



**2008-2009 Season
Program I**

**The Afiara String Quartet:
Valarie Li, violin
Yuri Cho, violin
David Samuel, viola
Adrian Fung, cello**

**Grace Presbyterian Church
October 12, 2008 3pm**



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756 - 1791)

String Quartet in E flat major, K.428
(1783)

- I Allegro non troppo
- II Andante con moto
- III Menuetto and Trio: Allegro
- IV Allegro vivace

Béla Bartók
(1881 - 1945)

String Quartet No. 3, Sz. 85
(1927)

- I Prima parte
- II Seconda parte
- III Ricapitulation della prima parte
- IV Coda

Intermission

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809 - 1847)

String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 13
"Ist Es Wahr?" (1827)

- I Adagio - Allegro vivace
- II Adagio non lento
- III Intermezzo: Allegretto con moto - Allegro di molto
- IV Presto - Adagio non lento

The Afiara String Quartet:

Valarie Li, violin Yuro Cho, viola
David Samuel, viola Adrian Fung, cello



Welcome to this, the opening concert of the Sierra Chamber Society's 22nd Season. Today's concert features a selection of works spanning three centuries, performed with their incomparable verve by the Afiara Quartet; who have recently returned from Europe, where they took Second Place in Munich's prestigious ARD Music Competition. The fact that they are fast gaining an international reputation will come as no surprise to those of us who have had the pleasure of hearing their wonderful performances. We wish them continued success, which they truly deserve.

Vienna, 1 September 1785

"To my dear friend Haydn.

A father who had decided to send out his sons into the great world thought it was his duty to entrust them to the protection and guidance of a man who was very celebrated at the time and who, moreover, happened to be his best friend..

In like manner I send my six sons to you, most celebrated and very dear friend. They are, indeed, the fruit of a long and laborious study; but the hope which many friends have given me that this toil will be in some degree regarded, encourages and flatters me with the thought that these children may some day prove a source of consolation to me.

During your last stay in this capital you yourself, my very dear friend, expressed to me your approval of these compositions. Your good opinion encourages me to offer them to you and leads me to hope that you will not consider them unworthy of your favor. Please, then, receive them kindly and be to them a father, guide and friend! From this moment I surrender to you all my rights over them. I entreat you, however, to be indulgent to those faults which may have escaped a father's indulgent eye, and in spite of them to continue your generous friendship toward one who so highly appreciates it. Meanwhile, I remain with all my heart, dearest friend, your most sincere friend."

W.A. Mozart.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)
String Quartet in E Flat major, K.428 (1783)

Mozart had been profoundly impressed by Haydn's set of six quartets Opus 33 published in 1781. Inspired by these works, he returned to the writing of string quartets after a lapse of ten years. It was between 1782 and 1785 that the six "Haydn" quartets were composed. As musicologist Alfred Einstein says, "Mozart did not allow himself to be overcome. This time he learned as a master from a master; he did not imitate, he yielded nothing of his own personality." Their respect and admiration being mutual, Haydn was, in turn, to be influenced in his own subsequent quartets by these quartets that Mozart dedicated to him.

In the earliest versions of the string quartet which developed out of the 'divertimento', the first violin had the bulk of the musical discourse, backed up by the cello providing



the very important bass line. The second violin and viola provided the inner voices, filling out the harmonies above the bass line; basically like a singer with accompaniment. Indeed, this style of quartet writing would continue in France into the early 19th century. However, Mozart followed Haydn's lead in conceiving the string quartet as a four-part discourse, shared by all the instruments. It was this concept that would be continued by Beethoven and Schubert, and to this day remains the paradigm for string quartet writing.

This is not to say that these masterful quartets did not have their detractors. An article in Cramer's *Magasin der Musik* from Apr. 23, 1787 we find Mozart described as: "the most skillful and best keyboard player I have ever heard; the only pity is that he aims too high in his artful and truly beautiful compositions, in order to be a new creator, whereby it must be said that feeling and heart profit little; his new Quartets for two violins, viola and bass, which he has dedicated to Haydn, may well be called too highly seasoned – and whose palate can endure this for long?"

The opening of the E Flat Quartet consists of a chromatic passage including nine out of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale, played in unison by all four instruments. I dare say the writer of the above article would have found this a splash of Tabasco Sauce on the tongue. The second movement is notable for its rich and daring harmonies, while the third movement menuetto is a folksy affair, with its repeated notes and yodel-like tune, contrasted by a minor mode Trio. The finale is a romp, containing both high spirits and passionate outbursts, plus a few tricks learned from "Papa".

In his work *Mozart: The Haydn Quartets*, John Irving writes; "The 'Haydn' Quartets continue to appeal to every time and to every taste, mediating effortlessly between melodic elegance and harmonic drama; solo display and gritty contrapuntal exchange; periodic dance and seamless fugue; 'high' and 'low' styles; simple and complex texture; formal convention and invention."

"The tragedy of Bartók was not only the lifelong struggle with poor health and constantly recurring financial difficulties, but also the neglect of his works, the ridicule of the press, and the lack of response of the audience on those rare occasions when he heard his works performed. This man whose music had an elemental sweep, barbaric rhythms, and penetrating force, never weighed more than 116 pounds, and sometimes as little as 87. His slow, even, measured walk was characteristic of his personality. When he came out on the Carnegie Hall stage, with delicate steps, to receive the ovation at the American premiere of his Violin Concerto, one New York newspaper said that he looked like a botany professor from a girl' college. But the small and fragile body was endowed with an iron and an uncompromising character. Although he spoke deliberately, with a soft voice, he could say a great deal without



using an unnecessary or unimportant word. This mild-mannered composer refused to utter a word he did not believe. He was eminently correct in his attitude toward others and expected the same in return. But he was never as severe with others as he was with himself. He had blue eyes, which revealed a sharp, keen mind. He was interested in everything; science, foreign countries, unusual foods, literature, languages, and especially philology. He was, in fact, more interested in things than in people. This knowledge of fields other than music was not superficial; he penetrated deeply into a subject and had a strong passion for accuracy. His crystal clear mind was quick to see the humorous side of a situation, and his life was simple and modest. He not only never had luxury, but even resented the thought of it. He refused to ask favors or to accept help. His pride and integrity showed the same strength that his music radiated. It was not easy to help him, as he did not want charity. It was part of the "Bartók tragedy" that not until immediately after his death did his popularity spread to every part of the world. On the other hand, fate did smile at Bartók. In his last two years, he enjoyed, finally the applause of the widest public and not only of the selected audiences of the various small societies of contemporary music."

Erno Balogh - pianist, teacher, composer, and friend of Bartók

"The opening allegro took me straight back to childhood and gave me in turn the rusty windlass of a well, the interlinking noises of a goods train that is being shunted, then the belly rumbling of a little boy acutely ill after a raid on an orchard, and finally the singular alarmed noises of poultry being worried to death by a scotch terrier. The second movement gave me continuously and throughout its short length the noise of a November wind in telegraph poles on a lonely country road. The third movement began with a dog howling at midnight, proceeded to imitate the regurgitations of the less refined or lower-middle-class type of water closet cistern, modulating thence into the mass snoring of a naval dormitory around the dawn, and concluded inconsequentially with the cello reproducing the screech of an ungreased wheelbarrow. The fourth movement took me straight back to the noises I made myself, on wet days indoors, at the age of six, by stretching and plucking a piece of elastic. And the fifth movement reminded me immediately and persistently and vividly of something I have never thought of since the only time I heard it: the noise of a Zulu village in the Glasgow Exhibition, a hubbub all the more singular, because it had a background of skirling highland bagpipes. Both noises emerged in this final movement of this Fourth Quartet of Béla Bartók."

(from a letter written by Alan Dent quoted in *The Later Ego* by James Agate, London, 1951)

The above is an entry from Nicholas Slonimsky's *Lexicon of Musical Invective*. I suspect that had he wished, Mr. Slonimsky could have compiled a volume of this work devoted entirely to Bartók. Although the above quote refers to the Fourth Quartet, such a flight of creative writing needs but a very small impetus to start it off, and the author would have found it as apt a clever description of the sound of the Third Quartet as well.



Béla Bartók (1881 – 1945)
String Quartet No. 3, Sz. 85 (1927)

Bartók's six String Quartets are now looked upon as worthy successors to the Quartets of Beethoven. They were composed throughout his career, from an unpublished early work dating from 1899 and not part of the Six, to the Sixth quartet composed in 1939.

An extremely fastidious composer, Bartók included timings down to the second, as well as the conventional metronome markings in his printed scores. One of the giants of Twentieth Century music, he alone provided, as it were, a lexicon of his own musical vocabulary in his six volume series of progressive studies for piano entitled *Microkosmos*. This work runs the gamut of elements that comprise Bartók's unique style; from simple unison melodies, to various modal scales and folk music styles to canons and the various devices and tricks of imitative counterpoint, as well as unusual interval combinations, chord clusters, and his "barbaric" rhythms. These are the raw materials from which the Third Quartet, and the three which follow it, are constructed. In addition to the aforementioned elements, the stringed instruments provide a wealth of tone color, including glissandi (slides), pizzicati, harmonics, tapping the wooden part of the bow on the strings, further expanding Bartók's musical language, often in the service of evoking the world of Nature, birds, insects, the wind and sounds of the night. As for color; during this period it was color of the expressionist; a style in the visual arts marked by jarring color combinations, deliberately crude and distorted renderings of the human figure and other familiar objects. It should be noted that the Third Quartet was composed between two of Bartók's most extreme works; the First Piano Concerto, with its barbaric rhythms and percussive tone clusters, and his Expressionist ballet the *Miraculous Mandarin* (the grisly tale in dance of two thugs and a prostitute who attempt to rob and murder a 'mandarin' who comes seeking the services of the 'ho'. Despite repeated beating and stabbing, he only dies after achieving sexual satisfaction, as in "I can't get no..." A tad racist? I believe so.)

The Third Quartet while played as a continuous movement, is comprised of a slow first part (*prima parte*) and an agitated second part (*seconda parte*). While the musical terrain may seem very unfamiliar, this plan is actually the format of the familiar "Hungarian Rhapsody". However, Bartók then adds a recap of the *prima parte*, but with no literal repeat of previously heard material; rather in the spirit of improvisation found in the folk music he heard and studied. The Coda, is an even briefer and faster recap of material, again with no literal repeat, of the *seconda parte*. While this music is a result of Bartók's extensive and pioneering work in Ethno-musicology, unlike much other 20th century art music based or inspired by folk musics, you'll not hear any arrangement of folk tunes, or folk-like tunes for string quartet in this work. Instead, Bartók extracted essential motifs, gestures, and rhythms of Hungarian and other European folk music, at the cellular level, if you will. With these as the building blocks, he constructed the unique sound world that is the Third Quartet.

Much to the composer's surprise and delight, this Quartet shared First Prize (with



a work, *Serenata op.46*, by Alfredo Casella) in a quartet competition sponsored by the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia. The Third Quartet was premiered on February 19, 1929 by the Waldbauer-Kerpeley Quartet in London's Wigmore Hall.

He started playing the piano at the age of four and was composing at eight, by which time he had memorized all the Beethoven symphonies and could play them on the piano. He may have even been superior creatively to Mozart as a young man, for Mendelssohn at sixteen had already written the Octet and was to follow it up in the following year with the *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*. Mozart at the same age had nothing comparable to show."

Harold C. Schonberg

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 13 "Ist Es Wahr?" (1827)

Mendelssohn was a child prodigy and a precocious artist. However he differs from prodigies like Mozart and Beethoven in that he did not come from a family of professional musicians. He composed sonatas, songs, cantatas, organ works, and even a symphony before his sixteenth birthday. At seventeen he produced his first masterpiece, the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Among his many accomplishments as a composer, conductor, performer, scholar, teacher and champion of his contemporaries, (he was also an excellent sketcher and watercolorist), was bringing back from obscurity the music of J.S. Bach and editing and revising Handel's Oratorios based on the principle of faithful adherence to the original, then a novel idea. He was the first to conduct Schumann's symphonies and, along with Schumann and Ferdinand David, founded the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843. Mendelssohn drove himself relentlessly in all his musical activities and died suddenly in 1847 at the age of 38.

Today, as art and literature increasingly take a back seat to popular culture (or worse yet, entertainment as consumable product, need I mention "American Idol"? Perhaps the "Good Book" had it right, in this instance, regarding what to do with idols and their worshippers), how can we begin to comprehend the eighteen year old Mendelssohn? He was a marvel, not only for his musical imagination and craftsmanship, but also for the quality of his understanding and his musical judgment. The A Minor Quartet provides a case in point. It was written in the year of Beethoven's death, 1827. At that time Beethoven's music was out of fashion. Rossini was the hero of the day. Carl Maria Von Weber and Ludwig Spohr, who wielded considerable influence on their fellow composers, viewed Beethoven's late quartets as the ravings of a cranky, deaf, old man, sick in body and spirit.

For his part, the 18 year old Mendelssohn found those quartets to be marvels, spiritually, intellectually and technically, a view not widely held until this century.



He made a careful study of them and was able to adapt some of Beethoven's techniques, such as integrated movements, fugal textures, new tonal effects and more adventuresome harmonies. The A Minor Quartet's last movement has a solo for the first violin that harkens to the last movement of Beethoven's Opus 132.

The concept of integrated movements is to be found by regarding the Quartet's subtitle, "Ist Es Wahr?" (Is it true?) The title comes from a poem by a friend of his, Johann Gustav Droyson, which Mendelssohn set to music and published as Opus 9, #1. The opening three note phrase of the song becomes a motto which in many guises informs the entire quartet. The second movement contains the fugal textures often found in the late Beethoven quartets. The intermezzo presents a beautifully simple melody sung by the violin, with the other instruments providing pizzicato accompaniment. The middle section of this movement contains music that brings to mind the scherzos of the Midsummer Night's Dream and the Octet. The final movement refers back to the opening and the motto, this time letting it continue to reveal the original song.

Program Notes by Joseph Way

Special Season Ticket Discount!

For those of you who have not yet purchased season tickets please note that we have an option for you to apply the cost of your single ticket for today's concert to a discounted season ticket purchase. Check it out at the ticket desk before the concert or during intermission.

The Musicians

The all-Canadian **Afiara String Quartet** takes its name from the Spanish *fiar*, meaning "to trust". It has been said that chamber music is a conversation between friends. Within the support of friendship, the Afiaras found that trusting each other, in rehearsal and on stage, was vital to the depth and joy of their music-making. As part of the Morrison Center for Chamber Music, they are in residence at San Francisco State University as teaching assistants to their mentors, the Alexander String Quartet. They have worked with the Kronos Quartet, Paul Hersh, Robert Mann, Mark Sokol, and Ian Swensen. The Quartet consists of:

Valerie Li, violin, received her Bachelor's from the Peabody Conservatory and her Master's from the New England Conservatory. She has performed at the Kennedy Center, Carnegie, Jordan and Strathmore Halls. Ms. Li won first prize in Chamber Music at the National Music Festival of Canada and was the recipient of a British Columbia Arts Council Award to study at Peabody, where she won the Marbury Prize and the Hulsteyn Award. Ms. Li has been named a fellow at Tanglewood



Music Center and Aspen Music Festival, and has performed at Taos School of Music in New Mexico and the Banff Centre for the Performing Arts. She has played with the Baltimore and Singapore Symphonies and served as Concertmaster of the New England Conservatory Philharmonia, the Peabody Symphony Orchestra and with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. Ms. Li has studied violin with Miriam Fried, Herbert Greenberg, and Gwen Thompson and chamber music with members of the Takacs, Juilliard, Vermeer, and Borromeo String Quartets.

Yuri Cho, violin, received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from The Juilliard School, where she studied with Dorothy Delay, Naoko Tanaka, and Masao Kawasaki as a recipient of the Dorothy Starling Violin Scholarship and the Jean Doyle Loomis Award. Hailed by the San Francisco Classical Voice as a musician with virtuosity, she was a featured soloist with the Seoul Royal Symphony in Korea and Japan, the Concordia Symphony Orchestra in Canada, and has given concerts in New York's Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, and in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Ms. Cho has performed with Norman Fischer, Jean-Michel Fonteneau, Paul Hersh, Jodi Levitz, and Ian Swensen. She was named an Osher Scholar at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Ian Swensen and is currently a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory's Preparatory Division.

David Samuel, viola, received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from The Juilliard School under the Nathan Gordon Scholarship and the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship. He has studied viola with Karen Tuttle, Michael Tree, and Paul Hersh, and chamber music with Emanuel Ax, Joseph Kalichstein, and members of the Juilliard String Quartet. He has performed in Canada, the U.S., and more than a dozen countries in Europe. His concerts have taken him to the Berlin Konzerthaus, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center. As an orchestral musician, Mr. Samuel has been the principal violist of the Juilliard Orchestra and the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival Orchestra. As a chamber musician, he performed with Robert Mann, Bonnie Hampton, Norman Fischer, Martha Katz, and Pinchas Zukerman. Mr. Samuel has been a teaching assistant to Michael Tree and is currently on faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Preparatory Division.

Adrian Fung, cello, has given solo recitals in New York's Carnegie Hall, the Goethe Institute, Montreal's Pollack Hall, the Toronto Centre of the Performing Arts, the Living Arts Centre, and Taiwan's National Concert Hall. He has been soloist with Ensemble 212, Columbia Chamber Players, and will appear with the Oakville Symphony next season. Mr. Fung was awarded an Artist Grant from the New York Foundation of the Arts and received the Goodrich Award from the National Arts Centre of Canada. He has performed at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln



Center and the Orford Music Festival's "Musicians On Tour" and premiered several works, including pieces by Huck Hodge and the International Society of Contemporary Music. A graduate of McGill University and Mannes College, Mr. Fung studied cello with Fred Sherry, Antonio Lysy, David Hetherington, and Susan Gagnon. He is currently an Osher Scholar at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, studying with Jean-Michel Fonteneau.

Sierra Chamber Society 2008-2009 Season
All concerts at 3PM

Sunday, December 14, 2008
Kline - String Trio
Juon - Piano Trio
Brahms - String Quintet in F, Op.88

Sunday, April 26, 2009
Francaix - Divertimento
for Flute and Piano
Dvorak - Slavonic Dances
Beethoven - String Quartet,
Op. 18 No. 2

Sunday, February 22, 2009
Haydn - String Quartet Op.76 No.5
Schumann - Fantasiestucke
for Cello and Piano
Prokofiev - String Quartet No. 2

Sunday, June 7, 2009
Haydn - Divertimenti
Hovhanness - String Quartet "Jupiter"
Schumann - Piano Quintet,
Op.44 in E flat

New Ticketing

Individual tickets for any concert can be purchased in advance by calling our new number: **925-930-8880** and we are now accepting VISA and MasterCard as well as checks. And there are always tickets at the door. And, as always, we are grateful for your donations which can be mailed to our PO Box 4485, Walnut Creek, 94596 or given to almost anyone here (believe us, they will find the way to the bank and put to good use).

The Sierra Chamber Society:
Stevan Cavalier, General Director
Greg Mazmanian, Executive Director
Joseph Way, Artistic Director
Richard A. Gylgayton, Program Editor
Mary Harvey, Business Manager
Jean Harris, Publicity

Sierra Chamber Society
PO Box 4485
Walnut Creek CA 94596
925-930-8880
<http://www.sierrachamber.com>

Our Home on the Web:
<http://www.sierrachamber.com>

Email
The Musicians - players@fuguemasters.com
Stevan Cavalier - steve@fuguemasters.com
Richard A. Gylgayton - richard@fuguemasters.com
Greg Mazmanian - greg@fuguemasters.com
Joseph Way - joe@fuguemasters.com



**Ticket prices provide a small percentage of our season's cost.
We are deeply indebted to our donors whose additional
generosity is gratefully acknowledged below.**

Business Contributors

Chevron
IBM
Simpson Manufacturing
Sunrise Bistro
Walnut Creek Super Print
Rob Wilson Recordings

Legacy Gifts (\$10,000 or more)

Estate of Virginia Hopkins
Dr. Florence R. Oaks
Dr. Virginia B. Smith

Founders (\$1000 or more)

Daniel Cavalier
In Memory of Naomi Cavalier
Andrew Hartman
Barclay and Sharon Simpson

Patrons (\$500 or more)

Mr. and Mrs. H. Bruce Byson
Bill and Dorothy Dworsky
Janet Church
Bruce and Katharine Hartman
Ivan and Ruth Majdrakoff
Shirley Weber

Sustainers (\$250 or more)

Barbara Gillis
Dr. and Mrs. Wiliam G. Gottfried
Rodney Lester
George and Nancy Leitmann
Arturo Maimoni

Supporters (\$100 or more)

Robert J. Bauer
Joe Bologna
Wayne and Marilyn Brock
Carol Butler
Carol and Ken Fowler
Plato and Pat Grivas
Jean Harris
Mary Harvey
William F. Kieffer

In Memory of Elaine Kieffer

Sylvain and Karen Lapointe
Manfred and Bernice Lindner
Mr. and Mrs. William L. Needham
Robert Muller and Verna Osborn
Don and Helen Pearlstein
David Ramos
Dorothy Whittemore Ross
Bill and Leslie Rupley
Robin Slovak
Joseph Way

*In Memory of Susan Way and
Daniel Way*

Franz and Sarah Wassermann

Donors (\$25 or more)

Betty M. Allen
Nicholas P. and Helen Armensis
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bell
Alice Hannah
Mrs. Hollis Hardy
Robert and Judith Ilgen
Michael and Nancy Kaplan
Beatrice Kushner
Sandy Levitt
Balazs and Jean Rozsnyai
Virgie G. Shore
Sheila Silver
Arline B. Spieler
Maury and Susan Stern
Robert Taines
Harry Wolf



Copious Thanks to:
FUGUEMASTERS!!
for the Hoot and Hollers