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## **Mozart Quintet, K. 614**

Mozart's E-flat Viola Quintet, K. 614, dates from the final year of his life, and was his last serious chamber work. It was written at more or less the same time as his opera *The Magic Flute*, which is also an E-flat-major-based work; but it is striking how this key resonates so differently in the two pieces. The opera's timbre is rich and dark, with associations of majesty and secrecy, whereas the Quintet evokes a bright divertimento played by wind instruments in the open air. Indeed, if one were to have to guess which of Mozart's viola quintets originated as a work for winds, one might well choose this quintet rather than the c minor work.

For performers, the E-flat Quintet is distinguished by its considerable technical demands, and by its paradox of carefree spirit crossed with substantial compositional scope. The first movement opens with a horn-like hunting call in the violas, which is answered by a graceful descending figure in the violins. The working-out of this material starts almost right away, and is contrapuntally active and convoluted; it leads directly to the movement's other melody, which is sweeter, smoother and more intimate. Of the two, it is the first, more extroverted material which Mozart devotes his attention to, and which sets its stamp on the movement. Essentially the mood is festive and brilliant, with virtuosic demands made on all five players, the first violinist in particular.

The slow movement is courtly and somewhat ornate. It is not one of Mozart's lyrical, aria-like slow movements, but evokes instead a graceful and dignified dance. The opening melody is the *idée fixe* of the movement, appearing many times in many guises, sometimes decorated by other voices, sometimes digressing into unexpected channels, but always recognizable by its repeated starting pitch. Perhaps it is the absence of any second melody that lends the movement its round-dance atmosphere.

The minuet is jovial, Haydnesque, celebratory. There is clever deployment of one small instrumental group against another, of violins vying with one another, of melodies being turned upside down, and then finally, an ominous c minor halt – after which the music teasingly and quietly draws a simple conclusion. The ensuing Trio is a musette-like creation, wherein a smooth, gentle tune is played out against a persistent E-flat in the bass; more than anything it evokes a celestial music box, spinning its gleaming idea out to an inevitable close.

A carefree, rather rustic melody opens the finale, full of high jinks and good humor. The movement that unfolds continues and develops this joyful vein; in places the music recalls in its textures and figurations the final movement of Mozart's 39<sup>th</sup> symphony, also in E-flat. In the middle section of the movement, the five voices get into a stormy argument, which takes a fugue-like form, complete with its own subject; but the episode is brief, and, as if finding itself too learned for this context, hurriedly dissipates. The movement plays out according to the pattern of its sonata form, and closes with a joking coda: a teasing question with a boisterous rejoinder.

Note by Misha Amory