



Of Art, Invention, and Good Spirits

Sasha Callahan, violin
Alexander Vavilov, viola
Leo Eguchi, cello

PROGRAM

American Haiku for Viola & Cello

Paul Wiancko (b. 1983)

- I. Far Away
- II. In Transit
- III. Home

Divertimento in Eb major for String Trio, K. 563

W.A. Mozart (1756—1791)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Menuetto
- IV. Andante
- V. Menuetto (Allegretto)
- VI. Allegro

Winter has been the quintessential challenge to human survival since the beginning of time. As the cold freezes the plant and creature alike, we shelter inside with our loved ones and hope that the kindling and the nourishment will last until nature awakens again in Spring. As we make our way through the cold dark months, we are inspired to recognize and celebrate that which sustains us and gives us hope: human invention and good cheer.

The first item on our menu has no shortage of either about it. How do you combine Appalachian fiddling and Japanese folk tunes in a piece for just two Italian instruments? Paul Wiancko excelled in just that with his viola and cello duo, aptly named *American Haiku*. It starts with a fanfare invoking a virtuosic brass ensemble and quickly swirls into a tapestry of infectious percussive rhythms in the cello underpinning the Japanese folk tune in viola. In just a few moments we are transported half a world away to a village in Kentucky, tapping our toes and bobbing our heads to a jiving fiddle tune.

The only string trio Mozart ever completed is rightfully celebrated as one of the jewels of chamber music repertoire. The unparalleled inventiveness of the creator is prominently on display here, but is only a part of the story. By 1788, the year of writing, Mozart and his family fell on hard times and were struggling to make ends meet. A fellow Freemason and good friend of the composer, Michael Puchberg, had often extended a lifeline to the family by loaning money and on one such occasion received back a dedication of this trio as a way of repayment.

The loan must have been generous indeed for the 50-minute-long composition is double the length of a standard string quartet or even a symphony. The assembly of 6 movements ranges wildly in character and takes us on a breathtaking journey from the symphonic opening through the serendipitous Adagio, a set of colorful variations sandwiched between two Minuets (one, vigorous; another, elegant), and towards the folksy finale.

In *Mozart: His Character, His Work*, one of the most revered Mozart scholars, Alfred Einstein, wrote about this divertimento: “Each instrument is primus inter pares, every note is significant, every note is a contribution to spiritual and sensuous fulfillment in sound”. He thought that the piece “was intended to offer something special in the way of art, invention, and good spirits,” and we couldn’t agree more.

- Alexander Vavilov