
LAWO
CLASSICS
Mozart
String Quartets
Milanese Quartets K. 155–160 & K. 80
ENGEGÅRD QUARTET

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's earliest quartets

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart could already lay claim to a long list of compositions when he wrote his earliest string quartet. At 14 years old, he conceived his G major quartet one evening in Lodi, near Milan. Similarly, other quartets on this recording appear to have been written on the spur of the moment, which does not mean they were written in a hurry, however. Joseph Haydn's achievements in this genre do not appear to have weighed heavily on his shoulders at that stage. K. 155–160 were also written in Italy, mostly in Milan, then the capital of the Habsburg duchy of Lombardy, and Italian influences are more easily discernible. The early K. 80 is a precursor to the later cycle of six quartets composed in late 1772 and early 1773 while on leave from the princely archbishop's court in Salzburg. Whereas K. 80 is in four movements, all the others are in three.

Travelling with his father, teacher and mentor Leopold meant that Wolfgang may have received his advice. This is not easy to determine, however, apart from in a number of tempo markings.

String quartet in G major K. 80
This work is unique among Mozart's quartets not only because it is his first. It contains elements of the suite, as well as Italian Baroque and Rococo styles. All its movements are in the same key, apart from the trio section of the minuet, a feature typical of Baroque suites. In later quartets, at least the slow movement usually adopts a different tonality. The sequence of movements is also unusual.

The gently flowing *Adagio* is marked by great elegance. The two violins often share the melodic material, politely bowing to each other. Galant embellishments, *fioriture* and light *staccato* scales add a virtuosic touch. After a short middle section, the opening returns with written-out ornamentation. Elsewhere, ornaments are often welcome but mostly left to the performers.

Unusually, the second movement is an *Allegro*, which would normally occupy first place in later works. Again, the second violin is allowed to shine melodically. A number of unison passages are also conspicuous, as in the stern third and fourth bars. Some fast violin passages recall Vivaldi's violin concertos. Quite surprisingly, Mozart introduces a contrapuntal element in the middle, with a 'walking bass' played by the viola.

The third movement is a beautiful, danceable *Menuetto* with a trio section in C major. It was not uncommon to end a work in this way. Still, the composer must have felt that something was missing, as he added the *Rondo* a few years later. Its somehow quirky repeated couplet hints at a *gavotte*. A plaintive minor episode varies the character and Wolfgang seems to poke fun at his initial idea by finally augmenting its ending.

String quartet in D major K. 155
The six quartets in this series are closer to K. 136–138, written some months earlier, than to the following six 'Viennese' quartets composed in the summer of 1773. Spirited, without undue complications, in major keys, with three movements and inspired melodies, these express youthful joy of life. Mozart must have enjoyed Italy!

The opening *Allegro*, with its march-like first motif, is a good example of these qualities. The bass line propels the other voices forward, while the first violin sings and enjoys passagework akin to that in Mozart's violin concertos. Rarely are the middle voices allowed a leading role. In the middle section, however, they take the lead in a short canon before the second violin revels in brief bird-like trills.

The setting is similar in the ¾ *Andante* in A major. The violins exchange short comments after the opening melody. These are repeated after a short middle section leading into a shortened first theme. A brief coda allows the opening motif to reappear.

The final *Rondo* has an almost breathless character. In the first episode, the first violinist is challenged by fast triplets and leaps; the second episode calms down in minor and the third brings bravura scales in semiquavers. The resolute ending is in unison.

String quartet in G major K. 156
Presto is the fastest tempo. At the same time, this ⅜ movement has a smoothly rocking character, as two-bar sequences feel like one. The middle section is relatively longer than in most of these quartets and is mostly built around an almost engine-like rhythmic motif.

The *Adagio* is in dark E minor, with heavy *forte* sighs breaking through the melodic line. Syncopations underline the restlessness of the movement, while some light comes through the blinded windows. A strange, eruptive figure involving hemidemisemiquavers (sixty-fourth notes) challenges the *cantabile* line.

The recapitulation contains a number of new elements. Interestingly, this is the second version Mozart wrote. The first still exists, but has been crossed out.

Contrary to K. 80, Mozart chose to end this quartet with a *Tempo di Menuetto*. The brisk repeated main part involves the cello more melodically than in most movements of the series. The quasi-baroque *Trio* starts with an *ostinato* bass line, shared by viola and cello, before the violins take up the same figure.

String quartet in C major K. 157
Less fragmented themes and consequently longer melodic lines make this quartet stand out. The sunny, almost serene first movement involves all voices in the thematic material and the middle part may for once be called a development section, giving less important motives from the exposition extra significance. The noble first theme does not need any.

The touching, monothematic C minor *Andante* flows in quavers on top of a brook of semiquavers. There is a hint of a *barcarolle*. Beginning with only the three upper voices, it expands emotionally with the entrance of the cello. A more sinister motive leads into the middle part and finally into a short coda.

The *Rondo Presto,* with its frequent cheeky syncopations, limits its contrasting episodes to two, repeating the first of them towards the end. Thus, this movement also gains in harmonious unity, giving this quartet a special place at the heart of the cycle.

String quartet in F major K. 158
Here Mozart builds his first unconventional ten-bar theme from a short triplet motive, which is repeated eight times. The second theme, accompanied by spinning-wheel quavers in the second violin, follows immediately. Its initial motive will often be heard in later quartets – it experienced its first triumph in K. 136. Also in this *Allegro*, we may call the middle section developmental.

Andante un poco Allegretto opens with an ostinato-like canon before moving on to less complicated voice-leading in the major mode. The movement is in A minor, has a short middle part and a varied repetition of the first part.

As in K. 156, the finale is an elaborate *Menuetto*. Trills, '*Lombardic*' rhythms (short-long dotted patterns) and hints of counterpoint are followed by a *Trio* in F minor. Tonally this seems to go astray but is saved by a semiquaver passage in the first violin.

String quartet in B major K. 159
The first theme of this *Andante* sonata form movement is introduced by the second violin – though this is only evident when you read the score. The first violin interrupts, seems to repeat the opening, then soon leaves it in favour of the second theme. The developmental middle section treats only the different elements of this theme. As the tempo is quite brisk, this is a quartet without a slow movement. We might expect an *Adagio* or *Larghetto* here, however, Mozart deceives us.

A dramatic and elaborate *Allegro* follows. The key is G minor, a sure sign of drama in Mozart's music. The movement is of ample dimensions, with syncopations, '*Lombardic*' figurations and some chromaticism. Here and there is a denseness of sound which points forward to his mature quartets. The second theme brings brighter hues. A short middle section does not find much to say; there is enough content already.

A final *Rondo* (*Allegro grazioso*) lets us relax. The repeated main theme seems to anticipate sewing-machine ballets; it is later varied in different ways. Interspersed are fast triplet figurations and a delightfully stretched episode in B flat minor, followed by a brief coda that concludes with decisive unison triplets and chords.

String quartet in E flat major K. 160
All movements here are in basic sonata form, even if the middle sections hardly bring any real development. The opening *Allegro* initially revisits the same theme as the second of K. 138, with its falling thirds and *appoggiaturas*. The exposition has no repetition sign, which is very rare. The short middle section visits C minor before leading into an almost literal repetition of the exposition.

The *Un poco Adagio* seems to explore the key of B flat major. Only after five bars do we recognise A flat major as its tonality. This is highly unusual; also, the second part repeats the opening modulating sequence with its reassuring cadence. Mozart's invention adds variation to the second part through chromatics and greater emotional depth before a short *coda* unwinds the tension.

A march-like motif sets the tone for the celebration that is the series' final *Presto*. Sparkling triplets, dense cadential chords and a 16-bar pedal note on the dominant in the middle section are all part of the feast, bringing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's first string quartet cycle to a satisfying close.

Morten Carlsen
Norwegian Academy of Music
Edited by Philip Dutton – Composer

Engegård Quartet

Arvid Engegård &
Laura Custodio Sabas – Violins
Juliet Jopling – Viola
Jan Clemens Carlsen – Cello



Formed under the midnight sun in Lofoten in 2005, the Engegård Quartet has rapidly become one of Norway's most sought-after ensembles. Their bold, fresh interpretations of the classical repertoire combined with a deep attachment to their Scandinavian roots has attracted international acclaim and inspired some innovative partnerships and programming.

The quartet's debut CD was praised as 'breathtaking' in The Strad, while their second release won Pizzicato magazine's 'Supersonic Award'. Their CD of works by Grieg, Sibelius, and Olav Anton Thommessen was praised by Tully Potter in Music Web International as 'what Grieg lovers have been waiting for'.

The Engegård Quartet has a busy concert schedule throughout Scandinavia and further afield. They have performed in some of Europe's finest venues including the Mozarteum in Salzburg and Prague's Rudolfinum, as well as several tours to South America. The Engegård Quartet have been delighted to appear in international festivals such as Delft Chamber Music Festival, SoNoRo Festival in Bucharest, and Heidelberg's Streichquartettfest.

Deeply committed to today's composers and to keeping the string quartet repertoire alive and developing, the Engegård Quartet has commissioned several works throughout their career. They have focused first and foremost on Norwegian composers including Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje, Olav Anton Thommessen, Therese Birkelund Ulvo and Cecilie Ore. International commissions have included Olli Mustonen, Philip Dutton and Julian Anderson.

The Engegård Quartet's acclaimed collaborations with the jazz violinist Ola Kvernberg and hardanger fiddler Nils Økland and have led to commissions including the Telemark Quintet from Nils Anders Mortensen, and Hypnagogia and The Flight from Ola Kvernberg. Several of these commissions have been recorded by the Engegård Quartet.

On the classical front, the Engegård Quartet has had the honour to work with (among others) Sir András Schiff, Leif Ove Andsnes, Olli Mustonen, Paul Lewis, Dènes Várion, Nobuko Imai, Kim Kashkashian and Emma Johnson MBE.

The Engegård Quartet's concert and recording programs reflect their passion for the core quartet repertoire and their desire to discover and share new musical worlds. They have recorded the complete string quartets by Robert Schumann, Catharinus Elling and Johan Kvandal, and are recording the complete string quartets by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. You will find the Engegård Quartet's recordings on 2L, BIS, Simax and LAWO Classics.

From psalms to polkas, Norway's folk music tradition has been part of the Engegård Quartet's repertoire from the start. They have recently released several folk music videos, many in their own arrangements for string quartet.

Members of the quartet are deeply involved in bringing superb chamber music to Norway – Arvid Engegård as Co-Founder and Artistic Director of the Lofoten International Chamber Music Festival, and Juliet Jopling as Founder and Co-Artistic Director of Oslo Quartet Series. The Engegård Quartet's own '1-2-3 Festival' focuses on one composer over a long weekend and has proved immensely popular ever since its inaugural year of 2016. Every November, in "Nynorskens hus", right in the center of Oslo, this classical mini festival provides a feast of chamber music, song, piano works, and lectures. Read more on 123festival.no.

Arvid Engegård plays a Jean Baptiste Vuillaume violin (1858) on loan from Dextra Musica. Laura Custodio Sabas plays a Jean Baptiste Vuillaume violin (1857). Juliet Jopling plays a Pietro Giovanni Mantegazza from Milano (1790) on loan from Dextra Musica and Jan Clemens Carlsen plays a Giacomo Zanoli cello (1737) on loan from Dextra Musica.

The Engegård Quartet is supported by the Norwegian Arts Council.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756-91)

String Quartet No. 1 in G major, K. 80/73f

1___Adagio__05:07
2___Allegro__03:09
3___Menuetto and Trio__02:33
4___Rondo__02:23

String Quartet No. 2 in D major, K. 155/134a

5___Allegro__03:24
6___Andante__03:01
7___Molto Allegro__01:19

String Quartet No. 3 in G major, K. 156/134b

8___Presto__02:50
9___Adagio__04:40
10__Tempo di Menuetto__03:33

String Quartet No. 4 in C major, K. 157

11___Allegro__05:12
12___Andante__04:11
13___Presto__01:48

String Quartet No. 5 in F major, K. 158

14__Allegro__03:08
15__Andante un poco Allegretto__03:52
16__Tempo di Minuetto__03:58

String Quartet No. 6 in B-flat major, K. 159

17__Andante__03:42
18__Allegro__04:54
19__Rondo. Allegro grazioso__02:13

String Quartet No. 7 in E-flat major, K. 160/159a

20__Allegro__03:03
21__Un poco adagio__03:54
22__Presto__02:32

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