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## **PACIFICA QUARTET**



## **MOZART & BRAHMS CLARINET QUINTETS**



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**CEDILLE**

**24 BIT  
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## MOZART & BRAHMS CLARINET QUINTETS

ANTHONY MCGILL  
PACIFICA QUARTET

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Quintet in A major for Clarinet and Strings, K. 581 (1789) (30:54)

- 1 I. Allegro (9:05)
- 2 II. Larghetto (6:05)
- 3 III. Menuetto (6:40)
- 4 IV. Allegretto con Variazioni (8:53)

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Quintet in B minor for Clarinet and Strings, Op. 115 (1891) (37:36)

- 5 I. Allegro (12:56)
- 6 II. Adagio (10:48)
- 7 III. Andantino (4:32)
- 8 IV. Con moto (9:06)

TT: (68:38)

## MOZART & BRAHMS CLARINET QUINTETS

Notes by Andrea Lamoreaux

Anton Paul Stadler (1753–1812) and his brother Johann were both clarinetists with the Vienna Music Society in the 1770s, and were also employed as musicians in the household of Count Dmitry Golitsin, Russian ambassador to the Viennese imperial court. In the early 1780s, Emperor Joseph II organized his own wind band — oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns — and the Stadlers became part of this group, known in 18th-century Germany and Austria as a *Harmonie*. By the time they became the first official clarinet players in the imperial court orchestra, Anton Stadler had already met a talented Viennese newcomer whose reputation as both composer and performer had preceded his arrival from his native city of Salzburg: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Stadler organized the 1784 concert at which Mozart's grand Wind Serenade (*Gran Partita*) was premiered, and also

participated in the first performance of the composer's Quintet for Piano and Winds (K. 361 and K. 452, respectively). Later he'd be the inspiration for the *Kegelstatt* Trio for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano (K. 498) and Mozart's last completed instrumental composition, the Clarinet Concerto K. 622. Stadler first played the concerto in Prague, where he was in the opera orchestra for *La Clemenza di Tito*, whose score features clarinet prominently.

During the 1790s Stadler toured Russia, Germany, and the Baltic states as a concert soloist while continuing his role in the imperial court orchestra. He retired as a performer around the year 1800 but continued to teach.

The Serenade, Piano and Wind Quintet, Concerto, and Trio are all marvelous, but it's the piece Mozart wrote in 1789, calling it Stadler's Quintet, that immortalized this great woodwind artist's name. The A Major Quintet for Clarinet and Strings can be heard as a musical manifestation of friendship, reminding us in every measure how Mozart and Stadler found each other kindred spirits.

They even shared a joint attraction to the Freemasonry movement, with its promise of universal brotherhood and enlightenment. Both were members of the Viennese Masonic lodge called New Crowned Hope.

This is one of Mozart's best-known chamber compositions and a special favorite for the sheer beauty of its themes and skillful interplay among the five instruments. Mozart was an outstanding composer of concertos, and the Quintet has the sound of a mini-concerto at times when the clarinet comes to the fore. For the most part, however, it's pure chamber-music with equal partners.

The serenity and sunlit good cheer of the entire piece is heralded right at the beginning by the strings' gently harmonious opening theme. The clarinet joins in almost immediately with a comment that starts in its mellow low register and rises to its bright higher one. As the sonata-form movement unfolds, the first violin and cello have important solo passages along with the clarinet. In the exposition, three distinct themes are

presented. The short development mostly features the string players; the recapitulation brings the original themes back in elaborated form.

The Larghetto movement has been compared to a Nocturne or Romance — terms that came along in the 19th-century's Romantic era (and are perhaps unsuited to describing a Classical-era quintet). Another comparison that's sometimes made is to an operatic aria, which feels more relevant, given Mozart's mastery of that realm. It's less an aria than a duet, however, because the movement is dominated by a lyrical dialogue between the clarinet and the first violin. Muted strings add an aura of enchantment and distant beauty.

In the elegant Menuetto, inward-turning emotion gives way to extroverted conversation, led by the clarinet. The movement contains two contrasting Trio sections, the first for strings alone, the second a dancing duet for clarinet and violin. To conclude the Quintet, Mozart presents a cheerful theme with five variations and a coda. Contrasts of

tempo and a brief excursion into the minor mode enliven the sequence of variations, with the viola given prominence in Variation 3. Throughout this finale, the clarinet takes the lead and, as in a concerto, is given a short solo cadenza. The coda brings all five players together in happy harmony.

Richard Mühlfeld (1856–1907) joined Germany's Meiningen Court Orchestra as a violinist, but soon switched over to his second instrument, the clarinet, on which he was largely self-taught. In addition to his work for Meiningen, which was closely associated with Brahms's music, Mühlfeld spent several summers as clarinetist for the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra playing Wagner's operas. Brahms was first captivated by Mühlfeld's artistry at a Meiningen concert in March 1891, not long after Brahms told his publisher that he was going to retire from composing. It can be debated whether he really meant that, but hearing Mühlfeld certainly fired Brahms up to return to his craft. In summer 1891, he wrote a Clarinet Trio with cello and piano and a Clarinet Quintet with four strings. Three years

later, he produced a pair of sonatas for clarinet and piano that he also transcribed for viola and piano. (His canon of final works is rounded out by the *Four Serious Songs* and a set of 11 chorale-preludes for organ.)

Mühlfeld premiered the Clarinet Quintet in Meiningen in fall 1891 with the string quartet headed by Brahms's violinist friend, Joseph Joachim. Joachim would later introduce both the Trio and the Quintet at concerts in Berlin.

Similarities (beyond instrumentation) between Brahms's Op. 115 and Mozart's K. 581 include their use of muted strings in the slow movements and finales laid out in theme-and-variations form. Yet the tone of the two works is quite different. Predominantly in a minor key, the Brahms is more flavored with melancholy, more passionate, even a little portentous at times. Its first two movements are lengthy, the last two shorter and more direct. There's a remarkable sense of thematic unity, as Brahms ingeniously transforms and expands his opening idea to generate themes heard later.

The Quintet is often described as "autumnal" — perhaps because, as one of the composer's last works, it comes from the autumn of his life. But it's certainly not a sad piece: vigorous and intense, it has a variety of moods and reveals a musical genius still reveling in showcasing his skills.

The Allegro finds the clarinet and violins first in D major, the relative of B minor; this home key is eventually established by the cello's opening theme. Since the two main themes of this movement are closely related, it can be heard as variations as well as a standard sonata form of exposition–development–recapitulation. In the emotionally intense Adagio, dreamy and distant opening and closing sections surround an agitated central portion that's been linked to Brahms's lifelong fondness for the improvisatory style of Hungarian gypsy music. The most prominent voice in the Adagio is the clarinet.

The third movement takes its time reaching the expected Scherzo tempo. It opens Andantino with the clarinet playing in D major, joined by

the viola and cello. Then the Scherzo proper finds the strings playing a related theme, but in B minor. In the finale, a passionate, dark-hued theme is varied with the clarinet partnering each string player in turn. The strongly rhythmic second variation is once more reminiscent of the Hungarian style. A variation in which the viola takes a leading voice progresses to a repeat of the Quintet's opening theme. This leads to the coda and a powerful final chord.

*Andrea Lamoreaux is Music Director of 98.7wfmt, Chicago's Classical Experience.*

## ANTHONY MCGILL

Principal Clarinet of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra since 2004, Anthony McGill has been recognized as one of the classical music world's finest solo, chamber, and orchestral musicians.

He has appeared as soloist with orchestras including the Metropolitan Opera and New York String Orchestras at Carnegie Hall, and the Baltimore, San Diego, and Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras. 2013–2014 orchestral performances include appearances with Orchestra 2001 and the Baltimore and New Jersey Symphony Orchestras.

As a chamber musician, McGill is a member of the Schumann Trio with Michael Tree and Anna Polonsky. He has collaborated with Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Gil Shaham, Midori, Mitsuko Uchida, and Lang Lang. On January 20, 2009, McGill performed with Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, and Gabriela Montero at the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

He has performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia with

quartets including Guarneri, Tokyo, Brentano, Pacifica, Shanghai, Miro, and Daedalus, as well as with Musicians from Marlboro and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

McGill has appeared on NPR's *Performance Today*, MPR's *St. Paul Sunday Morning*, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society series, and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. In 2013 he appeared, with his brother Demarre, on *NBC Nightly News*, *Steve Harvey*, and with Melissa Harris-Perry on MSNBC.

In demand as a teacher, McGill serves on the faculty of the Juilliard School, Peabody Institute, Bard College Conservatory of Music, and Manhattan School of Music, and has given master classes throughout the United States and in Europe.

For more information — [anthonymcgill.com](http://anthonymcgill.com)

## PACIFICA QUARTET

Recognized for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and often-daring repertory choices, the Pacifica Quartet has gained international stature as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. The Pacifica tours extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia, performing regularly in the world's major concert halls. Named the quartet-in-residence at Indiana University's Jacob School of Music in March 2012, the Pacifica also served as quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2009–2012) — a position previously held only by the Guarneri String Quartet — and received the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance.

Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly won chamber music's top competitions, including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002, the ensemble was honored with Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and the appointment to Lincoln Center's CMS Two. In 2006, Pacifica was awarded a prestigious

Avery Fisher Career Grant, becoming only the second chamber ensemble so honored in the grant's long history. Also in 2006, the Quartet was featured on the cover of Gramophone and heralded as one of "five new quartets you should know about," the only American quartet to make the list. In 2009, the Quartet was named "Ensemble of the Year" by *Musical America*.

The Pacifica Quartet has carved a niche as the preeminent interpreter of string quartet cycles, harnessing the group's singular focus and incredible stamina to portray each composer's evolution, often over the course of just a few days. Having given highly acclaimed performances of the complete Elliott Carter cycle in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and Houston; the Mendelssohn cycle in Napa, Australia, New York, and Pittsburgh; and the Beethoven cycle in New York, Denver, St. Paul, Chicago, Napa, and Tokyo (in an unprecedented presentation of five concerts in three days at Suntory Hall), the Quartet presented the monumental Shostakovich cycle in

Chicago and New York during the 2010–2011 season and in Montreal and London’s Wigmore Hall in the 2011–2012 season. The Quartet has been widely praised for these cycles, with critics calling the concerts “brilliant,” “astonishing,” “gripping,” and “breathtaking.”

An ardent advocate of contemporary music, the Pacifica Quartet commissions and performs many new works, including those by Keeril Makan and Shulamit Ran to be premiered during the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 seasons. In 2008, the Quartet released its Grammy Award-winning recording of Carter’s Quartets Nos. 1 and 5 on the Naxos label; the 2009 release of Quartets Nos. 2, 3, and 4 completed the two-CD set. The Pacifica’s other recordings for Cedille Records include *Mendelssohn: The Complete String Quartets*, *Declarations: Music Between the Wars*, and its acclaimed, four-volume *The Soviet Experience: String Quartets by Dmitri Shostakovich and his Contemporaries*.

For more information — [pacificaquartet.com](http://pacificaquartet.com)

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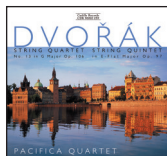
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