





Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Quartets

No. 1 in G minor K. 478 (1785)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Andante*
- III. *Rondo. Allegro moderato*

No. 2 in E flat major K. 493 (1786)

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

Mozart's Piano Quartets date from the mid 1780s – a period that also brought, among many other things, five of his major piano concerti (D minor K. 466; C major K. 467; E flat major K. 482; A major K. 488 & C minor K. 491), two important string quartets (including the *Dissonance* K. 465), and his opera *Le nozze di Figaro*.

While there were earlier incursions by less well-remembered figures into the piano quartet repertoire, it took Mozart to raise its status on to an unprecedented plateau. In his two quartets he found a way of giving each instrument - violin, viola, cello and piano - its rightful sense of independence.

According to the composer's own catalogue, the K. 478 Quartet was completed on 16th October 1785 and was among a number of works requested by the Viennese publisher, Franz Anton Hoffmeister, who was also a composer. In it Mozart treats his four instrumentalists as equals, with the concerto-like piano part well balanced against the continuously interesting string writing.

However, Hoffmeister, hoping for something to suit the amateur market, was dissatisfied with what Mozart submitted, complaining the music was too difficult and that the public would never buy it. He told the composer to write in a more popular vein or else he would neither print anything further of his nor pay him. The disgruntled Mozart responded, "Then I will write nothing more, and grow hungry or maybe the devil take me!" But he did write another Piano Quartet, completing it on 3rd June 1786. This time the more obliging firm of Artaria published it.

The key of G minor always had a special meaning for Mozart. Alfred Einstein, quite an authority on matters Mozartean, maintained it was his key of fate and described the first movement's opening theme as being as powerful and trenchant as the comparable fate themes found in Beethoven's 5th and Tchaikovsky's 4th Symphonies.

The Allegro begins with a terse motif, stated by all four instruments, that is immediately transformed before the piano alone ushers in the second subject. A third theme, again stated by the piano but echoed by the violin, is the only one with any trace of lightness. There is a short passionate development and recapitulation while the fate motto is hammered home in the reasonably lengthy coda, which is really a second development, to bring the movement to its fervid conclusion.

The Andante offers tranquil respite even if it, too, can be emotionally unsettling at times. It begins with a melancholy melody stated softly by the piano and then, more forcibly, by the rest of the ensemble. Led by the strings, the second subject suggests a feeling of hopeless resignation. These themes are repeated with little change except in Mozart's ingenious scoring.

'Profligate in its melodic invention' describes the G major Rondo finale, which thrives on incredibly flowing themes that, on occasions, prophetically hint at ideas found much later in Mozart's last opera *Die Zauberflöte*. Their jubilant nature comes as a marvellous relief after the elements of despondency suggested in the previous movements. Even so, the finale is not without a sense of stormy drama conveyed in the exchanges

between piano and strings in the central development.

The start of the E flat Quartet may seem peculiarly dark and dramatic but this impression is quickly dispelled by what follows - a sonata form movement, which has a bright and genial nature that extends itself throughout the entire piece. This opening Allegro also has a plethora of lyrically enchanting themes.

One of these moves into the surprising key of B flat initially heard on the piano and almost immediately assumed by the violin. This dominates the development section, which branches into other unexpected keys with striking instrumental groupings as well as contrasted dynamic sequences. While strings engage in relatively close dialogue, the piano employs a series of rapid scales and arpeggii.

In the recapitulation the main theme returns on violin and viola and is immediately pursued by the cello but now appearing strangely in the key of B flat. It takes the piano to ingeniously return to the E flat home key with the fugue-like coda finally resolving the issue.

The Larghetto, also in sonata form, is light and delicate. However, there are tinctures of intensity and passion that stem from the piano's opening statements. Echoing phrases

are also an attractive feature of this wistful and sensitive movement.

Unusually for him, Mozart left discarded sketches of his thoughts on the theme of his moderately paced Allegretto finale. His ultimate choice presents the idea of a gavotte that has a superabundance of memorable melodies. Alfred Einstein called them, 'the purest, most childlike and godlike ever sung'.

The principal subject has the strings playing an abrupt unison phrase answered pleadingly by the piano. Another theme has a somewhat militant bearing but this is soon reshaped into a more lyrical character. A myriad of other ideas coalesce and dissolve with remarkable fluidity and frequency before a short coda brings the K. 493 Quartet to its totally satisfying conclusion.

Pat O'Kelly



Finghin Collins piano

One of Ireland's most successful musicians and significant musical ambassadors, Finghin Collins was born in Dublin in 1977 and, following initial lessons with his sister Mary, studied piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music with John O'Connor and at the Geneva Conservatoire with Dominique Merlet. His international career was launched by winning first prize at the Clara Haskil International Piano Competition in Switzerland in 1999. He has performed in recital and with major orchestras throughout Europe and the United States, as well as in the Far East and Australia. In October 2017, the National University of Ireland conferred on him an honorary Degree of Doctor of Music.

In 2019 Finghin performs in the UK, Denmark, the USA, Italy, Switzerland, Russia, Turkey and undertakes an extensive Irish recital tour marking 20 years since his Clara Haskil Prize. The year 2020 will see solo, chamber and concerto performances of Beethoven across Europe to mark the composer's 250th anniversary, as well as many other projects and collaborations.

Over the past two decades Collins has retained strong ties to Switzerland, performing regularly at festivals and recital series, particularly in the western French-speaking part of the country. He has also maintained a close relationship with Claves Records, recording many award-winning CDs of music by Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and Stanford. A Chopin recital CD was released in September 2017, a co-production between RTÉ lyric fm and Claves Records.

Finghin Collins also makes a significant contribution to the musical landscape of his native Ireland, where he resides. Since 2013, he has been Artistic Director of Music for Galway, which will present the major classical programme of Galway 2020, European Capital of Culture. He is also the founding Artistic Director of the New Ross Piano Festival, which celebrates its 15th edition in 2020, as well as the founding co-Artistic Director of the International Master Course at the National Concert Hall in Dublin.

Rosanne Philippens violin

Rosanne Philippens is an extraordinary communicator, with an innate musicality and an infectiously joyful yet sincere approach to music-making. She is in high demand across the Netherlands where she performs regularly in the major halls and series both as soloist and chamber musician. She is also a keen play/director and recently made her debut with the Orchestre National de Lyon leading the orchestra in a hugely successful performance of *The Seasons* by Vivaldi and Piazzolla in Lyon's Auditorium receiving the highest praise from players and management. Philippens's playing is refined, exuberant and profound, and was described by the Dutch daily paper *De Telegraaf* as "energetic, sensitive and flawless". Recent highlights include performances with the Rotterdam Philharmonic at De Doelen, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic in the prestigious Zaterdag Matinee series and the Residentie Orkest both in The Hague and at the Concertgebouw Hall, Amsterdam. Elsewhere Philippens has played with the Barcelona Symphony, the Ulster Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony and with orchestras across Germany, Finland and Switzerland, with conductors including Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Lawrence Foster, Otto Tausk, Jan-Willem de Vriend, Antony Hermus and Nicholas Collon. In recital and chamber music, Philippens plays regularly with artists such as István Vardai, Vilde Frang, Julien Quentin, Víkingur Ólafsson, Amihai Grosz, Camille Thomas and Zoltán Fejérvári in festivals and halls across Europe. A strong believer in breaking down barriers in classical music, she runs her own concert series 'The Amsterdam Salon Pop-Up', presenting high-quality concerts in carefully sought-out and unusual locations in an intimate salon atmosphere.

Philippens records exclusively for Channel Classics. Her latest CD *Insight* represents the culmination of a very special and personal journey for Philippens; the choice of works by Bach, Enescu and Biber and the order in which they were recorded was inspired directly by the feedback gathered from audience members during a solo European tour. Her album *Dedications*, featuring works by Kreisler, Fauré, Ysaÿe and others received a five-star review in the Dutch *De Volkskrant* and glowing praise from *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*, and her recording of Prokofiev's 2nd Concerto was described by *BBC Magazine* as "a triumph". Rosanne Philippens was taught from an early age by Anneke Schilt at the Amstelveen music school. She continued her studies at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague and the Hanns Eisler Academy in Berlin with Coosje Wijzenbeek, Vera Beths, Anner Bylisma and Ulf Wallin, receiving the highest distinction from both institutes. Philippens won first prize at the Dutch National Violin Competition in 2009 and the Freiburg International Violin Competition in 2014. Philippens plays on the 1727 Barrere Stradivarius, thanks to the generous support of the Elise Mathilde Foundation.

Máté Szücs viola

Hungarian born violist Máté Szücs has had a career as an award winning soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player. Máté was principal viola in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra from 2011 to 2018 where he also appeared as a soloist playing the Bartók Viola Concerto in September 2017.

Máté was seventeen when he switched from the violin to the viola and graduated from the Royal Conservatory of Brussels and the Royal Conservatory of Flanders in Antwerp with the highest distinction. He further undertook a session at the Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth in Waterloo, Belgium where he obtained his diploma, also with the highest distinction. Máté was eleven when he won the Special Prize of the Hungarian Violin Competition for Young Artists. Not much later he won First Prize of the Violin Competition of Szeged (Hungary) and the First Prize for the Best Sonata Duo of the Hungarian Chamber Music Competition. Since then, he has won First Prize at the International Violin and Viola Competition in Liège in Belgium, as well as finalist of the International Viola Competition “Jean Françaix” in Paris and Laureate of the International Music Competition “Tenuto” in Brussels. As a chamber musician, Máté has been a member of various chamber ensembles including the Mendelssohn ensemble; Con Spirito piano quartet, Trio Dor, Enigma Ensemble and “Fragments” ensemble. He has worked with prominent musicians such as Janine Jansen, Frank-Peter Zimmermann, Christian Tetzlaff, Vadim Repin, Ilya Gringolts, Vladimir Mendelssohn, László Fenyő, Kristof Baráti and István Várdai, Camille Thomas, Kirill Troussov and Julien Quentin.

In addition to performing solo with the Berlin Philharmonic, he has soloed with orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Flanders, the “Bamberger Symphoniker”, the “Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden”, the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra and at the “Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen”, where he was as well principal viola. Máté is also a sought after pedagogue. Since the summer of 2006 he has been a regular professor at the “Thy Masterclass” chamber music summer festival in Denmark and between 2012 and 2014 was also teaching at the Britten-Pears Festival in Aldeburgh, England. He has taught two years at the University of Music in Saarbrücken, between 2014 and 2018 at the Karajan Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, between 2015 and 2018 at the “Hanns Eisler” University of Music in Berlin and between 2015 and 2016 the Music Academy of Budapest. Máté gives masterclasses all over the world including New York, Los Angeles, Michigan, London, Berlin, Brussels, Seoul and Tokyo. Since 2018, he has been the Professor of Viola at the Geneva University of Music in Switzerland.

István Várdai cello

István Várdai, born in 1985 in Pécs, Hungary, began playing cello at the age of eight. At the age of twelve, he was admitted to the class of the “exceptionally gifted” at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. Nowadays, he is one of the finest cellists - supremely gifted and increasingly in-demand.

István balances performing wide-ranging concerto repertoire with a deep love of chamber music. He has performed in some of the world's leading venues collaborating with partners including András Schiff, Yuri Bashmet, Gidon Kremer, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, Mischa Maisky, Elisabeth Leonskaja and many others. He is also the co-curator of the Kaposfest Chamber Music Festival in Hungary, together with violinist Kristóf Baráti.

His broad range of concerto repertoire includes many 20th-century masterpieces which he performs with leading orchestras worldwide including Helsinki Philharmonic with Susanna Mälkki, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra with Hannu Lintu, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra with Douglas Boyd, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra with Jun Maerkl, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse with Klaus Mäkelä and many others. His performances receive wide acclaim.

István has won many of the most prestigious cello competitions in the world, including the ARD Competition in Munich (2014) and International Tchaikovsky Competition (2007), and in 2019 he served on the jury of the latter. At the beginning of 2019 he was appointed professor at Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts, succeeding the late Heinrich Schiff in the role, and where he himself studied in 2005. He plays the legendary ‘Ex du Pré-Harrell’ Stradivari, made in 1673.

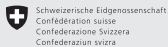
Recorded in St.Peter's Church of Ireland, Drogheda, (Ireland) May 2019

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, EDITING, MASTERING	Johannes Kammann
BALANCE ENGINEER	Inès Kammann
PIANO TECHNICIAN	Paul Wade
PIANO	Steinway
PHOTOGRAPHER	Frances Marshall
DESIGN	Amethys
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	Claves Records

We would like to thank:

Tom Corran

Embassy of
Switzerland, Dublin



Embassy of Switzerland in Ireland

Trevor Bryans
and Clarissa Hanna

Mary Canning
and Timothy King

Pauline Ashwood, Drogheda Classical Music
Louth County Council for the use of the Steinway piano

© & © 2019 Claves Records SA, Prilly (Switzerland)

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)**Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor K. 478 (1785)**

1	I. Allegro	14:57
2	II. Andante	07:20
3	III. Rondo. Allegro moderato	07:54

Piano Quartet No. 2 in E flat major K. 493 (1786)

4	I. Allegro	15:01
5	II. Larghetto	13:09
6	III. Allegretto	09:11

FINGHIN COLLINS *piano*
 ROSANNE PHILIPPENS *violin*
 MÁTÉ SZÜCS *viola*
 ISTVÁN VÁRDAI *cello*

claves

THE SWISS CLASSICAL LABEL SINCE 1968

