

Program Notes
The Mozartean Players
by Steven Lubin
First Presbyterian Church, Joplin, MO
April 8, 2010 – 7:00 p.m.

The three trios on tonight's program, written by the three great Viennese classical masters within an eleven-year span, represent their styles at markedly different stages of their respective careers.

Mozart composed his Bb Trio late in 1786, when he had nearly reached the close of what we might call his "middle period," comprising his first six Viennese years. The year 1786 culminated in a rush of mature masterworks, including the piano concertos in A and C minor, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and the *Prague* Symphony. By this time, Mozart, at 31, was writing with the perspective of a master who, having already widely explored the possibilities of his principal genres, was starting to create "metaworks," compositions that in their solutions to problems of formal construction referred back to, and commented upon, his own earlier solutions. Later, in his final five years, Mozart was destined to go entirely beyond the classic framework of his middle period, encountering new emotional landscapes. But works like the Bb Trio represent him at a stage of full mastery of his most characteristic style, written in one of the most fertile eras of his life. Notable in this work are the lofty tenderness of the slow movement and the emotional richness of the rondo finale, in which, as always in mature Mozart, the handling of what he called "the journey through the keys" reflects his sense of our journey through the stages of life.

Haydn's Trio in C was written when the composer was about 65, nearing the end of a career of astounding fertility and inventiveness. He wrote this work soon after having returned to Vienna from a pair of two-year-long trips to London, where, after having spent a long life of struggle in the service of the nobility, he had been suddenly deified by a worshipping public. Back in Vienna, now regarded as a sage, he was able for a time to savor the approbation of the music-lovers surrounding him, and wrote, in addition to the large choral works that attracted his focus at this point, a series of consummating instrumental works, trios and quartets, of which the C-Major Trio is an example. This work is extraordinary, even among Haydn's trios, a genre to which he devoted an enormous richness of styles and musical ideas. The majestic first movement calls for the fullest possible range of sound and volume available on the instruments of the time (including fresh demands on piano sound-production, prompted by Haydn's recent experiences with English pianos, which were more powerful than their Viennese counterparts). The slow movement includes a middle section of an extraordinary expressive rawness and power, and the last movement is a virtuosic tour-de-force of brio and vivacity.

Beethoven's Eb Trio, Op.1/1, by contrast, was his first published work! It was written when Beethoven was 24, not long after he had arrived from his native Rhineland to make his way in the Austro-Hungarian capital, and while he was under Haydn's tutelage. Beethoven learned a lot from Haydn, as did every other musician of the time, but he didn't take instruction from the older man entirely peaceably. Beethoven supposedly took extreme offence at a criticism of Haydn's directed at the third of the three trios of his initial published opus. Haydn supposedly disapproved of a "sinister" quality in Beethoven's style, and Beethoven was reported to have immediately assumed that Haydn was jealous of him! All this notwithstanding, Beethoven's initial opus already reveals his huge scope of formal architectural planning, his incredible rhythmic vitality and his wild textural inventiveness. The fast movements in this trio all generate powerful trains of propulsive momentum, and the slow movement explores Romantic emotional landscapes. In his technique of moving through keys, Beethoven shows himself to be an avid student of Mozart and Haydn, and yet already graceful and assured in this difficult art, and full of originality.

The instruments used in this concert are very much like those that would have been used at the premieres of all three works. The stringed instruments are set up in the late-18th-century manner, and the fortepiano is just like one that Mozart owned, a sister instrument of which Beethoven is known to have kept in his lodgings in the 1790's. (It is a copy, by Rodney Regier of Freeport, Maine, of a five-octave piano by Anton Walter of Vienna).