8 From Bach

1–3 *Brandenburg* Concerto no. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048 (1721)
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Allegro moderato	5:34
Adagio	2:38
Allegro assai	4:48

WU HAN, *harpsichord;* SOOVIN KIM, FREDERIK ØLAND, KRISTIN LEE, *violins;* PAUL NEUBAUER, MARK HOLLOWAY, ASBJØRN NØRGAARD, *violas;* COLIN CARR, LAURENCE LESSER, DMITRI ATAPINE, *cellos*

4 Adagio and Fugue in c minor, K. 546 (1788) 6:28
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

DANISH STRING QUARTET:
FREDERIK ØLAND, RUNE TONSGAARD SØRENSEN, *violins;* ASBJØRN NØRGAARD, *viola;* FREDRIK SCHØYEN SJÖLIN, *cello*

5 String Sextet from *Capriccio,* op. 85 (1940–1941) 10:42
RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

SEAN LEE, SOOVIN KIM, *violins;* PAUL NEUBAUER, MARK HOLLOWAY, *violas;* LAURENCE LESSER, FREDRIK SCHØYEN SJÖLIN, *cellos*

6–10 String Quartet no. 3 in F Major, op. 73 (1946)
DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

Allegretto	7:31
Moderato con moto	4:49
Allegro non troppo	4:12
Adagio	5:11
Moderato	9:27

JORJA FLEEZANIS, ARNAUD SUSSMANN, *violins;* MARK HOLLOWAY, *viola;* LAURENCE LESSER, *cello*

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Music@Menlo LIVE

8 From Bach

BACH	*Brandenburg* Concerto no. 3
MOZART	Adagio and Fugue
STRAUSS	String Sextet from *Capriccio*
SHOSTAKOVICH	String Quartet no. 3

Music@Menlo *LIVE*

8 From Bach

Music@Menlo's eleventh season, *From Bach,* celebrated the timeless work of Johann Sebastian Bach, the composer whose profound legacy has shaped Western music over the two and a half centuries since his death. Each disc of the 2013 edition of Music@Menlo *LIVE* captures the spirit of the season.

Disc VIII explores the effervescence of Bach's writing for string ensembles, as realized in the Baroque master's *Brandenburg* Concerto no. 3, scored for trios of violins, violas, and cellos. Mozart's Adagio and Fugue, which began its life as a piano duo, embraces this string tradition in its sonically aggressive timbre. The lush String Sextet from Richard Strauss's *Capriccio* weaves an exquisite tapestry from one sinewy Romantic line to the next; Shostakovich's Third String Quartet offers a more piquant perspective on the string literature.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)
***Brandenburg* Concerto no. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048** (1721)

In late 1717, Johann Sebastian Bach took the position of Kapellmeister at the court in Cöthen. His employer, Prince Leopold, was an avid music lover and upon Bach's arrival he increased the number of court musicians from three to seventeen. The wealth of instrumental talent available to Bach at Cöthen afforded him the opportunity to produce such pieces as the Suites for Solo Cello, the Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, and the magnificent *Brandenburg* Concerti, whose autograph is dated 1721. Between 1718 and 1719, Bach had played for the elector of Brandenburg in Berlin while

Dmitry Shostakovich's String Quartet no. 3 in F Major, op. 73. L-R: Jorja Fleezanis, Arnaud Sussmann, Laurence Lesser, and Mark Holloway.

negotiating the terms for a new harpsichord for the court at Cöthen. About two years later, he would compose these six concerti, scored for varied assortments of instruments, and dedicate them to the elector. Although the Margrave of Brandenburg, lacking the musical resources to stage a performance of the concerti, never thanked or paid Bach, the works came to life nevertheless at Cöthen, as Bach had deliberately suited them for the greater number of technically proficient musicians he had at his own disposal. The Third *Brandenburg* Concerto is scored for three violins, three violas, and three cellos. Its particular instrumentation infuses the work with a rich sonority throughout its three movements. Indeed, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the Third *Brandenburg* Concerto—a work composed in 1721, well before the viola and cello were regarded as soloistic instruments—is Bach's egalitarian treatment of

the full ensemble. Throughout the first movement, melodic lines bounce around from player to player, at times giving the impression of a game of musical hot potato. The second movement comprises just one measure: a simple two-chord Phrygian cadence, marked *Adagio*—often realized in performance as an improvisatory cadenza. The concluding *Allegro assai* revisits the joyful effervescence of the first movement.

—Patrick Castillo

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)
Adagio and Fugue in c minor, K. 546 (1788)

Mozart's Adagio and Fugue began life as the Fugue in c minor, K. 426, for two keyboards, in 1783. By the late 1780s, Mozart's popularity (and, consequently, his income) had taken a downward turn. Although *Le nozze di Figaro* had been wildly acclaimed in Prague, the opera's Vienna premiere in 1786 was not received well and its production did not prove lucrative for Mozart. The following year, *Don Giovanni* likewise failed to please: it was criticized as being overly learned and too sophisticated for the general listener. In order to generate much-needed income in the summer of 1788, Mozart composed at a furious pace, completing a symphony, a violin sonata, a piano trio, a piano sonata, and this arrangement of the piano duo Adagio and Fugue in the span of only a few weeks. The character of the Adagio and Fugue is severe and serious throughout. The opening dialog between the cello and the rest of the ensemble establishes a majestic rhythmic feel. Using an uncompromising pattern that continues for the rest of the introduction, Mozart intersperses music that serves to contrast with the aggressive, conquering opening measures. This contrasting material—as mysterious as the opening is obvious—infuses the Adagio with a disturbing and ominous atmosphere. It is Mozart the opera composer at work, introducing a shady character who puts everyone *en garde*. As the loud, stentorian sections remain the same length (in effect repeating themselves), the shadowy phrases get longer and longer, eventually leaving the Adagio in a mood of great tension and anticipation. The cello once

again has the first say as the angry, angular fugue subject breaks in. As in the fugues he arranged from Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier,* Mozart—still under the Baroque master's spell—demonstrates here a complete mastery of fugal technique. The Fugue serves simultaneously as an homage to Bach and as an announcement to the Viennese musical community of the arrival of a compelling and individual compositional voice.

—Patrick Castillo

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)
String Sextet from *Capriccio,* op. 85 (1940–1941)

Capriccio, the last of Richard Strauss's fifteen operas, represents one of the composer's most interesting contributions to the literature. An opera about opera, the work is often described as a musical "conversation piece," as its plot addresses questions about the nature of composition that preoccupied Strauss towards the end of his career. The opera begins with a scene where a newly composed string sextet (by the character Flamand, a composer) is being rehearsed. In fact, that sextet is a beautiful chamber work in its own right: it serves as a de facto overture to *Capriccio* but is just as often performed independently as concert music. The addition of a viola and cello to the standard string quartet makes for a rich, sensuous sound that appealed especially to composers in the Romantic period. Shortly following the work's peaceful opening, nervous tremolando featuring impassioned, recitative-like melodic lines set off a suddenly agitated section. The work also offers dolorous arioso passages, which likewise suit the sextet's operatic setting. But ultimately, even as it navigates a broad expressive terrain, the *Capriccio* Sextet is simply an enchanting work. In contrast to the operas *Salome* and *Elektra,* among others of Strauss's hyper-expressionist scores that pushed conventional tonality to its limits, the tenor of the sextet is idyllic and serene—and perhaps, being one of Strauss's final creations, even wistful.

—Patrick Castillo

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)
String Quartet no. 3 in F Major, op. 73 (1946)

Shostakovich composed his Third String Quartet in 1946, in the wake of the Second World War. Like much of Shostakovich's music, the Third Quartet has a strong narrative quality, suggesting an extramusical program—and, indeed, Shostakovich is said to have originally given subtitles to each of its five movements. The first movement *Allegretto* was originally subtitled "Calm unawareness of the future cataclysm." Shostakovich presents the playful first theme and then nimbly extends it to reveal its mischievous streak, and likewise the sober second theme, which Shostakovich extends to reveal a manic unpredictability. Throughout the exposition, Shostakovich's fiendish invention notwithstanding, the first movement seems innocently cast in Classical sonata form; but as the development section begins, the first theme dives unexpectedly into a thorny double fugue. The second movement was originally subtitled "Rumblings of unrest and anticipation." The viola begins with a forbidding ostinato, or a steadily repeating pattern, while the first violin plays what sounds like a kind of grotesque folk dance. The melody's asymmetrical gait, set above the insistent viola ostinato, makes for unsettling music. The second movement, essentially a scherzo, is answered by an even more diabolical scherzo in the third movement, originally subtitled "The forces of war are unleashed." The time signature at the start of the movement alternates between 2/4 and 3/4 in almost every measure, keeping the listener on edge. A desperately sad *Adagio* follows, identified as the quartet's "Homage to the dead." The movement ends with the quartet's loneliest music: the viola and cello, in their lowest registers, seem devastated, emotionally numb. The music proceeds without pause to the final movement, which resembles Classical sonata-rondo form. Shostakovich assigned the finale the heady subtitle "The eternal question: why and to what purpose?"

—Patrick Castillo

About Music@Menlo

Music@Menlo is an internationally acclaimed three-week summer festival and institute that combines world-class chamber music performances, extensive audience engagement with artists, intensive training for preprofessional musicians, and efforts to enhance and broaden the chamber music community of the San Francisco Bay Area. An immersive and engaging experience centered around a distinctive array of programming, Music@Menlo enriches its core concert programs with numerous opportunities for in-depth learning to intensify audiences' enjoyment and understanding of the music and provide meaningful ways for aficionados and newcomers of all ages to explore classical chamber music.