string quintet in F major op. 88

György Kurtág Arioso for string quartet
Antonín Dvořák string quintet in E flat major op. 97

This programme offers overflowing richness of sound and an opulent palette of colour. György Kurtág opens up a cosmos of sound in aphoristic brevity. His sparkling miniatures contain echoes both of Bach and of birds in the parks of Paris. Brahms in his first string quintet paints a delightful, sunny musical landscape perhaps inspired by Bad Ischl/Austria, where it was written. Antonín Dvořák's "American Quintet" makes its appearance in "wide screen format". Composed in the summer of 1893 in the Czech settlement of Spillville, Iowa, it is permeated by Dvořák's understanding of American folk music. Pentatonic elements, dotted rhythms and "exotic" turns of phrase are here blended with a typically Bohemian zest for music-making.



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