

2022 Preview Notes • Week Two • Persons Auditorium

Saturday, July 23 at 8 pm



Serenade in G Major, Op. 141a (1915)
Max Reger
 Born March 19, 1873 (Brand, Germany)
 Died May 11, 1916 (Leipzig)
 Duration: approx. 16 minutes
 Last Marlboro performance: 2010

Max Reger lived during an era that saw drastic changes in daily life, as well as in forms of musical expression, with the rise of expressionism, the stretching of tonality, and experimentation with the mixing of styles and genres, including jazz, which some composers felt more accurately reflected their new reality. Reger occupies an interesting position in this history, as his compositional language seems to be simultaneously receptive and critical of the turbulent social and aesthetic changes occurring around him. Growing up in a small town near Bayreuth, Reger was a product of the deeply Catholic state of Bavaria but was influenced as well by the Protestant musical world of the Upper Palatinate, of Leipzig, the Lutheran chorale and, more importantly, J.S. Bach. After studying with the music theorist Hugo Riemann in Wiesbaden, Reger returned to eastern Germany, where he eventually secured a professorship in composition at the University of Leipzig. Reger is known in particular for his mixing of a chromatic harmonic language and a usage of Classical and Baroque forms, such as the fugue and chorale prelude. Not afraid to wear his appreciation for the Classical era on his sleeve, Reger once wrote to his publishers, in response to hearing Richard Strauss's *Sinfonia Domestica* (1904), "It is absolutely clear to me *what* is lacking from our music today: a *Mozart!*"

The Serenade in G Major for flute, violin, and viola was composed quite late in Reger's life, just a year prior to his death. The work harkens back not only to Mozart and his *Divertimento* in E-flat Major for string trio, but also to Beethoven's Serenade in D Major, Op. 25, a work for the same constellation of instruments as Reger's. The trio consists of three movements: a tender, at times plaintive, Larghetto stands at the center of the work, flanked by a sprightly Vivace first and Presto final movement. As Reger himself remarked about the work, it is "*absolutely clear and straightforward* music," written in the spirit of Mozart. Truly, in the first measures of the Serenade one might stare with bafflement at the date of its composition. But as the work progresses, while the clarity of texture and line in Reger's language are retained, his explorative

chromaticism comes to the fore. This can be heard particularly in the secondary material of the inner Larghetto, which also returns as contrasting material to the lively melody heard in the flute, with which this Presto opens. Reger's Serenade has been heard many times at Marlboro, this evening representing its tenth performance at the festival since its first appearance on a Marlboro program in 1965.

Participants: Giorgio Consolati, *flute*;
 Isabelle Durrenberger, *violin*; Beth Guterman Chu, *viola*



String Quartet in F Major (1902-03)
Maurice Ravel
 Born March 7, 1875 (Ciboure, France)
 Died December 28, 1937 (Paris)
 Duration: approx. 28 minutes
 Last Marlboro performance: 2016

Ravel composed his String Quartet in F Major over the winter months of 1902, finishing the work in early April, 1903. The four-movement work was heavily influenced by Debussy's String Quartet in G Minor, written a decade prior—its structure is in fact modelled upon that of Debussy's—though Ravel's quartet is dedicated to his teacher at the Paris Conservatoire, Gabriel Fauré. Ravel's Quartet was premiered by the Heymann Quartet at the Société Nationale de Musique almost a year after its completion in early March 1904, a fecund year for the composer, during which he also completed his *Pavane pour une infante défunte* and *Jeux d'eau*, and which also saw the premiere of *Shéhérazade*. Almost immediately after the quartet's premiere, it entered the standard quartet repertory, where it has remained since. Tonight's performance is the tenth time it has appeared on a Marlboro program since its first festival performance in 1967.

The Quartet opens with a traditional sonata-allegro first movement, marked *très doux* (very sweetly). After this formally quite traditional first movement, the second movement, marked *Assez vif—très rythmé* (Rather lively, very rhythmical) is more experimental: it opens with pizzicato in every voice, the quartet plucking a highly accented, percussive dance, before the first violin enters, arco, with an ethereal song above an almost frenetic, rocking figure in the inner voices, marked *ppp*, which evokes the bright twinkling of stars. This singing line is passed between the violin and viola before melting away into the middle section of the movement, a Lento, which

features a wistful melody played by the cello. The movement concludes with a reprise of its raucous opening, the boisterous energy breaking forth first in the cello, then spreading to the rest of the quartet. The third movement, marked *Trés lent* (very slow), is lyrical—almost rhapsodic—though this contemplative atmosphere is almost constantly interrupted with material recalled from the first movement. Due to these interruptions, the calm that the movement might have represented never truly arrives. The Quartet concludes with an explosive finale, marked *Vif et agité* (lively and agitated), which is composed in a loose rondo form. Rhythmic instability generated by the usage of metrical changes, as well as the near omnipresence of tremolo, effects the agitated character of the movement. And with gestures towards the opening material of the first movement, Ravel creates a sense of formal closure. The work barrels to its conclusion as Ravel recapitulates the vigorous, in this guise almost triumphant, material of the finale’s opening.

Participants: Meesun Hong Coleman & Ji Won Song, *violins*; Jing Peng, *viola*; Brannon Cho, *cello*



Piano Quartet in A Major, Op. 26 (1861)

Johannes Brahms

Born May 7, 1833 (Hamburg, Germany)

Died April 3, 1897 (Vienna, Austria)

Duration: approx. 48 minutes

Last Marlboro performance: 2018

Brahms’ Piano Quartet No. 2 in A Major was completed in 1861 and premiered in November 1862 by the Hellmesberger Quartet and with Brahms himself at the piano. This premiere occurred in Vienna only a few months after Brahms made his first trip to the city, where he was introduced to its dynamic musical community by the likes of Clara Schumann and the prominent violinist and conductor Joseph Hellmesberger, Sr. After a private performance of Brahms’ first Piano Quartet in G Minor, Op. 25, Hellmesberger declared, “That is the heir to Beethoven!” Unfortunately, Brahms found the kindly meant comparison deeply unsettling, for, already predisposed to self-doubt, he felt it impossible to live up to the remark. After an overwhelmingly positive reception in Vienna, only a few months later, in the spring of 1863, Brahms accepted the directorship of the Vienna *Singakademie*, thereby solidifying his ties to the city where he would find permanent residence in 1870.

The Piano Quartet No. 2 in A Major was written shortly after the first Piano Quartet, while Brahms still resided in his home-town of Hamburg. The four-movement work is expansive in nature, representing the longest of all of Brahms’ chamber works and taking nearly 50 minutes to perform. In contrast to the tempestuous Piano Quartet No. 1, the A Major quartet is serene. It opens with a quietly majestic melody in the piano, to which the cello responds lyrically. Soon, all strings join together to restate the piano’s opening line, effecting a kind of re-orchestration of the beginning melody. This first movement is marked *Allegro non troppo* and is a sonata form; however, Brahms makes use of a compositional technique for which he would posthumously become famous, the “developing variation.” Using this technique, Brahms generates an abundance of lyrical melodies out of the smallest of musical motives, thus subtly creating motivic relationships between the various melodies present in the work. The second movement, marked *Poco adagio*, features a gentle, rocking motive in the strings, effecting an almost lullaby-like quality. The movement is defined as well by Brahms’ usage of timbral contrast to great effect, including a haunting reference in the piano’s sweeping diminished seventh arpeggios to Schubert’s Lied *Die Stadt*, from his posthumous song cycle, *Schwanengesang*. The heavenly closure of the *Adagio*, with an upward moving, trilled line in the violin, creates such a sense of serenity that it carries over into the following Scherzo movement, labeled *Scherzo—Poco allegro*. The lyricism of the previous two movements continues here in this dance movement, a surprising departure from the norm. It is only first in the secondary theme of the *Scherzo* (Brahms composes both the *Scherzo* and *Trio* to a sonata form) that a certain boisterousness typical of a Scherzo comes through. A raucous opening of the Quartet’s concluding *Finale (Allegro)* ensues, though Brahms does not entirely depart from the lyricism of the work’s previous movements. In this sonata-rondo form, the high-spirited opening material alternates with gentle, singing melodies that recall earlier moments in the piece. The work is concluded with a joyous coda that brings the Quartet to an exuberant close. The Piano Quartet in A Major has been a favorite work at Marlboro over the years: tonight’s performance is the twenty-first time that the work has been heard at the festival, since its first appearance on a Marlboro program in 1960.

Participants: Filippo Gorini, *piano*; Itamar Zorman, *violin*; Haesue Lee, *viola*; Brannon Cho, *cello*

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Sunday, July 24 at 2:30pm



Serenade in C Minor, K. 388 (1782)
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
 Born January 27, 1756 (Salzburg, Austria)
 Died December 5, 1791 (Vienna)
 Duration: approx. 24 minutes
 Last Marlboro performance: 2016

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed the Serenade in C Minor, K. 388 in Vienna in either July 1782 or late 1783 (there is still much scholarly debate as to the exact date). On July 27, 1782, Mozart wrote to his father about a piece he was working on, referring to it as *Nachtmusik* ("Night Music"). The German term is a linguistic equivalent to the Italian word *serenata* (Serenade), derived from *sera*, evening, and the Latin term *serenus*, serene, calm. The Serenade in C Minor, together with the Serenade No. 10 in B flat Major "Gran Partita" K. 361 and the Serenade No. 11 in F flat Major K. 375, represent Mozart's contribution to the then fashionable genre of *Harmoniemusik*. This was a form of eighteenth-century chamber music almost exclusively for wind instruments, often in the employ of an aristocratic patron. In composing the Serenade in C Minor, Mozart was likely hoping to receive a commission from the emperor or from another noble and musical connoisseur, Prince Aloys Joseph Liechtenstein. *Harmoniemusik* became very popular in Vienna around 1780-1800, after Emperor Joseph II founded the Kaiserlich-Königliche Harmonie, with which he established the standard instrumentation of two oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns, a model that was soon imitated in commissions from all noble families in the region. Among Mozart's Serenades, K. 388 is certainly the most puzzling and mysterious of the three. It is orchestrated for an ensemble traditionally used for light entertainment, and soft and idyllic by definition, yet it is extraordinarily dark in nature. The work is the only Serenade set in a minor key, using marked juxtapositions of extreme emotional maturity, only found in Mozart's latest works. It has four movements, lending it affinity with the grander scale of a symphony. The first movement displays a classical sonata form, beginning in C Minor as the exposition's the main key and E-flat Major as the secondary key area. The brief development makes use of a canon, which traverses through sections in B-flat, E-flat Major, and G Minor before returning to C Minor in order to conclude the movement with a mysterious oboe melody. The second movement is also a sonata form in 3/8, with a graceful and delicate effect. One might say, this

is the only movement that represents the concept of Serenade. The third movement is a minuet, labeled "in canone." In the midst of this movement, almost hermetic in its virtuosic usage of canon, Mozart switches to a different mode of canon right in the major key central trio section: a canon by inversion. In some ways, this moment represents a prefiguration of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G Minor (K. 550). There are only four voices in this middle movement, the oboes and the bassoons. Finally, the last movement takes a theme and variations form. The first four variations recapitulate the first movement's umbral atmosphere. The fifth variation brings the audience back to the lighter and softer mood of the second movement before reverting to minor in the sixth variation. Next, the seventh variation is formed by a rhythmically stretched melody. Finally, the movement closes with an exuberant final variation in C Major with a final horn, wrapping up the whole movement, thus effecting a transfiguration from the shadowy darkness with which the work began, into the bright, hopeful light of day.

Participants: Mary Lynch VanderKolk & Russell Hoffman, *oboes*; Yoonah Kim & Víctor Díaz Guerra, *clarinets*; Nelson Ricardo Yovera Perez & Gabriel Kovach, *horns*; Natalya Rose Vrbsky & Jake Thonis, *bassoons*



String Quartet No. 3, Op. 94 (1975)
Benjamin Britten
 Born November 22, 1913 (Lowestoft, England)
 Died December 4, 1976 (Aldeburgh)
 Duration: approx. 25 minutes
 Last Marlboro performance: 2018

Written just one year before his death, Britten's Third String Quartet represents the composer's return to quartet writing after a period of three decades. Britten was recovering from a heart operation in 1973 during which he complained of discomfort while reaching the upper staves of an orchestral manuscript. Musicologist Hans Keller ribbed him, suggesting that this was the perfect time for Britten to write a string quartet. The piece itself includes five movements, and it is sometimes seen as more of a suite because of this. Britten showcases many moods in succession, beginning with a meditation on how to pair two voices, moving onto an ostinato in the second movement that contrasts bustling material with an obsessively repeated musical gesture. The musical texture thins in the third movement, marked *Solo (Very calm)*, and the following *Burlesque* jostles the

piece back into motion. The final movement harkens back to Britten's final opera, *Death in Venice*, which was premiered in Aldeburgh in 1973. This final movement is titled *La Serenissima*, a nickname for Venice, and opens with a lapping motion reminiscent of the waters. This lapping, however, is anything but serene; in its eerie irregularity and the usage of ponticello in the violins, the music gestures towards the uneasy, almost threatening Venetian world portrayed by Thomas Mann in the eponymous novella upon which Britten based his opera. Britten referred to the end of his final quartet as "a question," and in Britten's treatment of the quartet's four voices, one can hear the quartet members pass a question and tentative answer back and forth amongst each other. The questioner is supported by tremelando or held notes in the other three voices in a texture reminiscent of Bartók's later quartets. Tonight's performance of Britten's Third String Quartet is a rarity: it is only the fourth time that the work has been featured on a Marlboro program since its first performance here, just under a decade after its premiere, in 1985.

Participants: Anna Göckel & Itamar Zorman, *violins*;
William Coleman, *viola*; Edvard Pogossian, *cello*



Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47
(1842)

Robert Schumann

Born June 8, 1810 (Zwickau, Germany)

Died July 29, 1856 (Bonn, Germany)

Duration: approx. 28 minutes

Last Marlboro performance: 2012

Robert Schumann had the habit of concentrating, in any given year, on one particular genre of music. 1842 was the chamber music year. It was Schumann's dear friend Franz Liszt who urged him to write chamber music, certain that writing for solo piano would not be enough for Schumann's powerful creative energy. In very quick succession, he composed three string quartets (Op. 41, composed in less than five weeks), a piano trio, and a piano quintet (Op. 44 composed in just over six days), as well as the piano quartet featured on tonight's program (composed, this time, in only five days). Both the piano quintet and the piano quartet are in E-flat Major—"creative doubles" as many scholars have described them over the years. But Schumann could not completely give up his passion for the piano, and this is clear as one listens to Quartet Op. 47, for in this work the piano has an important, if not *the*, most important role among all the instruments.

The Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47 opens with a brief, slow introduction, which contains a four-note motif, evoked by the piano like a distant and mysterious memory. This motif forms the basis of the *Allegro's* main theme. The *Scherzo* that follows, all staccato vigor, is interrupted by two contrasting *Trios*, vaguely recalling Mendelssohn's chamber music, with the first trio similar to one of the *Songs without Words*, but still clearly marked by the syncopated beats typical of Schumann's writing. The following movement, *Andante cantabile*, is lyrical and clear. In it we hear perhaps one of Schumann's most achingly romantic melodies, sung first by the warm and heartfelt cello sound, with its longing and unrest, and its major and minor sevenths that reach up only to fall down again and again. Towards the end of this movement, Schumann instructs the cello to tune the instrument's lowest string, C, down to B-flat, in order to provide a pedal bass with the tonic of the key. Finally, the last movement, marked *Vivace*, is in the form of a highly virtuosic fugue, which is based on a linear theme taken from the first movement. Here, the piano continues to play a central role until the brilliant and triumphant conclusion of the piece. Schumann's Piano Quartet has been a favorite piece at Marlboro, having been performed twenty times at the festival since its first appearance on a program in 1964.

Participants: Mitsuko Uchida, *piano*; Stephanie Zyzak,
violin; Beth Guterman Chu, *viola*; Oliver Herbert, *cello*