

Chamber Music

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC
THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

2000-2001

Houston Friends of Music

was created 40 years ago to bring Houstonians the finest chamber music
by recognized international ensembles.

As our presence in Houston has grown, a related commitment has emerged:
to share this experience with the younger generation and new audiences.
We provide free tickets for students at twenty high schools and colleges in the area.
We also sponsor master classes for music students, given by our guest artists.

As a 501(c3) charitable organization, your gifts are instrumental in
enabling us to maintain our high quality of performers and to
continue the Friends' educational outreach program.

For information on contributions, concert underwriting,
matching gifts, bequests or gifts of stock, please call
HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC at 713-348-5400.

If you are unable to attend a performance, please contact us during the day at the above phone number
for a tax-deductible donation of tickets; after 7:00 p.m. the day of the concert the
box office number to call is:
713-348-5363.

Upcoming Concerts

2000-2001 SEASON

MUIR QUARTET

with Guest Artist,
David Shifrin, Clarinet

Thursday, October 19, 2000

PACIFICA QUARTET

Tuesday, November 7, 2000

CHANTICLEER

Thursday, January 18, 2001

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

BORROMEIO

TRIO FONTENAY

Thursday, March 15, 2001

AMERICAN BRASS

QUINTET

Wednesday, April 4, 2001

STUDE CONCERT HALL * ALICE PRATT BROWN HALL * RICE UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2000

THE AMERICAN STRING QUARTET

Peter Winograd, Violin • Laurie Carney, Violin

Daniel Avshalomov, Viola • David Geber, Cello

PROGRAM

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

Quartet in F Minor, Op. 20, No. 5

Moderato • Menuet • Adagio

Finale: Fuga a due soggetti

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG (1874-1951)

String Quartet No. 2 in F Sharp Minor, Op. 10

With Dana Hanchard, Soprano

I. Massig

II. Sehr Rasch

III. Litanei: Langsam

IV. Entrückung: Sehr Langsam

INTERMISSION

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Quartet in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1

Allegro • Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando

Adagio molto e mesto • Thème Russe: Allegro

The American String Quartet is represented by

Melvin Kaplan, Inc. 115 College Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401

Recordings: CRI, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, New World, Musicmasters

Photographing and sound recording are prohibited. We further request that audible paging devices not be used during performances. Paging arrangements may be made with the ushers.

Martin Merritt-Stage Manager

Matt Coldwell-Technical Director and Lighting Designer

Quartet in F Minor, Op. 20 No. 5 (1772)

FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN

Haydn's production of string quartets constitutes a truly seminal event in the history of Western music. Elevating the fledgling genre from the superficial divertimenti of the Rococo era to a serious expression of intellect and invention in the Age of Reason, they represent the music he wrote for himself and his musicians once his career had been established and he had the liberty to speak in his own voice. He was a mature composer of 40 when he began to produce that string of four dozen masterpieces which stands unchallenged to this day for ingenuity, number, and variety, and as the standard against which future composers would be measured. Mostly written without commission, their sheer number has doomed some to undeserved neglect. For the modern audience this provides the potentially unlimited opportunity to hear something fresh.

The Op. 20 quartets were nicknamed "Sun" because five years after their original publication in France, Hummel's Berlin edition displayed a picture of the sun on its cover. As a group these quartets are indeed the start of a new day, a major step away from the Rococo style which had followed the Baroque, into the frankly Classical movement embodied by Haydn and Mozart, where substance once again became as important an artistic element as form. There are politics at play here—the conscious desire of the German-speaking intellectuals to distance themselves from the French, giving rise to the "Sturm und Drang" (storm and stress) movement. The opening of tonight's quartet exemplifies this move towards dramatic, personal expression. This is one of the relatively few of Haydn's quartets to begin in a minor key; further, it continues in minor in the following movement which, while marked Minuet retains none of character of that light-hearted dance form. Thus, the two opening movements of this quartet share an introspective cast.

The Adagio, on the other hand, is a sublimely sweet Siciliano, set in quasi variation form in which the first and second violins share a theme ornamented by the first violin in a rather Rococo style—a subtle Haydnesque joke. The final movement is a splendid double fugue—a fugue on the first theme as well as on

the second theme, and both together in complex contrapuntal combination à la Baroque—until the last 40 measures when Haydn turns it into a canon. Just to let everyone know he could do it all!

Program notes © by Nora Avins Klein, August, 2000

Second String Quartet, F Sharp Minor, Op. 10 (1907-08)

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Schoenberg's Second String Quartet was composed in the midst of a personal crisis. His wife, Mathilde, had left him for an affair with the young and talented painter Richard Gerstl, from whom both she and Schoenberg had been taking art lessons. Eventually she returned to Schoenberg, the couple was reconciled, and he dedicated this quartet to her. Gerstl, however, committed suicide six weeks before the quartet's world premiere. Despite these turbulent circumstances, Schoenberg not only devoted himself intensively to painting, he also achieved an artistic breakthrough in composition. In this respect the Second Quartet assumes a key position within his oeuvre.

With its division into four relatively short and condensed movements, the work represents a new departure from the extended and complex single-movement form employed in his previous works. While all the movements of this quartet are cyclically linked by common motivic material, it was the first in which Schoenberg tried out more concise forms. The Second Quartet is also one of the last works to use a key signature. And although all four movements employ tonal triads of the main key at crucial points, and end on a tonic, in this work a major step is taken toward the renunciation of tonal centers, a step toward so-called "atonality." The piece also features polyphonic and highly chromatic sections in which individual parts proceed very freely, without regard to traditional principles of tonality. Dissonances abound. As Beethoven's Ninth Symphony included the human voice in a symphony for the first time, Schoenberg's Second Quartet is the first string quartet on record to involve a singing voice. Here Schoenberg turned to the esoteric poetry of Stefan George (1868-1934), setting two poems: "Litanei" (Litany) and "Entrückung" (Rapture) from George's "Seventh Ring" (1907).

PROGRAM NOTES

The quartet's fervently intense opening movement in F-sharp minor is cast in sonata form. Yet the key scheme of the traditional sonata concept no longer provides harmonic contrast. Instead, contrast is achieved by confrontation of different thematic treatments. For instance, the context of the first theme with dotted rhythms is triadic and the second waltz-like theme is atonal and contrapuntal. The development offers ingenious counterpoint which, in Schoenberg's words, might attract the attention of a "connoisseur of contrapuntal finesse." In the recapitulation, the first theme, source of most of this movement's motivic-thematic material, receives special emphasis. Simultaneous with its statement in the viola, the cello presents it in augmentation. The second movement is divided into scherzo, trio, scherzo, and coda. The first section is based on three different motifs presented in various contrapuntal textures. The trio refers back to the scherzo and the first movement. At the end of the trio Schoenberg, in a tragic-comic spirit, quotes the popular Viennese folk song "Oh, Du lieber Augustin, alles ist hin!" (Alas, dear Augustin, all is lost!), whereupon the music breaks into fragments. Schoenberg continues this quotation and motivic material reminiscent of the first movement, then, after tentative gestures in the viola and cello, the scherzo is restated. Schoenberg's citation of the phrase "all is lost!" which simultaneously expresses despair and humor, has often been interpreted as an allusion both to his marital crisis and his abandonment of functional tonality.

In the third and fourth movements Schoenberg introduces the soprano voice. The slow third movement is a setting of "Litany" and is designed as a set of variations on a theme based on motives of the first two movements. Schoenberg chose the strict variations form in connection with the passionate text because he "was afraid the great emotionality of the poem might cause [him] to surpass the borderline of what should be admitted in chamber music." And he hoped that "the serious elaboration required by variation would keep [him] from becoming too dramatic." The strings play richly contrapuntal variations, while the soprano retains thematic autonomy. The closing movement is the setting of the visionary poem "Rapture." Two of its lines, "I feel air from another planet," and "I am dissolved in swirling sound," can be regarded as a motto for the atmosphere of departure and the exploration of the realm of "atonality" in the

finale. Following increased undermining and blurring of tonality in the earlier movements, the finale dispenses with the key signature altogether, and in many sections including the introduction, tonal centers are completely dissolved. Again based on the the sonata form but now framed by an introduction and a coda, this calm movement features chromaticism and altered fourth chords. Recapitulating motifs from the first movement's opening theme, the finale, however, concludes in F-sharp major, although this chord occurs only occasionally and functions mainly as a referential sound throughout the last movement.

Schoenberg's Second Quartet was premiered in Vienna in 1908 by the Rosé Quartet with soprano Marie Gutheil-Schoder. The premiere caused a scandal and triggered laughter, catcalls, and shouting. Tearing the work apart, reviewers even suggested that Schoenberg be brought to trial for the public nuisance of his music. However, a second performance in 1912 was well received. Today, the Second String Quartet is regarded as one of Schoenberg's most accessible pieces and as one of the finest works in the modern quartet literature.

Copyright © 2000 by Dr. Sabine M. Feisst

Sabine M. Feisst resides in New York City where she is currently working on a book about Schoenberg in the United States. The author of *Der Begriff in der neuen Musik/Concepts of Improvisation in New Music* (Sinzig, 1997) and various articles on 20th Century-Music, she is an associate researcher for the Busoni Edition at the Musicology Department of the Free University, Berlin.

LITANEI

Tief ist die Trauer, die mich umdüstert,
Ein tret ich weider, Herr! in dein Haus...

Lang war die Reise, matt sind die Glieder,
Leer sind die Schreine, voll nur die Qual.

Durstende Zunge darbt nach dem Weine.
Hart war gestritten, starr ist mein Arm.

Gonne die Ruhe schwankenden Schritten,
Hungrigem Gaume brockle dein Brot!

Schwach ist mein Atem rufend dem Traume,
Hohl sind die Hände, fiebernd der Mund.

Leib deine Kühle, lösche die Brände,
Tilge das Hoffen, sende das Licht!

Gluten im Herzen lodern noch offen,
Innerst im Grunde wacht noch ein Schrei...

Tote das Sehnen, schliesse die Wunde!
Nimm mir die Liebe, gib mir dein Glück!

PROGRAM NOTES

LITANY

Deep is the grief that surrounds me,
I enter again, Lord, into thy house. . .

The journey was long, my limbs are weary
The shrines are empty, pain alone is full.

My thirsty tongue longs for the wine
The battle was hard, my arm is numb.

Give rest to my faltering steps,
Break thy bread for the hungry mouth.

Lend thy coolness, quench the flames,
Away from all hope, send thy light!

Flames still burn fiercely in my heart,
From deep inside me comes a cry. . .

Death to my longings, close up my wound!
Take away love, grant me only Peace!

ENTRÜCKUNG

Ich fühle Luft von anderem Planeten.
Mir blassen durch das Dunkel die Gesichter
Die freundlich eben noch sich zu mir drehen.

Und Baum und Wege die ich liebe fahlen
Dass ich sie kaum mehr kenne und du lichter
Geliebter Schatten-Rufer meiner Qualen-

Bist nun erloschen ganz in tiefern Glut
Um nach dem Taumel streitenden Getobes
Mit einem frommen Schauer anzumuten.

Ich lose mich in Tönen, kreisend, webend,
Ungrundigen Danks und unbekannten Lobes
Dem grossen Atem wunschlos mich ergebend.

Mich überfahrt ein ungestumes Weben
Im Rausch der Weihe wo inbrunstige Schreie
In Staub geworfener Beterinnen flehen:

Dann sehe ich wie sich duftige Nebel lüpfen
In einer sonnerfüllten klaren Freie
Die nur umfängt auf fernsten Bergesschlupfen.

Der Boden schüttet weiss und weich wie Molke
Ich steige über Schluchten ungeheuer.
Ich fühle wie ich über letzter Wolke.

In einem Meer Kristallinen Glanzes schwimme-
Ich bin ein Funke nur vom heiligen Feuer
Ich bin ein Deobnen nur der heiligen Stimme.

RAPTURE

I breathe the air of another planet.
The faces through the darkness I see fainter
Which only just so kindly turned toward me.

And trees and paths which I once loved, now grow paler
So that I scarcely know them, and you lighter
Beloved shadow-causer of my torments-

Have in the deeper glow now fully faded
Only to cast round me after tossing turmoil
Of fights a spell of pious shuddering.

I am dissolved in music, circling, binding,
With boundless gratitude and praise unnamed,
Yet wishes to the grand breath yielding.

A wild and strong wind now overtakes me,
Enraptured by the solemn rites of service,
Where women, thrown in dust, cry pleading.

Then I see how the airy mists are lifting,
In sun-filled skies, in air so clear and free,
Which envelopes you only on farthest mountains.

The earth shakes white and soft as something curdled,
I climb across some deep ravines gigantic.
I feel as if I, past the last cloud floating,

Where in a sea of crystal-glittering splendor—
I am a spark, no more, of holy fire,
A thundering only of the holy voice.

Quartet in F Major, Op. 59 No. 1 Rasumovsky (1806)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Count Andreas Rasumovsky in the development of the musical life of Vienna after Mozart and Haydn. It was this generous and music-loving Russian ambassador to the Imperial Court at Vienna, himself only two generations removed from his illiterate Ukrainian peasant forefathers, who engaged a permanent quartet—the Schuppanzigh—with a lifetime contract, and placed them at Beethoven's disposal.

In 1806, Beethoven completed three quartets commissioned by the Count, each one to contain a Russian element. The contrast with his Op. 18 quartets of six years earlier could not have been greater. Upon playing through the first of them, one of the performers reportedly said, "Surely you do not consider this music." Beethoven is said to have replied, "Not for you, but for a later age." The piece was Beethoven's Quartet in F Major.

These Rasumovsky Quartets appeared during that decade 1803-1813, generally called Beethoven's "middle period," which followed immediately on the heels of his struggle to overcome deepening deafness, depression, and thoughts of suicide. The complexity, intensity, and unconquerable spirit of Beethoven's inner world are clearly reflected in these works, so radically different from anything which preceded them. The music-going public found them difficult to understand—more complex, fragmented and dissonant, more experimental tonally and rhythmically, and grander in design. For the performers they proved technically considerably more demanding. One wonders what Count Rasumovsky thought. Two cen-

PROGRAM NOTES

turies later the F Major quartet has become deeply beloved for what Melvin Berger has called "the spacious conception, the high expressivity, the sweep of formal structure, the beautiful melodies, the rich harmonies, the surging rhythms, and the brilliant string writing."

It begins with a serene and noble *Allegro*. The cello dominates the opening measures with a disarmingly innocent theme that will be taken up by each instrument and developed in ways which are novel, yet each note seeming musically correct. In the *Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando*, the rhythmic tattoo of the cello sets the stage for a multiplicity of motifs woven by each instrument into an intricate web of counterpoint. This movement is also notable for its exceptional length—far surpassing that of any preceding scherzo movement in the literature. The *Adagio molto e mesto* is one of Beethoven's saddest and most introspective movements. Its profoundly tragic mood is interspersed with but never relieved by, passages of bitter-sweetness. The tautness of the moment is broken by the first violin in a high-ranging cadenza ending in a long trill which leads without pause into the last movement, which is based on a cheerful "*Thème Russe: Allegro*" introduced by the cello. Although the theme is Russian, the music is pure Beethoven—full of abrupt changes of tempo, restlessness, and high spirits. It is a happy movement, full of good-natured and witty musical devices, a provocative finish to the first of his great romantic string quartets.

Program notes by Jack B. Mazow and Nora Klein, August, 2000.

Dana Hanchard

Dana Hanchard was born in New York city to Jamaican parents. She received her music education at the Manhattan and Juilliard Schools of Music. Artistically, she is at home in a remarkable variety of styles and genres, from baroque to popular and jazz, and from opera to chamber music and song recitals. Her performances have taken her all over North America and Europe. An abbreviated list of groups with which she has performed includes the New World Symphony, the Houston Symphony, Les Musiciens du Louvre, Da Camera of Houston, Glimmerglass Opera, the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen, and the Houston Grand Opera (in Meredith Monk's "Atlas"). She has performed with many of the most important baroque groups in England, Sweden, Scotland, Germany and the United

States. In addition, she writes and performs her own music in recital. She has recorded with Harmonia Mundi, Deutsche Grammophon/Archiv, Erato, ECM and Lyricord labels. This is her first appearance for the Houston Friends of Music.

The American String Quartet

The American String Quartet celebrated its 25th anniversary in the 1998-1999 season. The group has yearly toured virtually every important concert hall in Europe and North America since its inception and has been the Resident Quartet at the Aspen Music Festival since 1974. It was one of the first groups to receive a National Arts Endowment grant for its activities on college campuses and has taken part in many other educational activities. Among many other distinguished positions, it has also served as the Quartet in Residence at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City since 1984. Most recently the Quartet has recorded the complete Mozart quartets for MusicMasters/Musical Heritage—this in addition to previous complete sets of the quartets of Beethoven, Schubert, Schoenberg, and Bartok.

The four all come from accomplished musical families. They studied together at the Juilliard School where the quartet was formed in 1974, winning the Coleman Competition and the Naumburg Award that same year. Each member also finds time for solo appearances and recitals.

NEXT PROGRAM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2000 8:00 P. M.

MUIR STRING QUARTET

with Guest Artist

DAVID SHIFRIN, CLARINET

HAYDN

Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 50 No. 1

JANAČEK

String Quartet No. 1

BRAHMS

Clarinet Quintet Op. 115