

DAEDALUS QUARTET

MIN-YOUNG KIM - VIOLIN
KYU-YOUNG KIM - VIOLIN
JESSICA THOMPSON - VIOLA
RAMAN RAMAKRISHNAN - CELLO

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2006

~ PROGRAM ~

Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Animé et très décidé

Assez vif et bien rythmé

Andantino, doucement espressif

Très modéré—Très animé

Ainsi la nuit

HENRI DUTILLEUX (B. 1916)

~ INTERMISSION ~

Quartet No. 14 in A minor, Op. 132

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Andante - Allegro molto moderato

Vivace

Adagio di molto

Allegretto (ma pesante)

Allegro

CLAUDE-ACHILLE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)
String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10 (1893)

Claude Debussy's String Quartet, Op. 10, is evidence of a composer on the cusp of finding his musical voice. The quartet, written in 1893, is Debussy's last piece in a traditional genre with a (more or less) conventional form (until the set of sonatas written in the last years of his life). It is the last time he employs a cyclical structure (certainly the influence of his former teacher at the Paris Conservatoire, Cesar Franck), with the main themes of all the movements closely related to one another. It is also one of the last works in which the influence of the Russian Nationalist composers, particularly Borodin, is so apparent. Finally, it is the last time Debussy uses an opus number to mark his work (and indeed the first; the Op. 10 designation is completely arbitrary!).

The following year, Debussy completed the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, and music would never be the same. The bold and masterful use of instrumental color and timbre which formed the basis for this and so many of Debussy's later works, however, were already in play in the string quartet. Other features of the "new" Debussy working within the "old" framework are textural contrasts (both subtle and dramatic) and the use of modal and whole-tone scales, creating a feeling of free-floating harmonies.

The theme on which so much of the music in the quartet is based asserts itself, fanfare-like, at the outset of the opening *Animé et très décidé*. The theme remains virtually unchanged melodically or rhythmically throughout the movement but is harmonized in a different way nearly every time it appears. The movement, and much of the rest of the work, is propelled by these subtle variations, as well as by repetition of short phrases, dramatic crescendos, and a great flexibility of tempo.

The scherzo, marked *Assez vif et bien rythmé*, is often described as showing the influence of Javanese gamelan music, heard in Paris at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle*. This is certainly a defensible position, given the prominent ostinato figures and the unique textures created by juxtaposing and combining arco and pizzicato playing. But this movement has always sounded distinctively Spanish to me, from the opening guitar strums of the cello to the dance-like rhythmic vitality (featuring Latin-sounding, two-against-three cross rhythms). Perhaps Debussy had both cultures in mind—the first example of "Asian fusion"?

The third movement (*Andantino, doucement expressif*) is the most overtly Romantic of the quartet, and shows Borodin's influence most clearly.

This is a beautiful and tenderly expressive movement in which Debussy makes ample use of the dark sonorities of the viola. A contrasting middle section begins in chant-like austerity and gradually heats up to a powerful, operatic climax before fading back into the opening music and dissolving into a mere shimmer of sound. The finale is the most episodic movement, in effect summing up all the variant statements of the work's main theme and adding a few new ones. It also features the most "orchestral" writing of the work, and brings the piece to a grand, satisfying close.

Program note © the Daedalus Quartet, 2006.

HENRI DUTILLEUX (B. 1916)

Ainsi la nuit (1976)

Henri Dutilleux is one of the most respected French composers of his generation. Born in Angers, 200 miles southwest of Paris, he received his early musical education in Douai, and later at the Paris Conservatoire winning the 1938 Prix de Rome, the fruits of which were denied him by the outbreak of World War II. After a brief stint in the armed forces, Dutilleux held many positions including teacher of harmony, chorus master at the Paris Opéra, arranger of bar and nightclub music, head of musical illustrations at French Radio, and professor at the *Ecole Normale de Musique* and Paris Conservatoire. Throughout this time, he continued composing in a meticulous and highly self-critical fashion. Like Brahms, Dutilleux is a perfectionist who has produced a mature oeuvre that is far from copious but includes works of consistently high quality.

Dutilleux's style eludes easy classification; he has attempted to remain authentic to an artistic integrity that has rejected allegiance to a prevailing compositional system or group of composers (such as *Les Six* or *Jeune France*). Nevertheless, he maintained personal acquaintances with French composers such as Darius Milhaud and Francis Poulenc. While embracing certain musical elements from an earlier era (tonality, melody, and a Romantic conception of purpose), his work is clearly of our time. Influences in his music include Bartók (counterpoint, Gregorian chant, symmetry), Ligeti (texture), and Lutoslawski (harmonic structure). A great admirer of Proust, Dutilleux has drawn from the author's notions of prefiguration and memory. Both logic and dream cohabit in Dutilleux's musical language, oscillating between tonality, atonality, and modality.

Ainsi la nuit (Thus Is the Night) was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, written for the Juilliard Quartet, and dedicated

to Olga Koussevitzky and the memory of the composer's friend, Ernest Sussman. It is his only string quartet to date. The première took place on January 6, 1976 by the Quatuor Parrenin in Paris. Dutilleux described the piece as "a sort of nocturnal vision" in which the reflection of Bartók's "night music" is evident.

The work is divided into seven titled sections - with four *Parenthèses* which anticipate or recall material heard elsewhere - just as dreams allow re-ordering of events in fragmentary form, a jumbling of past, present and future (the Proustian influence). The untitled Introduction begins with the opening theme, with its arching contour and rhythmic hesitancy. It opens with a chord (pivot chord) of three superimposed fifths (C#-G#, F-C, G-D), followed by a melodic ascent and descent. Serving an architectural role as a point of reference, this theme is recalled and transfigured throughout the various sections.

In the *Nocturne 1*, Dutilleux applies a static, linear texture - making use of Gregorian modes and recalling the nature sounds of Bartók's Fourth and Fifth String Quartets. As the movement progresses, these sounds are concentrated as an intense descending melody that later recedes into obscurity.

Parenthèse 1 begins with a pizzicato breakdown of the initial chord, leading into *Miroir d'espace* (Mirror of space). In this section the first violin and the cello reflect each other while playing calm contrapuntal lines. Within these outer lines, a space is created which the two inner voices fill contrastingly with more incisive and agitated forms.

The introductory *Parenthèse 2* makes use of material from *Miroir d'espace*, and invokes again a scene of nature music while leading into *Litanies 1*. Here the pivot chord appears after substantial evolution. This animated movement displays the unifying thematic material in a form more concentrated, violent, and rhythmically incisive.

Leading into *Litanies 2*, *Parenthèse 3* begins with a variant of material from *Parenthèse 2*. The subsequent passages comprise a pensive meditation on previously heard material.

The final *Parenthèse* reintroduces the pivot chords, taken up in the following *Constellations*. Here the thematic material is given a penetrating and rhythmic treatment. This movement provides the most freely soloistic material for the four instruments. A progressive tension is built, utilizing dramatic textures and the ample *tutti crescendo*, leading to an energizing climax and somewhat ironic conclusion.

The brief *Nocturne 2* might almost be considered as a witty scherzo, with a playfully restless first violin melody. In its wanderings, it encounters

interjections of fragmented references from elsewhere.

The last movement, *Temps suspendu* (Suspended time) envelops the listener in a revelatory night landscape. Again the pivot chord occupies the centerpiece and final statement, coupled with episodes of mysterious melodies floating above a rich harmonic underpinning. Dutilleux has described this movement in terms of "harmonies of distant bells," referring to scenes from his own youth. This image may also recall the end of Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* (Remembrance of Things Past), in which a ringing doorbell prompts the listener to superimpose awareness of events past and present. Thus Dutilleux is giving precedence to a subjective time, eluding any notion of rigid limits and order.

Program note © Shamin Gopinath, August, 2001.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
String Quartet in A minor, Opus 132 (1825)

The fact that Beethoven's last years were troubled by profound personal disappointments and ill health didn't stop him from continuing to compose ever more original music, albeit at a slower pace. The *Missa Solemnis*, the last three piano sonatas, the Ninth Symphony, and the Diabelli Variations are from this period. Last of all came the now-famous Five Late String Quartets, completed during a one and a half year period six months before his death. It was Prince Galitzen, a young Russian nobleman and, like Razumovsky, an accomplished musician, who started it with his commission for three string quartets.. Beethoven's style had undergone serious change since the writing of his last string quartets 12 years before, so one can only imagine what the Prince said when he heard the results. During this time Beethoven had invented new sonorities, stretched tonal boundaries and harmonies further than ever - reaching at times into atonal territory - developed an interest in the old Church modes and Baroque forms, and had found a means of expressing the extremes of emotion with lightening changes of mood, dynamics and tempo, contrasted with deepest tranquillity. Furthermore, he had chosen to ignore perceived human limitations of performance. In the end, Beethoven sent to the Prince Op. 127, 132 and 130. Having more to say, however, he didn't stop there, continuing on with Op. 131 and 134 (note that Op. 133, the *Grosse Fuga*, is in reality the original final movement of Opus 130) before laying down his pen. Suffice it to say that, aside from his devoted fans, audience shock was great and it was, in fact, decades before these quartets took their regular place on the

concert stage.

Beethoven was in the process of composing tonight's quartet when he became so ill he had to stop for several months (for whatever reason, the opus numbers do not reflect the correct sequence of composition: 132, 130 and 131). That recovery was not assured can be surmised by his handling of the third movement of the quartet, as we shall see.

The plan of these quartets is so revolutionary as to require comment. The middle three of the last five quartets constitute a triptych, bound by motif, style and content. In at least one instance a movement originally intended for one quartet found a home in another. And strikingly, the opening notes of tonight's quartet are exactly those of the famous final movement (the *Grosse Fuga*) of the next quartet forming one of the basic kernels upon which the entire movement is built. All throughout Opuses 132, 130 and 131 one can identify a unifying four-note motif which appears in many guises. This was composition on a gigantic canvas.

The first movement, *Assai sostenuto* (Introduction) introduces the four-note motif which will be heard in one form or another and one key or another, throughout the first movement, where it will be easy to spot, and in the remainder of the quartet where it may be less so. The Baroque flourish by the first violin which ends the introduction and introduces the *Allegro*, is another device which Beethoven uses in these late quartets. It too, will appear later for the similar purpose of introducing a new idea. Beethoven deliberately blurs the tonal base of the first part of this movement, so it is not clear if we are in the key of A minor or E minor. This is the first hint of ambiguities to come. After the development section there will be two apparent recapitulations - the first in E minor, the second in the "correct" key of A minor.

The second movement, *Allegro ma non tanto* (Scherzo) (quick but not too much), begins with a lilting dance in triple meter. The middle section is a gently rustic bagpipe drone with big solos for the second violin and viola, with witty offbeats in contrast.

The third movement is the hallmark of this quartet. A work of utter originality, with it Beethoven explicitly bared his soul as no predecessor had ever done, to give thanks for having survived his recent illness. The work bears the inscription *Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der Lydischen Tonart* (Holy Hymn of Thanks to God on High from a Convalescent, in the Lydian Mode), *Molto adagio*. Written in the Lydian mode, a Church mode harking back to the middle ages, the key is formed of a scale starting on F, but missing the B flat, thus placing the half steps between the 4th and 5th tones of the scale instead of the 3rd and 4th. It was

historically associated with music of healing and recovery. Beethoven's choral melody is used in the manner of Bach's chorale preludes - the stark hymn is broken up into phrases separated by flowing, lyrical passages. The hymn consists of five phrases, all of equally long-held notes, the first phrase appearing with the first violin in what sounds like the third measure (but is actually still the second measure - Beethoven has made it impossible to distinguish the strong beats in the opening measures). The full hymn tune never appears all of a piece, but always broken up. Once the five phrases have been played, Beethoven shifts to an *Andante* section of livelier meter and brighter key bearing the notation *Neue Kraft fühlend* (Feeling New Force). There is no mistaking the cheerfulness and joy in these passages. The first return to the hymn tune is the best chance to identify it since, aside from the measures which weave between its segments, it is played entirely by the first violin. Next, another contrasting section is heard, a variation of the first, and the movement ends with a *Molto adagio* return to the Hymn of Thanks, this time entitled *Mit innigster Empfindung* (With Intimate Feeling), and now in a denser, more contrapuntal setting, the hymn distributed among all the instruments, and played with growing strength. But Beethoven has yet another statement of ambiguity to make: this work is bitonal. Its long-drawn-out ending is first in the key of F major and then, a few surprising measures later, it ends in the key of C.

The fourth movement (*A la Marcia, assai vivace*) is a jaunty march. Only a glance at the score will tell whether it starts on an up beat or a down - another ambiguous touch. It is brief and leads directly, via a long flourish in the first violin, into the fifth movement *Allegro appassionato*, a rondo unambiguously in the key of A minor, with a beautiful, lyrical waltz as its foundation theme. There are several key changes along the way, some bordering on the atonal. At the final *Presto* you will hear a sharp change of color into A major for the long, joyful coda which ends this work.

Why does the music world approach this music with such awe? Eye witnesses reveal that Beethoven knew the power of music to heal. When someone dear to him became ill or seriously depressed, he would be seen arriving unbidden at their home, seating himself wordlessly at the piano, playing for an extended time and then, still wordlessly, taking his leave. Music was his speech. He had found the way to make it so, transmitting directly from a deep and honest source unhampered by the limitations of spoken language. That is what we experience - the shared solace of an eloquent essay on the human condition, heart to heart, filtered through a gifted genius.

Daedalus Quartet

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The Daedalus Quartet takes its name from the mythical Greek inventor, artist, and architect celebrated for creating the art of sculpture, designing the Labyrinth, and above all for regaining his freedom by devising wings that made it possible for him to fly. The Daedalus Quartet (pronounced DED-a-lus) was founded in the summer of 2000, and one year later captured the Grand Prize of the 2001 Banff International String Quartet Competition, quickly establishing itself as among America's outstanding string quartets.

The Daedalus Quartet was named by Carnegie Hall to participate in the ECHO (European Concert Hall Organization) Rising Stars program, through which it made debuts during the 2004-2005 season at the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), the Megaron (Athens), the Festspielhaus (Baden-Baden), Symphony Hall (Birmingham), the Palais des Beaux Arts (Brussels), Philharmonie (Cologne), the Cité de la Musique (Paris), the Mozarteum (Salzburg), and the Musikverein (Vienna), as well as at Weill Recital Hall for Carnegie Hall's "Distinctive Debuts" series. A re-engagement to perform at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall followed.

The Daedalus Quartet was appointed by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center as the Chamber Music Society Two quartet for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 seasons, leading to numerous performances at Lincoln Center, including collaborations with artist members of the Society and other Chamber Music Society Two artists, as well as participation in many of the Society's educational programs. The ensemble was appointed Columbia University's Quartet-in-Residence for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 seasons.

The Daedalus Quartet has won wide acclaim for their performances of contemporary music, including works by Elliott Carter, George Perle, György Kurtág, and György Ligeti. Among the works they have premiered is David Horne's *Flight from the Labyrinth*, commissioned for the quartet by the Caramoor Festival.

The members of the quartet hold degrees from Juilliard, Curtis, the Cleveland Institute, and Harvard University. Brother and sister violinists Kyu-Young Kim and Min-Young Kim, who alternate on first violin, and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan grew up in East Patchogue, Long Island; they met violist Jessica Thompson, a Minneapolis native, at the Marlboro Festival.

Visit the Daedalus Quartet at www.daedalusquartet.com.