

## *Program Notes Courtesy of Chamber Music Tulsa*

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### **Boccherini, String Quartet Op. 2, No. 6 in C Major**

Though Luigi Boccherini was Italian by birth, he experienced his greatest success far from home. Born in the Tuscan town of Lucca, where the great-great-grandfather of Giacomo Puccini was serving as music director of the local cathedral, Boccherini learned music from his father, a double bass player, and went on to study the cello at a conservatory in Rome. Unlike the Puccinis, however, the Boccherini family did not have a lucrative dynasty in place; the elder Boccherini made his living playing in theater orchestras and frequently had to move to find work. When Luigi was a teenager, the family ended up moving to Trieste, Venice, and finally Vienna, where father and son often performed in orchestras together. Luigi's own career as a cellist took him even farther, with engagements in London, Paris, and ultimately Madrid, where, in 1761, he won a position as a court musician and composer to Don Luis Antonio, brother of the Spanish King Carlos III. In Madrid, one of Boccherini's responsibilities was to provide chamber music, and over the course of his career, he composed more than ninety string quartets, easily surpassing Haydn's output. The first six of these quartets to appear in print were composed as early as 1761 and published soon thereafter as his Opus 2. Like Mozart's earliest quartets, Boccherini's Opus 2 string quartets are in the three-movement Italian style, typically culminating with a minuet and trio.

### **Verdi, String Quartet in e minor**

Giuseppe Verdi was not a composer readily associated with chamber music—or instrumental music of any kind. Rather, he transformed Italian opera from a vehicle for displaying vocal technique into an epic and dramatic art form rivaling Richard Wagner's contemporaneous innovations in Germany. Born in what was then French-controlled northern Italy, Verdi studied music in Milan, and first ventured into opera in 1839 with the moderately successful *Oberto*. Even greater fame came with his third opera, *Nabucco*, which led to an impressive string of triumphs. By the early 1870s, Verdi was at the height of his career, producing his newest operas *Don Carlos* and *Aida*. The latter work had received its world premiere in Cairo in late 1871, and was subsequently working its way through the major Italian opera houses under Verdi's supervision. In March of 1873, *Aida* was scheduled to be performed in Naples, and Verdi was on hand working to adapt this large-scale work for the Teatro di San Carlo. But just before the premiere, he hit a setback: the soprano Teresa Stolz, who had sung the part of *Aida* in every Italian performance thus far, became ill. Lacking a suitable understudy for the challenging new role, the Naples premiere had to be postponed a few days—meaning Verdi suddenly had some free time on his hands. He decided to occupy himself by composing a string quartet, a genre he had never before attempted. The work received its premiere in a surprise performance for Verdi's friends in his Naples hotel suite on April 1.

Like Wagner's only chamber piece, *Siegfried Idyll*, Verdi's string quartet was not originally intended for public consumption. Nevertheless, Verdi seems to have poured all of his energies into it, creating a work that is both technically demanding and musically rewarding. Though its melodies are appropriately operatic, it appears that, unlike Puccini, Verdi refrained from reusing any of them in his subsequent works. The *allegro* first movement opens with a dark and mysterious theme that sets the tone for the work; an agitated segue leads to an almost reverent second theme, creating an interplay of turbulence and tenderness that characterizes the movement. The *andantino* second movement begins as an operatic cavatina, with the quartet members sharing the solo role. This initial lyricism is contrasted by two agitated central episodes. In the third movement, the *prestissimo* main theme recalls a tumultuous operatic scene change (such as the *auto-da-fe* scene from *Don Carlos*), while the central trio section has the cello playing an expressive tenor aria. The finale begins with a scampering *allegro assai mosso* melody that becomes the basis for a fugue as it is passed among the four instruments in imitation. Here in particular, Verdi shows the extent to which he had mastered the techniques of Bach, Beethoven, and his other predecessors beyond the opera stage.

## Puccini, *Chrisantemi*

Another composer known predominantly for his contributions to opera, Giacomo Puccini was born into a Tuscan family of church musicians. It was expected that young Giacomo would succeed his father, Michele Puccini, as *maestro di cappella* at the San Martino cathedral in the small town of Lucca—a position that had been held by a Puccini for four generations. But Michele died when his son was only six years old, breaking the chain of succession but freeing Giacomo to pursue other musical avenues. In 1883, while attending the Milan Conservatory, Puccini decided to compose a one-act opera for a competition; he did not win, but *Le Villi* was successful enough to put the scion of the Puccini family on a very different career path.

Puccini reportedly wrote the short string quartet movement he called *Chrisantemi* (“Chrysanthemums”) in a single evening in January 1890. Named for the traditional Italian flower of mourning, *Chrisantemi* was an elegy for Amedeo di Savoia, an Italian-born nobleman who had briefly ruled as the King of Spain in the 1870s. This was still relatively early in Puccini's career; he had just premiered his problematic second opera *Edgar* the previous year—a work that the composer would later disown after three attempts at revision. *Chrisantemi* was not Puccini's first string quartet; he had composed a set of three short minuets and an unrelated scherzo for string quartet as a conservatory student six years prior. Composing *Chrisantemi* seemed to lead Puccini back to these student quartets, however, and melodies from all of his string quartets ultimately found their way into his third opera, *Manon Lescaut* (1893). *Chrisantemi* in particular features prominently in *Manon*: the soaring main theme that opens the quartet serves as the orchestral backdrop for much of the action of Act IV, when Manon and des Grieux are wandering to their deaths in the desert, while the quartet's soloistic second theme underscores the Act III prison duet between the ill-fated lovers.

## Respighi, *String Quartet in D Major*

Best known for his trilogy of vivid orchestral tone poems *Fountains of Rome* (1916), *Pines of Rome*

(1924), and *Roman Festivals* (1928), Ottorino Respighi was a composer torn between the influences of the ancient and the modern. Born in Bologna into a musical family, Respighi studied violin, viola, and piano at the conservatory there, and won his first job after graduation in far-off St. Petersburg as principal viola of the Russian Imperial Theatre Orchestra for its Italian opera season. While in St. Petersburg, Respighi also had the opportunity to study composition briefly with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, the renowned master of orchestration. Rimsky-Korsakov's influence can be heard not only in the rich variety of tonal colors that characterized Respighi's orchestral works, but also in the confidence with which he composed idiomatically for the individual instruments. After only one season in Russia, Respighi returned to Italy to continue his composition studies at Bologna. It was then that his career took him into chamber music; in 1903, he became the violist of the Mugellini Quintet, a Bolognese piano quintet with the composer Bruno Mugellini (1871–1912) at the keyboard. Respighi toured with that group until 1908 before moving to Rome. In 1913, he was appointed professor of composition at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia there, a post he held for the remainder of his life.

Stylistically, Respighi's music fits in well with his French contemporaries Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, but he was also profoundly influenced by his research into music of the past, particularly the works of the late Renaissance and early Baroque era. Although Respighi completed eight string quartets and quartet movements in his lifetime (including *Il tramanto*, a setting of Shelly's poem "The Sunset" for mezzo-soprano and quartet) only two of these works were written during his years with the Mugellini Quintet. His string quartet movement and his first two complete quartets (curiously, the only quartets he numbered) all date from his student years. In 1906, Respighi wrote one of his earliest expressions of neo-classicism: his Quartet for Four Viols, a new composition for the ancient *violas da gamba* of Monteverdi's time. The very next year, he completed a modern String Quartet in D Major, a piece that remains one of Respighi's most significant early compositions as well as an important twentieth-century Italian contribution to the string quartet.

Like the quartets of Ravel and Debussy, Respighi's D Major Quartet takes a traditional four-movement form. The *allegro moderato* first movement begins with a sumptuous instrumental texture and romantic character made to feel just a little slippery by Respighi's facile key modulations. This sumptuousness is contrasted by a more angular second theme, which goes on to feature some Debussyesque whole-tone scales. The second movement is a set of variations on a simple *andante* theme of Respighi's own invention, stated at the outset and subject to several brief but wide-ranging changes of character, including a waltz, a scherzo, and a lugubrious elegy. Respighi titled the third movement *Intermezzo*; it opens with a slowly rising five-tone scale that leads immediately into a delicate and often lyrical scherzo (*allegretto vivace*); a slower central trio section based on the opening scale supplies the contrast. The *allegro vivace* finale opens dramatically, with a leaping melody over tremolos setting the mood, which is broken up at times by passages of more lyrical music, leading back to a climax on the opening theme.

## QUARTETTO DI CREMONA

Cristiano Gualco, *violin*  
Paolo Andreoli, *violin*  
Simone Gramaglia, *viola*  
Giovanni Scaglione, *cello*

The **Quartetto di Cremona**, founded in 2000 while the members were students at the Accademia Walter Stauffer in Cremona, Italy, is rapidly becoming one of the most interesting and dynamic chamber music ensembles of their generation. The *Strad* Magazine noted their "extremely mature and lyrical sound," the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* described them as "one of the most exciting quartets of their generation" and the London Times have listed them as one of the up-and-coming foursomes to watch.

The ensemble studied with Salvatore Accardo, Bruno Giuranna, and Rocco Filippini at the Accademia Walter Stauffer, took master classes with Piero Farulli of the Quartetto Italiano at the Scuola di Musica in Fiesole, and continued their studies with Hatto Beyerle of the Alban Berg Quartet.

The Quartetto di Cremona received a Borletti – Buitoni Trust Fellowship in 2005 and have won top prizes at international chamber music competitions including first prize at the seventh Cremona International Competition, along with top prizes at the Vittorio Gui International Chamber Music Competition in Florence, and the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition. In 2009, the Quartetto di Cremona made its Decca recording debut of Boccherini Flute Quintets (with Andrea Griminelli) and in 2011, released their second recording for Decca of Fabio Vacchi's String Quartets. Recordings under other labels include the Brahms and Dvořák Piano Quintets (with pianist Filippo Gamba), string quartets by Haydn, Bartók, Borodin, Brahms, and Schubert. Their critically acclaimed CD "Italian Journey" dedicated to the music of Italian composers was released in November 2012. From July 2012 and over the next two seasons, they will record the complete Beethoven String Quartets for the German label Audite, of which the first three volumes have already received high praise. Other recording projects include the works by the recent winner of the Nielsen Prize, Thomas Agerfeldt Olesen, who has already dedicated two of his quartets to the group.

The Quartetto di Cremona has performed around the world at concert halls and international music festival such as the Konzerthaus in Berlin, Beethovenhaus and the Beethovenfest in Bonn, Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, Wigmore Hall in London, Salle Gaveau in Paris, Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Kammermusik Gemeinde in Hannover, the Torino-Milan (Mi-To) Festival, the Turku Festival in Finland, and the Perth Festival in Australia. During the 2011 – 2012 season, in addition to giving concerts throughout Europe, they also toured China and South Korea for the first time. During the 2015-16 season, they will be performing the complete Beethoven cycle at the Norfolk and Norwich Chamber Music Club in England.

Their concerts are broadcast by radio and television stations world-wide (RAI, WDR, BBC, VRT, SDR, etc.) performing repertory ranging from early Haydn to contemporary music. They collaborate regularly with artists such as Angela Hewitt, Ivo Pogorelich, Lynn Harrell, Andrea Lucchesini, Cédric Tiberghien, Pieter Wispelwey, and Bruno Giuranna; and have worked with composers such as Fabio Vacchi, Helmuth Lachenmann and Silvia Colasanti. They will record and give concerts in Italy with Lawrence Dutton of the Emerson Quartet in the fall 2014.

The Quartetto di Cremona has given master classes in Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and throughout Italy. They currently hold professorships at the Accademia Walter Stauffer and have also taught at the Paganini Conservatory in Genoa.

The Quartetto di Cremona are Artists-in-Residence at the Società del Quartetto of Milan where they are involved in various projects and collaborations including their recently completed Beethoven cycle in the Spring of 2014 for the 150th anniversary of the Società del Quartetto and their upcoming concert cycle of all the Mozart string quartets beginning in Fall 2015.

Cristiano Gualco plays a violin by Nicola Amati (Cremona) 1640

Paolo Andreoli plays a violin by Paolo Antonio Testore (Milan) ca. 1750 kindly on loan from the Kulturfonds

Peter E. Eckes

Simone Gramaglia plays a viola by Gioachino Torazzi (Turin) ca. 1680 kindly on loan from the Kulturfonds

Peter E. Eckes

Giovanni Scaglione plays a cello by M. Capicchioni (Rimini) 1974

Website: [www.quartettodicremona.com](http://www.quartettodicremona.com)

*October 2014. Please discard any previously dated materials.*

#### **CRISTIANO GUALCO, violin**

**Cristiano Gualco**, born in Genoa in 1974, graduated “summa cum laude” from the Conservatorio Niccolò Paganini in Genoa at the age of 20 and has won several national and international competitions. He continued his post graduate studies at London’s Guildhall School of Music where he studied with Krzysztof Smietana. He has also participated in masterclasses with Paul Katz and Rainer Schmidt. Upon graduation from Guildhall, he went to study with Salvatore Accardo at the Accademia Walter Stauffer in Cremona where he and Simone Gramaglia met and founded the Quartetto di Cremona. Mr. Gualco plays on a violin made by Nicola Amati, 1640.

#### **PAOLO ANDREOLI, violin**

**Paolo Andreoli**, born in Genoa in 1980, graduated “summa cum laude” from the Conservatorio Niccolò Paganini where he studied with Alessandro Ghè and Joseph Levin. Other teachers include Anthony Flint, Giulio Franzetti, Danilo Rossi, and Massimiliano Damerini. He has also studied at the Accademia di La Scala in Milan where he was concertmaster of the Accademia’s orchestra. Mr. Andreoli plays a violin made by Paolo Antonio Testore, ca. 1750, kindly on loan from the Kulturfonds Peter E. Eckes.

#### **SIMONE GRAMAGLIA, viola**

Considered one of the finest violists of his generation, **Simone Gramaglia** began studying the piano and the recorder as a child. At the age of 16, after hearing a concert given by violist Bruno Giuranna, he decided to study the viola and entered the Conservatorio Niccolò Paganini where he graduated with honors six years later. He continued his studies with Bruno Giuranna in Cremona and Michael Kugel in Belgium, and has participated in masterclasses with Yuri Bashmet and Serge Collot.

When not playing with the Quartetto di Cremona, Simone Gramaglia enjoys performing as a soloist and teaching. He founded and directs a special music course in Bogliasco called “Master4Strings” and teaches at the Scuola di Musica in Fiesole. Mr. Gramaglia plays on a viola made by Gioachino Torazzi, ca. 1680, kindly on loan from the Kulturfonds Peter E. Eckes.

### **GIOVANNI SCAGLIONE, cello**

After graduating from the Conservatorio Niccolò Paganini in Genoa, where he studied with Nevio Zanardi, **Giovanni Scaglione** continued his studies at the Musikhochschule in Basel, Switzerland where he studied with Ivan Monighetti and graduated with honors. He has also participated in master classes with Antonio Meneses and Michael Flaksman. Before joining the Quartetto di Cremona in 2002, he was also a member of the Boccherini Sextet with whom he toured Italy performing at prestigious concert series such as the Amici della Musica di Firenze, Amici della Musica di Palermo, Amici della Musica di Perugia, and Unione Musicale di Torino.

Mr. Scaglione also studied with Mario Brunello in Brescia and with Rocco Filippini at the Accademia Walter Stauffer in Cremona, where he was invited by Rocco Filippini and Salvatore Accardo to perform chamber music concerts with them. He has also performed as soloist with the Basel Symphony Orchestra and in May 2011, made his solo recital debut at Quirinale in Rome which was broadcast live on RAI Radio 3. Mr. Scaglione plays a cello by Marino Capicchioni made in 1974.