It was not unusual for Mozart to rework an already completed composition, as he did in the case of the Viola Quintet in C Minor, K. 406. It appeared originally as his Serenade for Winds, K. 388. The musicologist and Mozart biographer, Alfred Einstein, maintains that Mozart planned to submit a set of six viola quintets to Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia, in hopes of receiving a further commission or a court appointment. Even though the composer accelerated the process of completing six works by changing an extant work into a viola quintet, there is no evidence that the full project ever came to fruition. In spite of the reduction from eight parts in the Serenade to five in the Quintet, the work is perfectly suited to the smaller medium and projects great power. After a stark, ominous opening passage in unison, the first movement of the quintet proceeds with four distinct motives, corresponding to the following characteristics: beseeching, defiant, flirtatious, and stubborn. The second movement moves to the major mode, and its tranquility eases the tensions that were built up by the first movement. The third movement, a minuet, reveals Mozart's potential for astounding contrapuntal writing. Once the melody has been subject to numerous intricate contrapuntal treatments in the minuet, the Trio in rovescio (Trio in Reverse) presents the melody both in its original form and its inversion. The final movement begins, as did the first, with a sober theme. The theme is subject to seven variations, in each of which it becomes progressively more obscure. The seventh variation carries the work to a depth of chromatic anguish, but its positive mood is restored by a glistening coda.

Stylistically related to his Second Symphony, which also dates from 1924, the quintet has six movements, the first of which calls to mind the antics of clowns, with the woodwinds tumbling over one another. Each of the successive movements features an unusual acoustical effect, with special emphasis on the possibilities of the double bass in the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth movements.

The artistry of clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld (1856-1907) was a great inspiration for Brahms, who in 1891 wrote two major works with Mühlfeld in mind: the Trio in A Minor, Opus 114, and the Quintet, Opus 115. In a letter to his friend Eusebius Mandyczeweski, the ever self-deprecating Brahms referred to the latter as a "piece of foolishness" that he was trying to "nurse along." The work, to the contrary, is a masterpiece in its genre, displaying the clarinet’s most telling effects, from the high wail of its clarino register to the dark, romantic shades of its low chalumeau range. On the occasion of the quintet’s first performance on 12 December 1891 in Berlin, Mühlfeld was the clarinetist, with the Joachim Quartet providing the other four parts.

The Fifty-ninth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.

Selections from concerts at the Gallery can be heard on the second Sunday of each month at 9:00 p.m. on WGMS, 103.5 FM.

2355th Concert

NEW YORK CHAMBER SOLOISTS

Allen Blustine, clarinet
Helen Kwalwasser, violin
Ynez Lynch, viola
Lisa Chin, double bass

Melvin Kaplan, oboe
Michael Roth, violin and viola
Matthew Herren, cello

Sunday Evening, 1 October 2000
Seven O’clock
West Building, West Garden Court
Admission free
PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791)
Viola Quintet in C Minor
K. 406 (1787)
Allegro
Andante
Menuetto in canone; trio al rovescio
Allegro

Sergey Prokofiev
(1891–1953)
Quintet for Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, and Double Bass (1924)
Moderato: Tema con variatione
Andante energico
Allegro sostenuto ma con brio
Allegro precipitato, ma non troppo presto
Andantino

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)
Quintet in B Minor
Op. 115 (1891)
Allegro
Adagio
Andantino; presto non assai, ma con sentimento
Con moto

INTERMISSION

Since 1957 the New York Chamber Soloists have been acclaimed as an outstanding ensemble of distinguished virtuosos, performing widely diverse repertoire in creatively programmed concerts. Eleven musicians make up the core ensemble of strings, winds, and keyboard. In response to the demands of the repertoire, the Chamber Soloists, with the help of guest artists, have increased their number to as many as twenty. This flexibility has allowed the group to perform many works that are seldom heard, owing to the unusual instrumental combinations for which they were written. The Chamber Soloists’ programming innovations have included Bach’s complete Brandenburg Concerti in a single concert; the complete Mozart horn concerti; and song cycles, cantatas, and operas from Claudio Monteverdi to Hugh Aitken. The ensemble has appeared at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Library of Congress, and at the Mostly Mozart, Sun Valley, and Caramoor Festivals. The New York Chamber Soloists appear at the National Gallery by arrangement with Melvin Kaplan, Inc., of Burlington, Vermont.

Allen Blustine is one of New York’s busiest and most versatile clarinetists. He has performed with a broad spectrum of musical organizations, including the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He teaches at Columbia University.

For more than twenty-five years, Melvin Kaplan, founder and oboist of the New York Chamber Soloists, has been one of the nation’s most influential figures in chamber music. As a soloist, he premiered works by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Ezra Laderman, Hugh Aitken, Karl Korte, and William Sydeman. He is a regular lecturer and performer at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and was on the faculty of the Juilliard School for more than twenty years.

Violinist Michael Roth is a member of both the American Composers Orchestra and the New Orchestra of Westchester, Connecticut, and a former member of the critically acclaimed Oberlin Piano Trio. A graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, he taught at the University of Massachusetts, where he received the Julian Olevsky Award. A regular participant in the Aspen, Tanglewood, Saratoga, and Vermont Mozart Festivals, he currently teaches at the Westchester Conservatory of Music.

Violist Inez Lynch is a charter member of the Chamber Soloists. She has appeared as soloist with the Musica Aeterna Orchestra and the Festival Orchestra of New York and has performed with the Fine Arts and Emeson String Quartets. She was a member of the original cast for the ground-breaking New York Pro Musica production and recording of The Play of Daniel.

Cellist Matthew Herren has appeared in chamber music and recital performances throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, France, and Italy. The long list of festivals at which he has performed includes Ravinia, Sarasota, New York’s Alice Tully, and Philadelphia’s Mozart on the Square. A founding member of the Concertante Chamber Ensemble, the Yellowstone Music Festival, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, he serves as principal cellist with the Manhattan Chamber Orchestra.

Violinist Helen Kwalwasser has concertized throughout North and South America and Europe as a soloist and chamber musician. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and the Juilliard School, she has played with the Pennsylvania Ballet Orchestra, the Princeton Chamber Orchestra, the American Chamber Orchestra, and the Galimir Quartet. She is professor of violin at Temple University, from which she received the Creative Achievement Award in 1984.

Cellist Lisa Chin graduated from the Manhattan School of Music in 1996. In 1997 she toured Europe with the American Institute of Musical Studies Festival Orchestra and participated in the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences’ “Grammys in the Schools” program. She has performed with the Riverside Symphony, the Allentown, Pennsylvania, Symphony, the Seoul Symphony of New York, and the Manhattan Virtuosi. Double bassist Allen Blustine is one of New York’s busiest and most versatile clarinetists. He has performed with a broad spectrum of musical organizations, including the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He teaches at Columbia University.

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