

18

concert

The Chester String Quartet

the
Beethoven
Cycle

The Complete String
Quartets of Beethoven
in Six Concerts

in

6

8:00 p.m. Saturday,
December 14, 1996
Campus Auditorium

Robert W. Demaree, Jr.,
Dean, Division of the Arts

one

two

three

four

five

six

The Chester String Quartet

Aaron Berofsky
violin

Kathryn Votapek
violin

David Harding
viola

Thomas Rosenberg
cello

Program

Quartet in c-minor, Op. 18 #4

Allegro ma non tanto

Scherzo: Andante scherzo quasi Allegretto

Menuetto: Allegretto

Allegro

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 74 "Harp"

Poco Adagio-Allegro

Adagio ma non troppo

Presto

Allegretto con Variazioni

Intermission

(There will be one intermission of 15 minutes)

Quartet in a-minor, Op. 132

Assai sostenuto-Allegro

Allegro ma non tanto

Molto adagio

Alla Marcia, assai vivace

Allegro appassionato

Program III

Quartet in c-minor, Op. 18 #4

The fourth of the Opus 18 quartets, in C minor, is broadly conceived and consistently projected in its overall harmonic structure. Every movement is in one or the other of the modes of C, except for the Trio of the Minuet. The richness of this sonority of the strings lends grandeur to the quartet as a whole.

The opening movement has a symphonic sweep of melody and rhythm, with the flowing theme punctuated by noble chordal gestures. Moments of elegant delicacy lend contrast, while the latter part of the movement provides an opportunity for the composer to play conjuring tricks with the major and minor versions of the key.

The second movement pretends to be a strict fugue, but dissolves into witty games, lilting dances, and mock serious drama. Delicate articulation and gentle endings compound the delight.

Richness of sound, compressed harmonic action, and rhythmic shifts characterize the Minuet. The central trio section is in the key of A flat and sounds like an outdoor country dance. The score contains explicit instructions that the repeat of the Minuet should be played at a faster tempo, which adds a sense of urgency to its return.

The final movement is a rondo on a breathless gypsy fiddler's tune, cadenced by stamping chords and melodramatic pauses. The music falls into clear-cut sections marked by repeats, and the high spirits are continued through shared fragments of the melody, an accelerated version of the tune, pregnant pauses, and the whirling ending.

Quartet in E flat Major, Op. 74, "The Harp"

The E flat Quartet, Opus 74, opens with a slow and expressive introduction that creates an air of mystery and the uncertainty against which the first movement itself is projected. This **Allegro** is a collage of disparate elements unified in a seamless harmonic flow. The **pizzicato** fragments tossed from one instrument to another have earned this quartet its soubriquet "The Harp." After the midpoint of the movement passages of turbulence precede the recapitulation of the opening section, and a lengthy coda presents a virtuoso **cadenza** for the first violin projected against a combination of earlier motifs.

The slow movement is in rondo form with a lyrical, floating refrain. The intervening episodes explore contrasting key areas, while each return of the refrain becomes more elaborate. The movement ends in uncertain rhythmic suspense.

The Scherzo starts with an explosion of energy, generating an impulse over which even fragmentary statements become charged with meaning. The violent

Trio returns twice, and in the final reprise of the opening a feeling of intense suppression is created by the changed dynamics. (Beethoven's markings move from **sempre p** to **piu** to **ppp**.) The music leads directly into the final movement, which is a series of variations on a very simple but curiously asymmetrical theme. The variations include a rigid staccato counterpoint exercise, a lilting viola melody, and running sixteenth notes. The fifth variation is a solo for the first violin against bouncing chords, while the sixth begins with shapeless meanderings and grows slowly into an energetic coda. The juxtaposition of gentleness and power is maintained until the very end, for, after a furious whirlwind of notes, the final two notes are soft.

Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132

Written immediately after Opus 127, the Quartet in A minor, Opus 132, approaches similar challenges as its predecessor, but resolves them in quite different ways. If there is one rhetorical concept running through this work, it is the unification of disparate elements, the juxtaposition of seemingly diverse ideas in such a way that each illuminates the other.

The first movement opens with a seamless and mysterious passage in long notes built around a four-note motif heard in the cello. This is the same motif that appears throughout Beethoven's Opus 131 quartet as well as in the "Grosse Fuge." Then, within the first page of the score, in dizzying proximity, come a run of sixteenth notes in the first violin, a singing theme in dotted rhythm that turns into a march, and an **adagio** sigh. All of these elements, as well as further themes, are subsumed into the powerful and restless unity of this movement.

The second and fourth movements are both in the major mode and provide a support for, as well as a contrast with, the extraordinary central slow movement. The second movement **Allegro ma non tanto** is a witty and skillful play of cross-rhythms on a simple dance-like theme, while the Trio section projects an ethereal bagpipe melody over a drone bass.

An unequivocally programmatic inscription heads the diverse sections of the slow movement. Over the opening **Molto Adagio** Beethoven wrote "Holy song of thanks from a convalescent to the Divinity, in the Lydian mode," and over the contrasting **Andante** "Feeling new strength." This was not the first time Beethoven had characterized his music with specific descriptive or programmatic content—the Piano Sonata "Les Adieux" and the Pastoral Symphony are other well-known examples—but the depth of emotion in the music, and the remarkable transformation of the **Molto Adagio** upon its subsequent returns are without parallel.

The fourth movement is a brief and jerky march. A rhapsodic recitative for the first violin leads directly into the last movement, which spins out a sweeping melody in a leisurely rondo. Moments of manic energy and contrasting episodes lead to the wayward ending.

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



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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 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 Artimiyw, Ralph Votapek, Steven DeGroot, 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 Scibert. 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.

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).

As a courtesy to the artists and to other members of the audience, latecomers 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 Upspace 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.

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