

Chamber Music

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THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

2000-2001

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC

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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

BORRAMEO

TRIO FONTENAY

Thursday, March 15, 2001

AMERICAN BRASS
QUINTET

Wednesday, April 4, 2001

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC

STUDE CONCERT HALL • ALICE PRATT BROWN HALL • RICE UNIVERSITY
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2001, 8:00 P.M.

BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

Nicholas Kitchen, violin • William Fedkenheuer, violin
Mai Motobuchi, viola • Yessun Kim, cello
WITH SPECIAL GUEST ARTIST *Paul Katz, cello*

PROGRAM

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Quartet In F Minor, Op. 95 (Serioso)

Allegro con brio • Allegretto ma non troppo
Allegro assai vivace ma serioso • Larghetto; Allegretto agitato

STEVEN MACKEY (b.1956)

Ars Moriendi (nine tableaux on the art of dying well)

1. "Don't trouble trouble"
2. First Lament Fragment
3. "Speak like the people, write like the king"
4. Second Lament Fragment
5. "Everything in moderation, including moderation"
6. A Peculiar Spice
7. Third Lament
8. Fibrillation
9. Londonderry Aire

INTERMISSION

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Cello Quintet in C Major, Op. 163, D. 956

Allegro ma non troppo • Adagio
Scherzo: Presto; Trio: Andante sostenuto • Allegretto

Exclusive Management: ICM Artists Ltd. 40 West 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019; Lee Lamont, Chairman, David V. Foster, President & C.E.O.

The Borromeo Quartet can be found on the Internet at www.borromeoquartet.org.

THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS.

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 Tim Dickson-Technical Director and Lighting Designer
Program Design by Geri Snider Creative Services



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

Quartet in F minor, Op. 95

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Beethoven completed his quartet in F minor in October, 1810, but did not publish it until six years later. Beethoven himself gave it the subtitle "Serioso." Many events, both personal and political, could have put Beethoven in a serious mood. He probably abandoned his hopeless courtship of Therese Malfatti in the spring of 1810. His deafness was growing, possibly aggravated by the noise of the siege of Vienna in May 1809. In May of 1810 he had written his friend Dr. Wegeler: "Had I not read somewhere that a man ought not of his own free-will to take away his life, so long as he could still perform a good action, I should long ago have been dead—and, indeed, by my own hand. Oh, how beautiful life is, but for me it is for ever poisoned."

However the events of Beethoven's life may have affected his mood, the seriousness of this quartet could be understood as strictly musical. He seems to have been reaching out toward some of the techniques of his late quartets, attacking purely musical problems. The F minor is certainly different from his previous quartet, Op. 74 of 1809. Joseph Kerman calls Op. 95 "an involved, impassioned, highly idiosyncratic piece, problematic in every one of its movements, advanced in a hundred ways."

The first movement is intense and compressed. The opening motif is a forceful, brusque gesture played in unison, followed by a rest. When the cello repeats this motif, it introduces an abrupt change of key. Another unison passage leads to a more lyrical second theme, begun by the viola and taken up by the cello and second violin. A third section consists of a quietly drooping figure punctuated by sixteenth-note turns. The exposition is not repeated. Fragments of the first motif, especially the sixteenth-note turn, are devel-

oped, sometimes obsessively. Almost before we are aware, a quiet repetition of the opening motif ends the movement.

The *Allegretto* recalls the descending-ascending motion from the first movement, but gives it to a quiet solo cello, without the turns. The first violin takes up a song-like theme which is followed by a fugue begun in the viola. This material is elaborated until a quiet seventh chord ends the movement but leads immediately to the *Allegro assai ma serioso*. This part also begins with brusque gestures and rests, and continues with material based on a dotted-eighth-and-sixteenth-note rhythm. A contrasting section consists of a grave chorale in the lower strings under figuration in the first violin. These sections are repeated with some variation.

The finale begins with a slow *Larghetto espressivo* that recalls the rhythmic pattern of the previous movement. This soon turns into a nervous *Allegro agitato*, with many of the same abrupt contrasts characteristic of the other movements. After a descent into a soft, almost exhausted ending, the mood changes radically. The seriousness is blown away—or as Joseph Kerman says, "kicked in the rear"—by a final *Allegro* in F major. The composer Randall Thompson wrote of this ending that "No bottle of champagne was ever uncorked at a better time."

Program notes by Edward Doughtie.

Ars Moriendi

STEVEN MACKEY

Composer and guitarist Steven Mackey was born in Frankfurt, Germany, to American parents in 1956. He is currently Professor of Music at Princeton University. Trained as a guitarist, Mackey frequently performs his own music. His most recent composition, "Tuck and Roll" for electric guitar and orchestra, just received its premiere by the

New World Symphony conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas with Mackey as soloist; the piece was also included in a disc of his orchestral music recorded for BMG Classics. Upcoming commissions include an orchestra piece for the San Francisco Symphony and works for several chamber groups including the Brentano and Borromeo Quartets. The Brentano Quartet is recording Mackey's quartets for Arabesque Records.

Of "Ars Moriendi," the composer writes: "'Ars Moriendi,' Latin for 'the art of dying well,' was a term used to describe a visual art practice common in the 16th century. . . . These works were often presented as a series in books that priests used to inspire members of their flock to a good death: death with dignity.

"My composition does not represent an inspirational, hypothetical death, but rather a personal diary of my experience with my father's death, which I regard as among the richest, most profound experiences of my life. . . .

"'Ars Moriendi' is 24 minutes long and is in nine tableaux played without pause, except for a break between the sixth and seventh movements. The first six movements have distinct beginnings and endings but are performed *attacca*, while the last three movements are seamlessly connected.

"The titles of the first, third, and sixth tableaux are pieces of advice that my father shared relentlessly with my two older brothers and me. The music doesn't really attempt to capture the sense of these nuggets of wisdom, but the movements are, in general, reminiscences of my father's character in his prime: his athleticism, quick wit, the funny dances he did, and the way he yodeled rather than yawned when he got sleepy while driving. The first movement begins with my rendering the sounds of the hospital, of my father's labored breaths and his struggling heart. These sounds of his condition served both as a backdrop and as interpolations to our nostalgic musings on his life. When thinking about his last days, I am

reminded of a quote from a letter Rilke wrote to a friend: 'Everywhere, death permeated life like a peculiar spice in life's powerful flavor.' This is the source of the title of the fifth tableaux.

"The second, fourth, and seventh movements refer to the musical genre, especially common in the 16th and 17th centuries, known as the lament. These works were usually based on a recurring descending bass pattern or 'ground bass.' The first two 'lament fragments' tease out a pattern from elusive and disoriented textures. The ground bass becomes explicit and recurring in the 'Third Lament' and by the end of this movement the pattern is shortened to the same four-note bass line that Monteverdi uses in his madrigal 'Lamento della Ninfa.'

"The last two movements, flowing continuously from the 'Third Lament,' deal with the nitty-gritty of my father's death: the gravity of the occasion, his pathetic struggle to cling to life, his family's urging to let go, and the tide of ashen lifelessness flowing up from his toes and leaving through the top of his head. My father loved the 'Londonderry Aire' ('Danny Boy') and enjoyed torturing me by plunking it out awkwardly on any piano he came across. It seemed fitting that this piece, written in his memory, frequently drifts through the pentatonic world of that song and culminates in an explicit setting of the melody, harmonized by the lament ground bass. Coincidentally the words of the song—at least in my father's rendition—are also about saying goodbye: 'Oh, Danny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling.'"

Cello Quintet in C Major, Op. 163, D. 956

FRANZ SCHUBERT

The Cello Quintet in C Major was Schubert's last chamber music work, composed during August and September of 1828, the year he died at the age of 31. He had completed

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his "Great" C Major Symphony several months earlier.

This quintet is considered by many to be one of the most outstanding works in the chamber music repertoire. The addition of the extra cello to the normal string quartet allows for almost unlimited depth and variety of tonal color, enabling Schubert to obtain some of the most exquisite sound effects in all of Romantic music from this combination.

The first movement begins with a C major chord, played by the four upper instruments, which swells from soft to loud and is then extended by the first violin. Somewhat abruptly, this phrase is repeated by the four lower instruments in a minor key, causing a sudden change of mood. The music grows more agitated, leading with three chords into the second theme—a hauntingly memorable cello duet played above a viola bass line. In the development, contrapuntal sections alternate with more lyrical sections. Then the first theme returns to close the movement, with some added rhythmical figurations.

The *Adagio* possesses a statuesque quality that is unforgettable. The pianist Arthur Rubenstein requested that it be played at his funeral. The movement begins with three layers of sound: the pizzicati of the second cello creates a pulsation on the bottom, the first violin plays a serene though halting melody, and the three middle voices fill in with rich harmonies. A trill introduces the turbulent middle section in minor. The lower cello plays a low-pitched growling pattern of notes, and the second violin and viola play a syncopated rhythm, while the first violin and first cello play a high lyrical line in unison, binding everything together. As the strength of the middle section weakens, there are gaps in the sound, and the serenity that was present in the first theme is restored.

In the last two movements both cellos are used to reinforce the bass line, imparting a certain amount of gruffness when they play

in double stops. The *Scherzo* is reminiscent of a rustic peasant-like dance. A quiet *Andante* forms an unusual trio section before the *Scherzo* returns.

The finale begins in the character of a Viennese dance, with appropriate after-beats. The second theme is played once again by first violin and first cello, and the two themes are developed throughout the rest of the movement. The coda is propelled forward by two different increases in tempo and the quintet is brought to a brilliant ending in C major, though only after some weighty D flats are inserted, possibly as a reminder of earlier tensions.

Upon completion of the Cello Quintet, Schubert offered it to a publisher, who refused it. Its premiere did not take place until 1850 and the Quintet was not published until three years later.

Program Notes by Margaret Bragg, February, 2001.

The Borromeo Quartet

The Quartet takes its name from an area of northern Italy where the founding members played their first concerts together. The history of that region, located just south of Switzerland, has been greatly influenced by the Borromeo family, whose legacy of architectural landmarks include the palaces of the Borromeo Islands in Lago Maggiore.

After studying individually at the Curtis Institute, the members of the Quartet became the first ensemble to be accepted by the New England Conservatory for its prestigious Artist Diploma program in 1990. As a result, they were able to study with many of the faculty members at the Conservatory and they now serve there as Quartet-in-Residence. Early in their existence, they won second prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. This was with their founding membership of Nicholas Kitchen and Ruggero Allifranchini,

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violins, Ensik Choi, viola, and Yeesun Kim, cello. In August of 2000 the quartet was joined by William Fedkenheuer, violin, and Mai Motobuchi, viola, both of whom have studied at Rice's Shepherd School of Music. Each member of the quartet has performed extensively as soloist and with other chamber ensembles.

The Borromeo String Quartet regularly plays chamber music with other artists. They frequently join the Brentano Quartet for concerts and have performed with members of the Guarneri and Juilliard Quartets as well as collaborating with David Shifrin and other Artist Members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Paul Katz, Cello

Paul Katz is known to concertgoers the world over as cellist of the Cleveland Quartet, which during an international career of 26 years made more than 2500 appearances on four continents, in all of the music capitals, great concert halls, and music festivals of the world. As a member of this celebrated ensemble from 1969-1995, he performed at the White House and on television's "CBS Sunday Morning," NBC's "Today Show," and "The Grammy Awards" (the first classical musicians to appear on that show). The Cleveland Quartet has nearly 70 recordings to its credit on RCA Victor, Telarc International, Sony, Philips, and ProArte. These recordings have earned many distinctions including eleven Grammy nominations and two Grammy Awards.

Mr. Katz has also appeared as soloist in cities throughout North America. He was a student of Gregor Piatigorsky, Janos Starker, Bernard Greenhouse, Leonard Rose, and Gabor Rejto.

In 1996 Mr. Katz was appointed Professor of Cello and Chamber Music at the Shepherd School of Music of Rice University. He has

mentored many of the fine young string quartets on the world's stages today, and his students occupy positions in many of the world's major orchestras, including principal chairs.

In addition to his performing and teaching activities, Mr. Katz has received numerous awards, including an Honorary Doctorate of Musical Arts from Albright College and Chamber Music America's highest honor, The 2001 National Service Award, awarded for a lifetime of distinguished service in the field of chamber music, which included serving as President of Chamber Music America for six years.

Mr. Katz plays an Andrea Guarneri cello dated 1669.

NEXT CONCERT

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2001
STUDE CONCERT HALL, 8:00 P.M.

Trio Fontenay

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Trio Élégiacque, Op. 9

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Trio in B Flat Major, Op. 97, "Archduke"

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AMATEUR CHAMBER MUSIC ALERT

The Houston Friends of Music wants to know how many amateur musicians in our community would be interested in participating in a program of weekend workshops devoted to instrumental and vocal chamber music. The Amateur Chamber Music Players Foundation currently provides partial sponsorship for professional chamber music ensembles to coach adult, amateur workshops. If you are interested, please call our office at 713-348-5400. If there is sufficient response we will apply for the grant. Please be aware that there would be some participant fee associated with this program.