

The Carthage 1999-2000
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Juilliard string quartet
sunday, April 16, 2000, 4 p.m.



PROGRAM

Quartet in C major, Op. 76, No. 3 "Emperor" Haydn
Allegro (1732-1809)
Poco adagio cantabile
Menuetto: Allegro
Finale: Presto

Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 17 Bartók
Moderato (1881-1945)
Allegro molto capriccioso
Lento

INTERMISSION

Quartet in A minor, Op. 132 Beethoven
Assai sostenuto - Allegro (1770-1827)
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto adagio - Andante
Alla marcia, assai vivace
Allegro appassionato - Presto

The Juilliard String Quartet records for Sony Classical.

COLBERT ARTISTS MANAGEMENT Inc.
Agnes Eisenberger, President
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New York, New York 10019

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

Joel Smirnoff
Violin

Ronald Copes
Violin

Samuel Rhodes
Viola

Joel Krosnick
Cello

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

An ensemble that brings to its readings an extraordinary unanimity of purpose, the Juilliard String Quartet is celebrated for its performances of work as diverse as the string quartets of Beethoven, Bartók, and Elliot Carter — performances that are unfailingly characterized by clarity of structure, plasticity of line and compelling rhythmic drive. For more than 50 years, the Juilliard String Quartet has been renowned internationally for its uncompromising musicianship and the emotional intensity of its performances.

The 1999/2000 season is highlighted by a series of concerts in New York City with guest artist Maurizio Pollini (piano), under the auspices of Carnegie Hall. Among its many engagements in North America, the Juilliard String Quartet will perform in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, Toronto, Houston and Washington, D.C. performing works by Bartók, Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Shostakovich and others. The Quartet also tours Europe twice with concerts in London, Berlin, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Cologne, Milan and the Netherlands.

Highlights of recent seasons include concerts abroad at the Musikverein in Vienna, the Herkulessaal in Munich, and the group's first ever tour of mainland China. In 1997, the Juilliard String Quartet helped celebrate the reopening of the newly refurbished Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. For more than three decades, the Juilliard String Quartet has enjoyed a phenomenal reputation as quartet-in-residence at the Library of Congress, having succeeded the Budapest Quartet in 1962. The Quartet has developed a remarkably devoted and enthusiastic following in Washington, and is recognized as the "First Family" of chamber music in the United States.


By tradition, the Quartet performs at the Library on a set of priceless Stradivari instruments which were donated to the Library of Congress in 1936 by Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall. These instruments are the most important musical acquisition of the Library and the Juilliard String Quartet has remained the sole group to use these instruments there since they were played by the Budapest Quartet.

At the end of the 1996/1997 season, in a momentous occasion at Tanglewood, the Juilliard String Quartet's founder and first violinist Robert Mann retired from the group after 50 years. Earlier that season, Musical America named the Quartet "Musicians of the Year," making it the first chamber music ensemble ever to grace the cover of the Musical America International Directory of the Performing Arts. The ensemble also played the complete Beethoven cycle (subsequently telecast) in Japan.

As quartet-in-residence at New York City's Juilliard School, the Juilliard String Quartet is widely admired for its seminal influence on aspiring string instrumentalists from all over the world. In particular, the Juilliard String Quartet continues to play an important role in the formation of new American string ensembles. Some of the quartets it helped to create include the Alexander, American, Concord, Emerson, La Salle, New World, Mendelssohn, Tokyo, Brentano, Lark, St. Lawrence, and Colorado string quartets.

The Juilliard String Quartet has performed a comprehensive repertoire of some 500 works, ranging from compositions by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Dvorák to works by 20th century masters. It was the first ensemble to play all six Bartók quartets in this country, and it was through the group's performances that the quartets of Arnold Schoenberg were rescued from obscurity. The Quartet has been a particularly ardent champion of 20th century American chamber music. It has premiered more than 60 compositions of American composers, including works by some of America's finest jazz musicians. In recent seasons the Quartet has become a persuasive advocate for the complex and visionary four string quartets of Elliott Carter, which the group recorded on the Sony label in 1991.

The ensemble records exclusively for Sony Classical (formerly Columbia Records) and has been associated with the label since 1949. In celebration of the quartet's 50th year, Sony released seven CDs containing previously unreleased material as well as notable performances from its award-winning discography.




With more than 100 releases to its credit, the ensemble is one of the most widely recorded string quartets of our time. Its most recent release is a disc of Mendelssohn's string quartets Nos. 1 and 2. The Quartet's recordings on Sony Classical of the complete Beethoven Quartets, the complete Schoenberg Quartets and the Debussy and Ravel Quartets all have received Grammy Awards. The Juilliard String Quartet was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the National Academy for Recording Arts and Sciences in 1986 for its recording of the complete Bartók String Quartets, and in 1993 was awarded the "Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik" (German Record Critics Award) for Lifetime Achievement in the recording industry. In May 1994, its recording of quartets by Ravel, Debussy, and Dutilleux was selected by "The Times Magazine of London" as one of 100 Best Classical CDs ever recorded.

All members of the Juilliard String Quartet are American born and trained. Violinist Joel Smirnoff is a native of New York City and has been a member of the Quartet for nearly fifteen years — the last three as the ensemble's primarius. He was formerly the group's second violinist. Mr. Smirnoff attended the University of Chicago and The Juilliard School, and was, for a period of six years, a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He won second prize in the International American Music Competition in 1983. In 1985, Smirnoff made his New York recital debut at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. He has participated in the world premiere of many contemporary works, some of which were composed for him.

Violinist Ronald Copes joined the Quartet as second violinist in 1997. He was a member of the Dunsmuir Piano Quartet from 1991 to 1997, and of the Los Angeles Piano quartet from 1982 until 1990. Copes studied at the Oberlin Conservatory with David Cerone and at the University of Michigan with Paul Makanowitsky. From 1977 to 1997, he was Professor of Violin at the University of California at Santa Barbara. During the summers he is on the artist faculty of the Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival in Blue Hill, Maine. Born in Arkansas, Copes also is a regular performer at the Bermuda, Cheltenham, Colorado, and Olympic music festivals and appears in solo recitals across the U.S. and Europe.

Violist Samuel Rhodes, also from New York City, appears regularly in recitals and as soloist with orchestras in addition to his activities as a recording artist, composer and teacher. Celebrating his 29th season as a member of the Juilliard String Quartet and faculty member of The Juilliard School, he also is associated with the the Marlboro Festival. Rhodes' solo appearances have



included recitals at the Library of Congress, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, The Juilliard School and Columbia University's Miller Theater, among others. His most recent recording is a disc of Hindemith Sonatas for Solo Viola from Helicon. He studied composition with Roger Sessions and Earl Kim at Princeton University, where he received a master's degree.

Cellist Joel Krosnick, born in Connecticut, is active as an educator as well as a performer. His principal teachers were William D'Amato, Luigi Silva, Jens Nygard, and Claus Adam, whom he succeeded in the Juilliard String Quartet in 1974. A frequent recitalist and orchestral soloist, Krosnick performs throughout the U.S. and Europe. He has been heard at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, the Juilliard Theater, the Library of Congress, Merkin Hall, Symphony Space and appears regularly at the Miller Theater with pianist Gilbert Kalish. Krosnick has made solo recordings for the Orion, Nonesuch and New World labels.

PROGRAM NOTES

Quartet in C major, Op. 76, No. 3 "Emperor" Haydn
Allegro (1732-1809)
Poco adagio cantabile
Menuetto: Allegro
Finale: Presto

As the "Emperor-Quartet" this work is perhaps the most famous of all of Haydn's string quartets. After writing the anthem at the Emperor's command, Haydn — who was then 65 — became so fond of this theme that he incorporated it with variations into this quartet which he published two years later, in 1799. A wealth of literature relates to this anthem, the first drafts of which are preserved in Haydn's own writing. It has been suggested that he took its first part from a Croatian folk-song. As to the second part, musicological zeal has revealed a resemblance to the "Benedictus" of Haydn's Maria-zell Mass, written in 1782. Still more striking is the similarity to the last phrase of Mozart's famous "Allelujah." Actually, all these resemblances of material do not prove any resemblance of character. The Emperor hymn, with its quiet, yet solemn expression of definitely worldly sentiments is neither a folksong nor a religious hymn.

In the quartet, as Tovey rightly remarks, the variations "simply pass the unadorned melody from one instrument to the other." Haydn was obviously disinclined to change the cherished child's features, however slightly. But he produces worthy companions in the three other movements, which contain some of Haydn's happiest inspirations. The construction and the development of the opening theme in the first movement bear the hallmark of Haydn's genius. The whole movement is built upon the first five notes; even before the theme has finished its first appearance, the viola has seized these five basic notes for contrapuntal use in the third bar. The climax of the movement is reached in a spirited improvisation in E major, on a syncopated drone bass, at the end of the development section. The coda is original in form: the first two of the same five notes enter into a playful, gradually accelerated race.

The minuet begins with a five-bar phrase, the irregularity of which is opposed to the regular metrical structure of the succeeding phrases. The trio has charming contrasts between minor and major, of the kind which we so often find in Schubert's music. The last movement begins in C minor; the major mode is regained later. The agitated character of this movement reminds us of some of Beethoven's early finales (for example, that of his first piano sonata, Op. 2, No. 1 in F minor).

Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 17 Bartók
Moderato (1881-1945)
Allegro molto capriccioso
Lento

In terms of sheer sound, the String Quartet No. 2 is conceivably the most beautiful work that Bartók composed. This is not so much an evaluation as a description, for Bartók had different ends in view at different times, and sensuous beauty was one of many. The Second Quartet is very much an entity, differing from its predecessor by being more homogeneous and more personally "pure Bartók," and from its successors by being essentially a romantic, lyrical work. In being designated Opus 17, it is the last of the quartets to have received an opus number; the composer discontinued their use for any composition after Opus 20.

Bartók used a three-movement scheme for the quartet, surrounding an Allegro molto capriccioso second movement with two slower movements, a Moderato and a Lento. The first movement is in sonata form. Bartók's opening theme contains the germ of everything to follow in the movement, and rather than the expected dramatic contrast between first and second groups, they explore different aspects of the same basic material. In a sense, the entire exposition can be considered as building toward the beautiful closing theme, played together by the first violin and viola. That theme again closes the recapitulation, this time intensified by a pizzicato accompaniment in the cello. What is perhaps most remarkable about these two little sections, and about the quartet as a whole, for that matter, is that they are at once beautiful and unfamiliar. This is in no sense a variant of someone else's music; this is a beauty that had not been heard before.

Bartók's second movement is a rondo, one that many commentators have described as "wild and barbaric" and compared to the Allegro barbaro for piano of a few years earlier. What was to become one of the composer's most idiomatic techniques is present here in great measure: the establishment of a "tonal level" (the feeling of a home key without restricting oneself by the harmonic limitations of that key) through the use of drones, or repeated notes. The drones, in a sense, act as anchors, sporadically appearing and disappearing, to keep this violently propulsive movement from flying off into atonal space.

The contrast offered by the finale could not be greater. It is a slow-moving piece, made up of several independent sections (which, however, have certain thematic relationships), and punctuated by a cadential figure. Although there is no accepted formal name for this kind of movement, it could be referred to fairly accurately as a medley. The mood of the whole is somber and intense.

Quartet in A minor, Op. 132 Beethoven

Assai sostenuto - Allegro

(1770-1827)

Allegro ma non tanto

Molto adagio - Andante

Alla marcia, assai vivace

Allegro appassionato - Presto

Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132, a work paradoxically confronting remote abstraction with personal immediacy, was completed in July 1825 and premiered in a small private performance in September of that year. Beethoven's grand scheme was the incomparable musical expression of a succession of contrasting psychological states. The opening Allegro represents an impassioned play of unresolved contradictions delineated by adroit deviations from orthodox sonata form, unexpected harmonic movements, and intriguing contrapuntal confrontations. The second movement, Allegro, provides further contrast in its mode of subdued entertainment, various compositional maneuvers combining in a sprightly dance set within the framework of a pastoral interlude.

The following slow movement reaches the transcendental culmination of the entire work. Variation technique, a major preoccupation in Beethoven's late style, serves to express sublime vision in the loftiest of musical terms. Ravaging contrast suffuses the overall structure: a conflicting pair of themes subjected to intensifying variation. The initial idea ("Holy Song of Thanks to the Godhead from a Convalescent") is a Romanticized archaic statement of triumph over agony, for Beethoven just had recovered from an illness. Classical harmonic and structural concepts are superimposed over the ancient Lydian mode. The other theme ("Feeling New Power") is an earthy avowal of human release couched in vigor of musical pace, rich texture, and elaborate ornamentation. The fourth movement, a brief march, returns to worldly simplicity concluded by a fervid operatic recitative. This leads directly to the final Allegro appassionato, an ardent rondo interchanging between the fervid main theme and coloristic interludes.