

25

Concert

The Chester String Quartet

the
Beethoven
The Complete String
Quartets of Beethoven
in Six Concerts

Cycle
in
6

one

two

three

four

five

six

8:00 p.m. Friday

March 14, 1997

Campus Auditorium

Robert W. Demaree, Jr.,

Dean, Division of the Arts

The Chester String Quartet

Aaron Berofsky
violin

Kathryn Votapek
violin

David Harding
viola

Thomas Rosenberg
cello

Program

Quartet in F Major, Op. 59 #1

Allegro

Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando

Adagio molto e mesto

Theme russe: Allegro

Intermission

(There will be one intermission of 15 minutes)

Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 130

Adagio ma non troppo- Allegro

Presto

Andante con moto ma non troppo

Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai

Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo

Grosse Fuge

As a courtesy to the artists and to other members of the audience, late-comers will be seated at an appropriate time. For the same reasons return to seating following intermission should be prompt. Attendance by children under the age of responsible behavior is discouraged. Audio and video recording equipment and cameras may not be used at a performance in any auditorium of IUSB. Eating and drinking in the Campus Auditorium, Recital Hall and Upstage are prohibited. Smoking is not permitted in any building of Indiana University South Bend.

Performers will not be available to members of the audience in the backstage area.

One of America's most distinguished and sought after chamber ensembles, the Chester String Quartet has been called "one of the best and brightest of the country's young string quartets" by the Boston Globe. Their engaging style and deep sense of musical commitment have brought them rave reviews from audiences and critics throughout the United States, as well as Canada, Latin America and Europe. The Chester's interpretations have also led to top prizes at international quartet competitions in Munich, Germany; Portsmouth, England; and Chicago's Discovery Competition. The Chester is currently Quartet-in-Residence at Indiana University South Bend where its members are full-time faculty.

Activities of the Quartet during the past year include performances from coast to coast in the U.S. and Canada. During this time the Chester appeared in NYC to give world premieres of works written for them and performed the entire Beethoven Cycle in a 10 day period in Oklahoma City. The Quartet recorded two compact discs released in the spring of 1996, the Complete Mozart Quartets for Flute and Strings on the Chesky label ("expert performances, cleanly recorded" Stereo Review, 9/96) and Music of Aaron Kernis on the New Albion label ("5 stars...A Classic" San Francisco Chronicle, 5/96). In February 1996 they performed in NYC at the 92nd Street Y and recorded another CD for New Albion. Their summer schedule included performances at numerous festivals and faculty positions at the summer chamber music schools of the Icicle Creek (WA) and Madeline Island (WI) festivals. They will be returning to NYC for a live radio broadcast concert later this season.

The Quartet's CD on the Koch label of Quartets by Barber, Piston, and Porter received critical acclaim from publications including Fanfare and

Gramophone magazines and the Los Angeles Times. In addition to its performances of the standard repertoire and commissioning of new quartets, the Chester has an ongoing interest in a wide range of collaborative and innovative work. In past seasons they have appeared in all the major halls of NYC including performances with the New York Chamber Ensemble at Alice Tully Hall and a performance with noted jazz artists Al Foster, Charlie Hayden, and Adam Mackowicz at Carnegie Recital Hall. Summer performing and teaching appearances include such festivals as Newport, Aspen, the International Festival of San Jose (Costa Rica), Rotterdam (Holland), Guelph (Canada),

Madeline Island, Icicle Creek, South Mountain, Cape May, Pittsburgh Summerfest, The Quartet Program, Music Mountain, and numerous others. Members of the quartet have joined in concert with many international solo artists and chamber musicians, including pianists Ruth Laredo, Alexander Toradze, Lydia Artimyw, Ralph Votapek, Steven DeGroote, and Alexander Kriyanov; members of the Guarneri, Cleveland, and Muir string quartets; string players Carter Brey, Norman Fischer, Marcus Thompson, Karen Tuttle, Alexander Baille, and Boris Pergamenchikof; and vocal artists such as Dawn Upshaw, Lucy Shelton, and Glen Seibert. The quartet previously recorded for the CRI, Stolat, and Pantheon labels and has been heard numerous times on National Public Radio, the BBC, and German State Radio.

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The members of the Chester String Quartet play on a beautiful set of instruments, including violins by Joannes Pressenda (Turin, 1844) and Michele Deconet (Venice, 1754), a viola by Pietro Antonio dalla Costa (Treviso, c. 1750), and a cello by Lorenzo Storioni (Cremona, 1794).

Program V

Quartet in F Major, Op. 59 No. 1

The three quartets of Opus 59 are an immensely varied and powerful accomplishment. Several fertile years had elapsed since the composition of the quartets of Opus 18, and in these years Beethoven had taken great and uncompromising strides. It was now clear to all who listened to music in the first decade of the nineteenth century that a new era was underway.

The first movement of Opus 59 Number 1 has a symphonic breadth and scope. The warmly singing opening melody becomes the basis for an imaginative and satisfying **Allegro** with a rich development section that includes some learned fugal writing. The coda seems reluctant to depart.

In the second movement the rhythmic play allows for much light-heartedness, but there are also some powerfully dramatic outbursts, warm and captivating melodies, and the occasional touch of pathos. A central section develops into a fantasy of flying cross-rhythms.

The **Adagio** spins an atmosphere that is deeply moving, and yet has an inner conviction and serenity. There are two themes of great beauty and a wondrous variety of textures. Again the composer seems reluctant to bring the movement to an end, and the music dissolves into a trill.

The final movement begins without pause with a Russian melody (to please the Russian Ambassador, Count Rasumovsky, to whom the quartets are dedicated) which is treated with great freedom and ingenuity. Key excursions are far-reaching, and rhythmic complexities abound. The melody is heard once more, played slowly and very high, as if in a dream, before the dramatic ending.

Quartet in B flat Major, Op. 130, with "Grosse Fuge."

The B flat Major Quartet, Opus 130, is an extraordinary work, written in 1826, and abandoning any pretensions to orthodoxy. It is composed in six movements in a continuous alternation of fast and slow tempos, and enclosing two dance movements and two slow movements. The slow introduction to the first movement is integrated into the fabric of the movement proper. Its smoothly burnished surface is contrasted with the jagged emphasis of the **Allegro**, with its irregularly patterned sixteenth notes and repetitive rhythm. This contrast is gradually resolved, until, in

the central development section, a complete synthesis of polarities is achieved, and just before the end of the movement, the smooth style of the **Adagio** is heard, but in the tempo of the **Allegro**.

The **Scherzo** is a wispy sketch in duple time, with a Trio section that returns to the normal triple meter, but does not seem to know when to end. A chromatic sliding figure leads to the impressionistically embellished return of the opening.

The third movement is an unusual combination of mechanical rhythms and a simple childish melody. The piece is an exploration of the expressive possibilities inherent in eccentric juxtaposition and textural dissolve—in combination and disintegration. The ending is curt.

The fourth movement [**Alla danza tedesca**], like the second, employs simple, popular elements in a stylized and emotionally charged context, and, like the preceding **Andante**, experiments with embellishment and fragmentation of the theme.

A rich texture and timeless trajectory characterize the next slow movement [**Cavatina**], whose name is taken from an eighteenth-century aria form, and whose exquisite scoring and expressive melody are matchless in the literature. An extraordinary passage in the middle of the movement, marked "**beklemmt**" (oppressed), projects the first violin, in truncated gasps, over quietly insistent chords in the other instruments. Here is one of the most telling examples in all music where silence may be said to speak as eloquently as any notes.

Beethoven's original finale for this quartet is the monumental and architectonic "Grosse Fuge," though he was later persuaded to withdraw it and to write a new and lighter final movement. With its overall harmonic layout, its summation and synthesis of contrasting elements, and its powerful declamatory rhetoric, the "Grosse Fuge" stands as an extraordinary finale to the impressive musical statement that is Opus 130. Its opening presents all the elements that will be discussed in the course of the piece, almost like a table of contents. All of them are characterized by a four-note motif of two-half steps in different guises. This motif appears elsewhere in Beethoven's work, most notably at the opening of the A minor quartet, Opus 132, but here it serves to forge the strongest unity between the elements of this massive **tour de force**. The fugue unleashes an explosive power, unflagging in its intensity. This dissolves into a second, smoother fugue, and then into a light, dance-like section that is metamorphosed into a powerful series of stark passages, severely abstract and impressionistic. Lifting themes, tossed back and forth, alternate with heavy chords. The fragmentary opening synopsis is repeated in reverse order, and then a strong build-up of intensity carries the music forward to the final, emphatic, implacable close.

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