



SHANE CHEN violin
NICHOLAS WATERS violin
HELEN IRELAND viola
ZOE KNIGHTON cello

FLINDERS QUARTET

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART 1756-1792

String Quartet No. 14 in G major, K.387 (composed 1782)

I. Allegro vivace assai

II. Menuetto

III. Andante cantabile

IV. Molto allegro

Mozart had just heard Haydn's Opus 33 set of quartets in Vienna in 1781 and he was immediately inspired to compose for quartet again. This dedication to his muse reveals a self deprecating humanness in Mozart that is often overlooked. He reveals the agony of the long creative endeavour. These works had numerous rewrites and and he was often working on more than one string quartet at a time.

Haydn heard these works for the first time at Mozart's home. According to a letter Leopold wrote to his daughter, Nanerl, Haydn had declared, "Before God, and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste, and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition."

To my dear friend Haydn,

A father who had resolved to send his children out into the great world took it to be his duty to confide them to the protection and guidance of a very celebrated Man, especially when the latter by good fortune was at the same time his best Friend. Here they are then, O great Man and dearest Friend, these six children of mine. They are, it is true, the fruit of a long and laborious endeavor, yet the hope inspired in me by several Friends that it may be at least partly compensated encourages me, and I flatter myself that this offspring will serve to afford me solace one day. You, yourself, dearest friend, told me of your satisfaction with them during your last Visit to this Capital. It is this indulgence above all which urges me to commend them to you and encourages me to hope that they will not seem to you altogether unworthy of your favour. May it therefore please you to receive them kindly and to be their Father, Guide and Friend! From this moment I resign to you all my rights in them, begging you however to look indulgently upon the defects which the partiality of a Father's eye may have concealed from me, and in spite of them to continue in your generous Friendship for him who so greatly values it, in expectation of which I am, with all of my Heart, my dearest Friend, your most Sincere Friend,

W.A. Mozart

The first movement is at the same time conversational and operatic showing Mozart in his comfort zone. The themes are characterised by lightning quick dynamic changes and emphasis on chromatic movement. These elements are used in the other movements in a bold step towards unifying the piece. The quirky second movement with its off beat accents and chromatic movement gives a nod to the musical humour of Haydn. It may not seem so hilarious now, but at the time, it was a musical riot. This jaunt is followed by the emotional gravitas of the third movement. With the surety and comfort of C major, Mozart weaves his magic spell and delivers a poignant and heartfelt centre, worthy of his master. The fugal last movement is reminiscent of his symphony No. 40 (Jupiter). The writing of a true genius with the last tip of the hat to Haydn's "Joke" quartet in the final bars.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

String Quartet No. 4, Op. 18, No. 4 in C minor (composed 1799-1800)

I. Allegro, ma non tanto

II. Scherzo. Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto (C major)

III. Menuetto. Allegretto

IV. Allegro

Beethoven's Opus 18 set of string quartets reflected the age of enlightenment setting in which they were composed. The first movement in particular takes the string quartet from the relatively sedate classical court into the turbulent stadium of the romantics. Beethoven waited until he was nearly thirty to write his string quartets. By

this time, Mozart was nearing the end of his life. While one can't really compare the numerical value of Beethoven's sixteen quartets against Haydn's 68 and Mozart's 26, it is fair to say that the first of these in his Opus 18 set paved the way for many new advances. Beethoven attended many of Emmanuel Forster's twice-weekly quartet parties, so he knew the medium intimately. At this time, the string quartet was still largely an amateur pursuit and it was Beethoven's advances in his writing that forced it into the professional arena.

As Beethoven began work on his first string quartets, Haydn was beginning work on his last - his Opus 77 and part of his Opus 103. Indeed, Beethoven copied out the entire Opus 20 E flat quartet by Haydn. He certainly felt the weight of this master, even if they didn't necessarily get along as teacher and student.

One of Beethoven's teachers, Christian Neefe, had written that a composer must be a student not just of notes but of humanity. He said you need a "Meticulous acquaintance with the various characters of men with the passions. One observes the nuances of feelings, or the point where one passion changes into another."

These nuances of feelings are what sets these works apart.

This piece seems to announce a new age of music with its turbulent mood changes. It is the only quartet of the set in a minor key, and the choice is no accident.

Pianist and scholar Charles Rosen writes in his book on the 32 piano sonatas:
"Beethoven in C minor has come to symbolize his artistic character. In every case, it reveals Beethoven as a Hero. C minor does not show Beethoven at his most subtle, but it does give him to us in his most extrovert form, where he seems to be most impatient of any compromise".

We all know the fifth symphony and its triumphant journey from C minor to C major. The same happens in this quartet written years before its symphony sibling.

While the first movement uses the standard sonata form, the exploration within those parameters is showing Beethoven's strong desire to shake conventions of the past. Accented offbeats, swift dynamic changes and key changes all make for riveting and challenging listening. The work does not have a slow movement and instead we have scherzo-like dance full of contrapuntal magnificence followed by a more standard menuet.

The last movement rondo (with a tune that keeps returning interspersed with other material) seems to set challenges for the listener at every turn. Just when the music seems to be gaining momentum, he changes pace and key to a legato chorale. Beethoven's tempo change to prestissimo right at the very end is indicative of the extremes to which he was turning. Extreme harmony shifts, extreme dynamic contrast, extreme mood swings and extreme tempo markings. It all makes for extreme excitement.

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FLINDERS QUARTET

Flinders Quartet (FQ) is instantly recognisable as one of Australia's most loved chamber music ensembles. Its dynamic and stirring performances of a full spectrum of repertoire have audiences and critics articulating their esteem, and the quartet is a highly respected force in Australian chamber music.

"... Flinders Quartet displayed seamless ensemble as well as profound understanding of the music they played." Armidale Express (March 2016)

FQ regularly commissions and premieres works by Australian composers. In 2015, the quartet premiered works by Andrew Ford, Tom Henry, and Sweden's Mattias Lysell, while Elena Kats-Chernin and Stuart Greenbaum commissions are slated for 2016. In its ongoing mission to further the Australian tradition of chamber music, FQ has previously commissioned and premiered works by Peter Sculthorpe, Ian Munro, Calvin Bowman, Richard Mills, Ross Edwards, Paul Dean, Paul Grabowsky, and Katy Abbott.

The quartet is regularly invited to perform and tour for chamber music presenters such as Musica Viva, and is in demand at festivals throughout Australia often in association with some of the country's finest talents, including Slava Grigoryan, Kristian Chong, Ian Munro, Paul Dean, Karin Schaupp, Genevieve Lacey and Jayson Gillham. International engagements have taken them to the UK, Singapore, Canada, and most recently, Sweden and Finland.

FQ's first commercial CD release, *Reinventions* with Genevieve Lacey, was received with great critical acclaim, and was re-released on the ABC Classics label in March 2015. Also on the ABC Classics label is FQ's ARIA-nominated 2011 release, *Fandango*, with Karin Schaupp, and 2015 release *Intimate Voices: Sibelius String Quartet*.

"*Their shading, rhythmic pliability and tautness of ensemble are impeccable.*" **Limelight Magazine**, reviewing *Intimate Voices* (December 2015)

FQ's 2016 performance schedule includes their annual Melbourne subscription series, a collaboration with pianist Benjamin Martin, and recitals and masterclasses in various parts of metropolitan and regional Australia.

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