

String Quartet in D Major, Op.20 No.4 (1774)

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

- 1 Allegro di molto
- 2 Un poco adagio affettuoso
- 3 Minuet: Allegretto alla zingarese
- 4 Presto e scherzando

Chinese Folk Songs

Zhou Long (b. 1953)

- 1 Lan Hua Hua (Shaanbei)
- 2 Driving the Mule Team (Shanxi)
- 3 The Flowing Stream (Yunnan)
- 4 Jasmine Flower (Jiangsu)
- 5 A Horseherd's Mountain Song (Yunnan)
- 6 When Will the Acacia Bloom (Sichuan)
- 7 A Single Bamboo Can Easily Bend (Hunan)
- 8 Leaving Home (Shanxi)

String Quartet in g Minor, Op. 27 (1878)

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

- 1 Un poco andante – Allegro molto ed agitato
- 2 Romanze: Andantino
- 3 Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato-Piu vivo e scherzando

4 Finale: Lento-Presto al saltarello

String Quartet in D Major, Op.20 No.4

Joseph Haydn is sometimes called the "father of the string quartet" because from his decades-long treatment of it emerged the form and features of a typical classical string quartet-- a fast movement in sonata -allegro form (exposition, development, and recapitulation) a slow theme and variations or free-form second movement, a dance movement, usually a minuet and trio, and a much faster final movement. In his own catalogue Haydn classified his early string quartets up until Opus 20 as divertimenti and cassations. These were multi- movement forms with no specific instrumentation or structure. Haydn wrote numerous ones for various wind, wind and string and other combinations. Divertimenti were of light character, often written for the instruction of students or recreation of amateur players. Cassations were similar but meant to be played outdoors for parades or public events.

The six Opus 20 quartets are known as the Sun quartets because the Ataria edition featured an illustration of a rising sun on its cover. The quartet No. 4 is the most popular of the set, and although called a divertimento is formally a string quartet, but with a few twists. The Allegro di molto begins with a repeated unison note followed by a strikingly dissonant chord. This motif recurs in some form at the beginning of nearly every phrase. The second movement theme is in the almost overly expressive late baroque Galant style. The variations highlight in turn the second violin and viola together, then the cello, then the first violin. The final variation restates the original theme followed by a coda of all new material and a most unusual conclusion. The heavily accented syncopations and cross-rhythms of the minuet are quite out of character, surely meant to startle or amuse. The greatest humor though is in the totally madcap scherzando finale.

Chinese Folk Songs

Zhou Long is from a musical Beijing family where he learned the piano as a child. The Cultural Revolution upended his studies for a time, later he was able to continue at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. He received a fellowship to study at Columbia University and earned a doctorate there. He was the director of Music from China, a group

presenting concerts of traditional Chinese music as well as works by contemporary Chinese composers. At present he is a Distinguished Professor of Composition at the University of Missouri/Kansas City. The Seattle Symphony and the Cleveland Institute have both hosted him as composer in residence and he has given master classes at many universities and conservatories. Among his honors are an ASCAP Adventurous Programming Award and a Pulitzer Prize. Two notable compositions are his opera *Madame White Snake* and *The Rhyme of Taigu* for orchestra. The *Chinese Folk Songs* for string quartet make very effective use of the capacities of the instruments, including many atmospheric and coloristic effects. The songs themselves cover a range of expressions and are labeled with their place of origin.

String Quartet in g Minor, Op. 27

For most of his mature years Edvard Grieg divided his time between writing and touring, he was renowned both as a piano virtuoso and as the most prominent Norwegian nationalist romantic composer. He grew up in a musical household and had his first lessons from his mother who was an accomplished pianist. The family hosted musical gatherings where he gained a special appreciation for the music of Mozart, Chopin, and Weber. Grieg began to compose at about age fourteen, and later studied at the Leipzig Conservatory where he developed an affinity for the music of Robert Schumann. It was some time after this that Grieg began to delve more deeply into native Norwegian culture, perhaps sparked by his acquaintances with the violinist Ole Bull and the composer Rickard Nordraack. Thereafter very many of his compositions were based on texts from Norwegian literature and folk traditions, comprising incidental music for stage works, unaccompanied choral works, chorales with piano or orchestra, and numerous songs. Many of his solo piano works also have nationalistic associations. Grieg also contributed greatly to an important aspect of the nationalist movement, the building up of cultural institutions.

The quartet in g Minor is Greig's only complete string quartet. In a letter to a friend Greig wrote "...it is not intended to bring trivialities to market. It strives toward breadth, soaring flight and above all resonance...". The opening andante theme has an intervallic motif often used by Grieg, most notably in the piano concerto. It consists of a descending scale step followed by a descending third. This theme is a cyclical element returning many times all through the piece. The agitato first movement has moments of great power where all four instruments play double stops together. The effect is enhanced by using harmony purely for sonority rather than function. The Romanza second movement is lyrical with an agitated

middle section which recurs fitfully as the movement ends. In the Intermezzo the intervallic motif recurs in a syncopated rhythm briefly reminiscent of Renaissance music before proceeding in a more lyrical vein. A simple rustic melody is used for the middle section. The finale begins with the initial cyclical theme before launching into a vigorous saltarello. A lighter melody in duple time is introduced, the music becomes more lyrical. The saltarello returns with ferocity ending in sonorous harmonic clashes until the entire quartet ends with the cyclical theme.

Notes by Raymond Zoeckler

Information from the New Grove Dictionary,
Wikipedia, YouTube