

14

The Chester String Quartet

the  
Beethoven

The Complete String  
Quartets of Beethoven  
in Six Concerts

Cycle  
in  
6

8:00 p.m. Saturday,  
November 16,  
Campus Auditorium

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

concert

one

two

three

four

five

six

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 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 String Quartet's recently-released compact disc on the Koch International Classics label received critical acclaim from publications including *Fanfare* and *Gramophone* magazines and *The Los Angeles Times*. Released in 1995 were the *Complete Quartets for Flute*



**The Chester String Quartet**

*and Strings* by Mozart and *Music of Aaron Kernis*. In addition to its performances of the standard repertoire, the quartet has shown an ongoing interest in a wide range of collaborative and innovative work. In recent seasons they have given numerous performances at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall with the New York Chamber Ensemble and a performance with noted jazz artist Al Foster, Charlie Hayden, and Adam Mackowicz at Carnegie Recital Hall. They have appeared frequently on both radio and television, presented the entire Beethoven cycle, commissioned and performed new works, and have maintained a commitment to playing and recording lesser known works in the chamber music repertoire.

Founded at Eastman School of Music, the Chester is currently Quartet-in-Residence at Indiana University South Bend where its members are all full-time faculty. The Chester maintains a busy summer performance and teaching schedule, having appearances at such prestigious festivals as Newport, Aspen, the International Festival in San Jose (Costa Rica), Rotterdam (Holland), Guelph (Canada), Music Mountain, Cape May, Pittsburgh Summerfest, and South Mountain. Members of the quartet have joined in concert with many international solo artists and chamber musicians, including

pianists Ruth Lando, Alexander Toradze, Lydia Artimyya, Ralph Votapek, Steven DeGroot, and Alexander Knaev; members of the Guarneri, Cleveland, and Muir string quartets; string players Carter Brey, Norman Fischer, Marcus Thompson, Karen Tuttle, Alexander Baille, and Boris

Pergamenchukof; and vocal artists such as Dawn Upshaw, Lucy Shelton, and Glen Seibert. The quartet previously recorded for the CRI, Stolart, 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).

## Program II

### Quartet in E flat Major, Op. 127

The language of the E flat Quartet, Opus 127- the first of the string quartets Beethoven wrote in the last few years of his life- is tense, restrained, and fraught with meaning. It encompasses a rhetoric of dense significance beneath its often placid surface. The first movement is introduced by a series of full chords, and then opens out into a sunny but serious atmosphere. The chords return twice, gaining in meaning each time; but they are subsumed into the forward impetus and drive of the movement. Brief moments of poignancy cast a flicker of apprehension over the music, and the texture is fragmented by crisp rhythms. The movement ends with a gentle high cadence that leaves much unsaid.

The slow movement presents a series of short sections, each of which succeeds the other before full exploration or explanation has time to take place. At the outset the sheer interwoven sound of the strings evokes a sublime peace, which gives way to a seemingly endless passage of rhythmic pertness. An exquisite passage (*Adagio molto espressivo*) intervenes, and then the intensity builds but without climax. The first violin unwinds a long revolving melody that is taken over by the other instruments, and again a taut tension develops. A sudden stop. A note of the briefest tragedy is heard, and a melody of hushed but searing sadness. With this catalog of expressivity, a long coda would be required to lay to rest the material that has been explored. But the movement ends rhetorically early. The final chord resolves the harmony but little else.

The Scherzo is spritely in rhythm but never lighthearted. Disturbing cross currents are ever-present. Moments of anxiety and questioning hesitations undercut the play of the rhythm. The central Trio section is in the minor mode and if a dance is suggested, it is a dance that is grim and demonic. It stops in mid-air. The Scherzo returns with an added ending, brusque and impatient.

The final movement is spare and understated. The jaunty theme is again a disguise- here it disguises an exploration of the deepest emotion. A brute energy drives the music through a kaleidoscope of textural diversity. The occasional surging of power always stops far short of a climax. Before the end a section of surreal fantasy masquerades for the conventional calm. Frenzied chords lead to the expectation of a strong dismissive cadence, but a false ending disorients the listener, and suddenly it is over.

The quartet inhabits a world of resignation, resonance, and passionate restraints. By juxtaposing the conventional with pure novelty, and pushing outwards the boundaries of his form, Beethoven has created an entirely new realm of expression. After this, the first of his late quartets, for Beethoven music was never quite the same again.

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 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.

### Quartet in G Major, Op. 18, No.

The second of the Opus 18 quartets presents both a contrast and a presentiment of the expressive power Beethoven was able to mine a quarter of a century later. The first movement is refined and fully molded. It opens with a Mozartean mixture of motifs: an ornamental flourish, a military fanfare, and a lyrical opera aria. All of these prove germinal, and are developed and combined in an accomplished display of compositional skill.

The *Adagio* weaves a richly textured tapestry, with brilliant highlights, onto an irregular pattern of measures. There is a fast central section that acts as a foil to the highly ornamental return of the opening.

The Scherzo is a delightfully witty affair powered by manic energy. It stands in deliberate contrast to the central Trio, which combines a mock-serious counterpoint exercise with delicate figuration.

Several measures of exploratory preamble open the final movement, which ultimately begins in earnest with full texture and dynamics and a rousing statement of the main theme. In a technique that anticipates the resignation and unfulfillment of Opus 127, the motion and impetus of the music are constantly interrupted by hesitant falling patterns and dissolving textures; but here this serves only to heighten the repressed energy and power of the ending.

### Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3

The C major Quartet, Op. 59 Number 3, was written in 1806, and is the last of the set of quartets commissioned by, and dedicated to, Count Rasumovsky, the wealthy Russian ambassador to Vienna.

The first movement is introduced by an unusual series of chord progressions, which are given a fantastical quality through changes of dynamics and long sustained tones. This slow introduction leads into the *Allegro vivace*, in which the opening theme is presented on the first violin alone, but with the first clear emphasis on the home key all the instruments join in the bright exposition. Throughout the movement there is a continual contrast between sharply defined rhythmic outline (which dissolves into sustained notes or trills) and smoothly flowing melody. The ending is terse and epigrammatic.

A gently lilting song characterizes the *Andante*, with atmospheric impetus provided by pizzicato notes from the cello. A contrasting section is provided by a new theme in the first violin, which has crisper articulation and a Baroque embellishment. The movement closes with a sense of rolling timelessness.

The Minuet is elegant and fluid, with a bright, jerky, Trio section. A short coda leads directly into the finale, which has a tense, nervous, fugal opening and an impressionistic build-up of voices. The crackling energy of the music is extraordinary, with only the barest contrast or momentary release in a pause or trill. Nothing seems capable of stopping the single-minded drive of this movement until the definitive final chords.

## The Chester String Quartet

Aaron Berofsky  
*violin*

Kathryn Votapek  
*violin*

David Harding  
*viola*

Thomas Rosenberg  
*cello*

### Program

#### Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127

Maestoso - Allegro

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Scherzando vivace

Finale

#### Quartet in G Major, Op. 18 #2

Allegro

Adagio cantabile - Allegro

Scherzo: Allegro

Allegro molto quasi Presto

### Intermission

(There will be one intermission of 15 minutes)

#### Quartet in C Major, Op. 59 #3

Introduzione: Andante con moto- Allegro vivace

Andante con moto quasi Allegretto

Menuetto grazioso

Allegro molto

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