

ArtPower
University of California San Diego

MECCORE STRING QUARTET

November 3, 2017 at 8 pm

Department of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall



ArtPower presents
Meccore String

Quartet

November 3, 2017 at 8 pm
Department of Music's
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Wojciech Koprowski, *violin*
Jarosław Nadrzycki, *violin*
Artur Rozmyslowicz, *viola*
Karol Marianowski, *cello*

Program

Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937)

String Quartet no. 2, op. 56, M64 (1927)
Moderato, dolce e tranquillo
Vivace, scherzando
Lento

Robert Schumann (1810–56)

Quartet in A minor, op. 41, no. 1 (1842)
Introduction: Adante espressivo - allegro
Scherzo: Presto - Intermezzo
Adagio
Presto

INTERMISSION

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

String Quartet in G minor, op. 27 (1879)
Un poco andante
Romanze
Intermezzo
Finale

The Meccore Quartet is represented by MKI Artists
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About ArtPower at UC San Diego

ArtPower at UC San Diego presents performing arts that engage, energize, and transform the diverse cultural life of the University and San Diego. Through vibrant, challenging, multi-disciplinary performances, ArtPower seeks to develop more empathetic students and community members that are better prepared to engage in the world around them through their participation in high quality artistic, educational and engagement programs that broaden thinking and awareness, deepen understanding, and encourage new dialogues across UC San Diego and the community.

About the Program

String Quartet no. 2, opus 56

Karol Szymanowski

Born October 6, 1882, Tymoszwka

Died March 29, 1937, Lausanne

The String Quartet No. 2 comes from relatively late in Szymanowski's brief life: he wrote it in 1927, ten years before his death at age 54 from tuberculosis. As a composer, Szymanowski grew steadily across his career. He began composing under the influence of Wagner and Strauss, but travels to North Africa in 1911–12 introduced him to exotic new vistas and changed his music: now he wrote music of shimmering, sensual textures, often inspired by non-musical sources. But following World War I and the creation of an independent Polish state, Szymanowski became a devout Polish nationalist: he was named director of the Warsaw Conservatory and worked to develop a distinctly Polish musical idiom. As part of this, Szymanowski established a summer residence in Zakopane in a part of Poland he loved, the Tatra Mountains along its southern border. There he immersed himself in Tatra folk-music and culture, and these were reflected in his works of this period, particularly in his ballet *Harnasie*, in which a band of mountain robbers descends to rescue a beautiful young woman from a loveless marriage and carry her off to a better life in the mountains.

Szymanowski's attitude toward folk-music was similar to Bartók's. Both men loved folk-music, but in general they did not quote it directly in their own music. Instead, they tried to absorb that music—its modal melodies, distinctive rhythms, individual sounds—so completely that when they wrote their own music, it would be unconsciously suffused with the idioms of folk-music. The spirit of Tatra folk-music informs *Harnasie* and Szymanowski's *Mazurkas* for piano, and it makes itself felt in his Second String Quartet as well.

This quartet—first performed in Warsaw on May 14, 1929—is in three movements that seem at first to fall into the unexpected slow-fast-slow sequence; closer familiarity, however, shows that this is not wholly true. The first movement may be marked *Moderato, dolce e tranquillo*, but throughout this movement the background pulse feels unsettled and fast, even as Szymanowski's themes play themselves out at a more moderate tempo. The quartet opens with the glistening, murmuring sound of that accompaniment, and over this the first violin unfolds its eerie opening melody. As the movement proceeds, the musical language turns more aggressive, the mood more yearning, and the music becomes agitated before falling away to the subdued, calm close.

By contrast, the central *Vivace, scherzando* is hard-edged and full of energy. It rides along driving pizzicato ostinatos that have reminded many of the finale of Bartók's Second Quartet, but Szymanowski's music has a striking sound all its own, and particularly effective is the return of the opening material, when the ostinato accompaniment consists of rapid string glissandos. The central episode is quieter—though still harmonically unsettled—and the movement comes to a dynamic conclusion.

The finale may be marked *Lento* and may begin slowly, but tensions and tempos soon build to a busy, abrasive climax. This movement is in the form of a fugue, and the fugue subject is built generally around a Tatra folk-tune that Szymanowski also used in *Harnasie*. That theme appears in many forms in this movement, and at the end the four-note shape basic to that theme drives this music to its emphatic close.

Quartet in A minor, opus 41, no. 1

Robert Schumann

Born June 8, 1810, Zwickau

Died July 29, 1856, Eendenich

Rare is the composer who is not in some way haunted by the past. To a close friend, Beethoven confessed that he felt threatened by the example of Mozart's piano concertos, and in turn his own symphonies would prove just as daunting to the young Brahms, who complained: "You have no idea how the likes of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant like him behind us."

Nor was Schumann deaf to the sound of footsteps from the past. He made his early reputation with short piano pieces and then turned to songs. Both of these were "romantic" forms, but Schumann knew that—inevitably—he would have to try his hand at the forms perfected by the classical composers. In 1841 he was willing to take on the symphony, and the following year he turned to probably the most daunting of challenges, the string quartet. He spent that spring studying the quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, but even then he was still worried, and his language betrays his anxiety—so threatened was Schumann that he could almost not say the words "string quartet." Instead, he said only that he was having "quartet-ish thoughts" and referred to the music he was composing as "quartet-essays." Finally he overcame his fears and quickly composed three string quartets that summer, of which the Quartet in A minor, begun on June 4, 1842, was the first.

These three quartets are Schumann's only chamber works that do not use piano, and perhaps it is not surprising that—forced away from his own instrument—Schumann responded by writing with great originality. In this music he was willing to take risks, experimenting with polyphonic writing, unusual key relationships, and basing entire movements on variants of the same theme (an idea he may have taken from the Haydn quartets).

The first movement of the Quartet in A minor opens with a slow introduction marked *Andante espressivo*; certain critics have claimed to hear the influence of Bach in the long contrapuntal lines of this introduction, but that is for the individual listener to decide. The real surprise comes at the *Allegro*, where the exposition bursts to life in the "wrong" key of F major; the violin's opening theme here furnishes all the material for this sonata-form movement, which comes to a very effective close as the first violin holds a high F over quiet pizzicato strokes from the other voices.

The exciting *Scherzo*, invariably described as "galloping" flies along on its hammering 6/8 rhythm. Its middle section, which Schumann marks *Intermezzo*, brings a moment of calm before the return of the pounding opening material. The *Adagio* is based on the violin's radiant main theme, a melody whose shape is somewhat reminiscent of the slow

movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Schumann presents a series of variations on this theme before the movement comes to a quiet close. The concluding *Presto* is vigorous, athletic, and angular—and all of its material grows out of the powerful opening theme. The second theme-group is simply an inversion of this theme, and near the end Schumann presents a third variant of this same theme: over a quiet drone, this melody sings gently, briefly becomes a chorale, and suddenly gives way to the opening tempo, which rips this quartet to its exciting conclusion.

String Quartet in G minor, opus 27

Edvard Grieg

Born June 15, 1843, Bergen, Norway

Died September 4, 1907, Bergen

We so automatically think of Grieg as a Norwegian nationalist composer—as the composer of music for *Sigurd Jorsalfar* and *Peer Gynt*, of Norwegian dances for piano, and of a number of ravishing songs in Norwegian—that it comes as a surprise to discover an entirely different side of this composer: he was at some deep level dissatisfied with writing purely “nationalistic” music and was drawn to the discipline of the classical forms. In 1877, when he was 34, Grieg turned to the most demanding of classical forms and wrote to a friend: “I have recently finished a string quartet which I still haven’t heard. It is in G minor and is not intended to bring trivialities to market. It strives towards breadth, soaring flight and above all resonance for the instruments for which it was written. I needed to do this as a study . . . I think in this way I shall find myself again. You can have no idea what trouble I had with the forms, but this was because I was stagnating . . .”

The intensity of Grieg’s language suggests how difficult writing this quartet was for him—and also how important it was. Grieg made the task even more complex by unifying much of the quartet around one simple theme-shape, which is then varied and extended in countless ways across the span of the quartet. He took this theme from his own song *Spillemaend (Minstrels)*, composed two years earlier, in 1875. This shape is stamped out by the four instruments in octaves to open the quartet’s slow introduction, and listeners may take pleasure in following Grieg’s transformations of this theme: it reappears quietly as the second subject of the first movement, is shouted out furiously as part of the *Intermezzo*’s central episode, opens the finale’s slow introduction, and is threaded ingeniously into textures throughout.

One of the other impressive things about this quartet is its sound: Grieg was not kidding when he said that this music strives to achieve “above all resonance for the instruments for which it is written.” The massed sound of the opening, with the instruments in octaves, establishes this sonority, and at moments the sound of this quartet can verge on the orchestral, with hammered chords and extensive double-stopping. Yet Grieg can relax, and the quartet also has some of those wonderful, effortless Grieg melodies.

The structure may be briefly described: the portentous slow introduction leads to the nervous main subject, marked *Allegro molto ed agitato* (it is worth noting that two of the quartet’s movements are marked *agitato*, a third *marcato*). The second subject of this sonata-form movement is an attractive derivation of the fundamental theme-shape, and this movement makes its dramatic way over a very long span. Particularly impressive

is the ending of this movement: over ponticello accompaniment from the upper voices, the cello winds the movement down with a long melody marked *cantabile e molto espressivo*, and the music drives to a sudden close on a *Prestissimo* derived from the original theme-shape.

Grieg marks the second movement *Romanze*, suggesting music of an expressive character, and then alternates two quite distinct kinds of music: the melting lyricism of the opening gives way to a hard-driving *Allegro agitato*; the music moves between these quite different poles before a relaxed ending. The *Intermezzo*, marked *Allegro molto marcato*, begins with the same massive sound that opened the quartet. This movement—in ternary form—has a quicksilver quality, flowing quickly between different kinds of expression: *con fuoco* gives way almost instantly to *tranquillo*. After the slow introduction, the *Finale* turns into a racing dance movement—it is a *saltarello*, an old Italian dance that features leaping (the finale of Mendelssohn’s Italian Symphony is a *saltarello*). There is a subtle rhythmic sense here (2/4 will flow effortlessly into 6/8) as the music dances its way to a full-throated climax and a ringing close in G major.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger

About the Artists

Meccore String Quartet

Praised for its breathtaking performances, flawless technique, and visionary interpretations, the Meccore Quartet won second prize—and three additional special prizes—at the London International String Quartet Competition at Wigmore Hall in April 2012. The Quartet also has received top prizes at the Paolo Borciani Competition, the International Chamber Music Competition in Weiden, and the Max Reger International Chamber Music Competition. The Quartet was formed by four of Europe’s most celebrated young string players in 2007 and now performs extensively across the continent and abroad. The Quartet’s hugely successful debut tour in North America took place in November 2013.

Warner Classics released the Quartet’s debut CD of Debussy and Szymanowski in 2015, a finely nuanced and deeply introspective recording that won acclaim both in Europe and the U.S. As students the Meccore worked closely with the Artemis Quartet as well as with Alfred Brendel. Brendel raved that “the Meccore String Quartet impressed me as an outstanding young ensemble.”

The Meccore Quartet directs “Q’arto Mondì,” an international chamber music festival featuring top quartets from around the world that takes place annually in Poland. After having been featured many times on European radio and television, the Quartet’s Schubert recording was recently named one of the best accomplishments on the Polish cultural scene. The Quartet was also nominated for the prestigious Paszporty Polityki award.

The Quartet receives financial support from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, as well as from Young Poland.

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Smetana Trio

Fri. March 2, 2018 at 8 pm
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall
Tickets: \$40-54;
UCSD Student: \$9

"The passion for music of their homeland was matched by musical skill, flawless ensemble, and exceptional communicative ability."

— American Record Guide

PROGRAM

Alexander Zemlinsky: Trio in D Minor, op. 3
Dmitri Shostakovich: Piano Trio no. 1, op. 8
Felix Mendelssohn: Piano Trio no. 1 in D Minor, op. 49



Harlem Quartet

Fri. April 13, 2018 at 8 pm
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall
Tickets: \$40-54;
UCSD Student: \$9

After a rave reception at their San Diego debut at ArtPower in 2016, the Grammy-winning Harlem Quartet is bringing back its "new attitude to classical music, one that is fresh, bracing, and intelligent" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*).

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven: String Quartet no. 11 in F Minor, op. 95 "Serioso"
W.A. Mozart: String Quartet no. 17 in B-flat Major, K. 458
Anton Webern: *Langsamer Satz*
Antônio Carlos Jobim: *The Girl from Ipanema* (arr. by Dave Glenn & Harlem Quartet)
Guido López Gavilán: *Cuarteto en Guaguancó*



Aeolus Quartet

Friday, Jan 19, 2018 at 8 pm
Dept. of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall
Tickets: \$40-54; UCSD Student: \$9

Praised by *Strad* magazine for their "high-octane" performances, the Aeolus Quartet is one of the finest young quartets touring today. Formed in 2008 at the Cleveland Institute of Music by violinists Nicholas Tavani and Rachel Shapiro, violist Gregory Luce, and cellist Alan Richardson, the quartet is committed to presenting time-seasoned masterpieces and new cutting-edge works with freshness, dedication, and fervor.

PROGRAM

Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 76, No. 2
Philip Glass: Quartet No. 3 "Mishima"
Ludwig van Beethoven: String Quartet No. 14, Op. 131