



Takács Quartet Beethoven String Quartet Cycle

Concerts III and IV

January 21–22, 2017
Rackham Auditorium
Ann Arbor

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Takács Quartet

Concert III

Edward Dusing / *Violin*

Károly Schranz / *Violin*

Geraldine Walther / *Viola*

András Fejér / *Cello*

Saturday Evening, January 21, 2017 at 8:00

Rackham Auditorium

Ann Arbor

32nd Performance of the 138th Annual Season

54th Annual Chamber Arts Series

This evening's presenting sponsor is the Helmut F. and Candis J. Stern Chamber Arts Endowment Fund, which supports the annual presentation of a performance as part of the Chamber Arts series in perpetuity.

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Special thanks to Steven Whiting for his participation in events surrounding this weekend's performances.

The Takács Quartet records for Hyperion and Decca/London Records.

The Takács Quartet is Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Colorado in Boulder and are Associate Artists at Wigmore Hall, London.

The Takács Quartet appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

PROGRAM

Beethoven String Quartets Concert III

String Quartet in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5

Allegro

Menuetto

Andante cantabile: Thema – Variations I – V – Coda: Poco Adagio

Allegro

String Quartet in c minor, Op. 18, No. 4

Allegro ma non tanto

Scherzo: Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto

Menuetto: Allegretto

Allegro — Prestissimo

Intermission

String Quartet in a minor, Op. 132

Assai sostenuto — Allegro

Allegro ma non tanto

Molto adagio — Andante — Molto adagio — Andante — Molto adagio

Alla marcia, assai vivace — Piu allegro —

Allegro appassionato

The fourth and fifth movements are played attacca (without pause).

STRING QUARTET IN A MAJOR, OP. 18, NO. 5 (1798–1800)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Flonzaley Quartette; January 1912 in University Hall.

Snapshots of History...In 1800:

- The US Library of Congress is founded in Washington, DC
- Christmas Day first becomes a public holiday on an international scale
- President John Adams becomes the first US President to live in the Executive Mansion (later renamed the White House)

When the young Beethoven left his native Bonn for Vienna in 1792, his patron, Count Waldstein, sent him on his way with these words: “With the help of assiduous labor you shall receive Mozart’s spirit from Haydn’s hands.” What the Count meant was that even though Mozart had died the previous year, Beethoven could still study with Haydn, the other great Viennese composer. Things didn’t quite work out that way, though, for Haydn and Beethoven didn’t get along very well and the composition lessons never really got off the ground. Still, Waldstein’s words were prophetic on another level, as they implied that Beethoven could some day inherit the mantle of the two older masters. And in fact, once installed in Vienna, Beethoven lost no time in claiming his place as *im Bunde der Dritte* (the third in the alliance, to quote a famous phrase from Beethoven’s favorite poet, Friedrich Schiller). Having absorbed the style of Haydn and Mozart early on, he now began to put on his own personal stamp on that style. With his first 20 opus numbers, written between 1795 and 1800, he

thoroughly assimilated *and* carried on the genres of concerto, piano sonata, and chamber music; by 1799–1800, he was ready to write his first symphony.

In Beethoven’s six string quartets published as Op. 18, the influence of Haydn and Mozart cannot be denied. What is more, scholars have shown that some ideas in these quartets even predate the move to Vienna, and originate in compositional essays from the Bonn period. Yet at the same time, Beethoven’s unique voice is already manifest on every page.

The quartets were written for and dedicated to Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz, one of Beethoven’s most important aristocratic patrons. Simultaneously with Beethoven, the 67-year-old Haydn was also working on a set of quartets for Lobkowitz. Yet Haydn eventually withdrew from the project, not wanting to compete with his rebellious former student. He finished only two quartets, out of six that had been planned. These two, eventually published as Haydn’s Op. 77, give some indication that the influence between the two composers ran both ways, and the older man

was responding to a challenge from the unruly young genius he referred to, with a mixture of admiration and jealousy, as the “Grand Mogul.”

Commentators on Beethoven’s A-Major Quartet, in particular, never fail to point out the young composer’s debt to Mozart’s quartet in the same key (K. 464) from the set of six works dedicated to Haydn. No one will dispute this claim, which is based on the external structuring of the work: like Mozart, Beethoven placed his minuet in second place, and included a set of slow variations in the key of D Major. The more important question, however, is whether this quartet *sounds* anything like Mozart. And there, the answer has to be a definite no. From the very first measures we hear the sudden offbeat accents so typical of Beethoven, a certain dance rhythm rarely used by Mozart, and myriad other fingerprints that unmistakably belong to Beethoven and no one else.

The general feeling of the opening movement is rather cheerful and lighthearted, but that feeling seems to be constantly contradicted by the frequent incursions into the minor mode and the sudden rests interrupting the musical flow. As a result, we are kept on the edge of our seats, never knowing what is going to happen in the next minute.

Experts have called the second-movement minuet “simple,” mainly because it is an old-fashioned minuet rather than the more novel scherzo. Yet it is a sophisticated simplicity; even when the texture is down to the two violins as it is at the beginning, the phrases don’t always go where they are expected to, nor are they

necessarily over after the standard length of eight bars. The sudden outburst in a minor key in the middle of the minuet, followed by a general rest, is certainly a surprise, as is the varied recapitulation involving some contrapuntal imitation. The trio would be “simple” indeed, and even “Schubertian” as has been claimed, were it not for those persistent and disquieting offbeat accents.

With its theme all made up of scales, going first down and then up, the third movement again looks like a model of simplicity. It is one of many variation themes by Beethoven that are kept purposely “bare-bones” in order to allow for some spectacular development in the variations. But the latter turn out to be much more than the figurative embellishments of traditional variation writing. The very first one introduces counterpoint. The second variation may be more conventional, but the third is a breathtaking essay in musical color, the fourth a stunning chromatic chorale, and the fifth a grandiose statement of almost symphonic breadth. One would expect a sixth variation, but instead — after a sudden leap into a remote key — Beethoven appends a coda (conclusion) which is really a free meditation on the opening portion of the theme.

The finale is brilliant and virtuosic, with a swiftly running first theme and a second one that moves quite a bit more slowly. Both themes are manipulated with great ingenuity and are finally combined in the witty coda.

Beethoven's Impact

by Shulamit Ran

Something about the notion that there is a clear divide between two types of music — “pure,” “abstract” music on the one hand, and music with a “theme” or “storyline” that exists outside of the music on the other — has always left me ambivalent. I am convinced that all great music including, for example, a Mozart opera, a Schubert or Mahler song cycle, or a Stravinsky ballet, may be experienced and appreciated as “pure music.” Regardless of genre and category it is, first and above all, a construct of sound and time in musical space — parallel to, yet separate from, addressing a “topic.” Of course, penetrating the “extra musical” in those cases will enhance, illuminate, and add richness to our total experience. But the music comes first.

Equally, I believe that in much of the music we consider to be at the zenith of art at its purest and loftiest, the “human” is ever-present too, in its most wondrous nuance. Nowhere is this truer than in the massive achievement that are the string quartets by Beethoven. When I listen to every one of them, I am acutely aware that BEETHOVEN equals not only one of the greatest giants in all of art, but also a breathing person whose every phrase “spoke” — in a manner intermittently vivid and exuberant, pained and transcendent, heroic and fragile — of what it means to be alive.

No Beethoven quartet is like another. This holds true for all of Beethoven, of course. One is aware that with each and every composition Beethoven engages in

a new experiment. Listen with fresh ears, and you will be startled anew, surprised time and again.

By definition, a composer takes command of a listener's most precious and irreplaceable commodity — their time — a profound responsibility. Inspired by Beethoven, I, too, aim to make every note matter. I, too, want my music to feel urgent, necessary, organic at the smallest and largest levels. The magnificent balance where the music is never predictable yet feels “right” at all times is a Beethovenian marvel that inspires me every day.

It has been a special privilege to hear some of today's great quartets performing some of my string quartet music. Inevitably, on such occasions my music often finds itself alongside Beethoven, Haydn, and Mendelssohn. My heart sometimes flutters excitedly in the awareness that this truly is “playing with the big boys.” And from an early age Beethoven was Mount Olympus for me. At the very least it is my hope that to the listener transitioning from a string quartet by Beethoven to one by Shulamit Ran it will be apparent that, as I compose my music, I am always looking to the mountain-top, in awe and in hope.

Shulamit Ran is an Israeli-American composer. She is the Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor of Music at the University of Chicago. She has written three string quartets, and many other chamber works with a string quartet at its core.

STRING QUARTET IN C MINOR, OP. 18, NO. 4 (1798–1800)

Beethoven

UMS premiere: Paganini Quartet; January 1948 in Rackham Auditorium.

The key of c minor had a special significance for classical composers. Mozart endowed this key with deeply tragic connotations in works such as the c-minor Fantasy, Sonata, and Concerto (all for piano). Beethoven built upon this legacy in such works as the *Pathétique* Sonata, the Fifth Symphony, and the last Piano Sonata (Op. 111). In the String Quartet (as so often in Beethoven's other c-minor works), dramatic excitement is expressed by frequent offbeat accents, harsh chordal sonorities, and other surprising gestures. Yet there are also playful moments, as in the second theme of the first movement which, as it has often been pointed out, shares its melodic outline with one of Beethoven's most cheerful works, the "Duet for Two Obligato Eyeglasses" for viola and cello.

In many of his works, Beethoven replaced the Mozartian minuet with a scherzo. In the c-minor Quartet (as in a handful of his other works) he included *both* scherzo and minuet, eliminating the slow movement instead. It is true, though, that the scherzo has the *form*, if not the tempo, of a slow movement; with its fugal beginning, it would appear to be a close cousin of the "Andante" from the First Symphony. Scored in a bright and sunny C Major, it also has the wit and ingenuity of many a Beethovenian scherzo.

With the "Menuetto," we are back in c minor and, accordingly, it is a serious and brooding piece, whose

atmosphere is only temporarily relieved by a more light-hearted trio in A-flat Major. The way the conclusion of the trio is left open to prepare for the return of the minuet is a thoroughly modern touch.

The last movement is a spirited rondo, but the dark c-minor tonality is preserved all the way through (except for one brief episode). The Mozartian models from the c-minor Piano Concerto (K. 491) and the c-minor Serenade (K. 388) are very much in evidence, yet only Beethoven could have written the "Prestissimo" coda with its entirely unexpected ending.

STRING QUARTET IN A MINOR, OP. 132 (1825)

Beethoven

UMS premiere: Paganini Quartet; January 1948 in Rackham Auditorium.

Snapshots of History...In 1825:

- Greece is in the middle of its eight-year War of Independence against Turkey
- The world's first modern railway, the Stockton and Darlington Railway, opens in England
- The Erie Canal opens, connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean

With its “Holy Song of Thanksgiving of a Convalescent to the Deity in the Lydian Mode,” the a-minor Quartet is in a category all by itself, not only among Beethoven’s quartets but in the entire music literature as well. Nowhere else did Beethoven take such a bold step outside the style that Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven himself, had done so much to develop. The same claim may of course be made of the *Great Fugue* (originally the finale of the string quartet in B-flat, Op. 130, later published separately), but while in that work Beethoven expanded an existing framework almost beyond recognition, in the “Holy Song” he did the opposite: he reduced his means and retreated into a newly-invented archaic world that no one knew existed.

The patient who gives thanks for his recovery is, of course, Beethoven himself. In April 1825 — when he was in the middle of writing the a-minor Quartet — the composer became gravely ill with an inflammation of the bowels. His physician, Dr. Anton Braunhofer, prescribed a strict diet, and wrote in one of the deaf composer’s conversation books: “No

wine, no coffee; no spices of any kind. I’ll arrange matters with the cook.” Beethoven’s condition improved; soon he was able to return to work and finished the quartet in July 1825. But with a slow movement that had obviously not been planned from the start, this was no longer the same work that Beethoven had begun before his illness.

If there is one word that occurs more often than any other in discussions of this quartet, it is *contrast* — contrast both *within* movements and *between* movements. The contrasts begin immediately at the beginning, where a mysterious slow introduction is suddenly interrupted by an “Allegro” flourish in first violin. “The conflict revealed here casts a shadow not only over the first movement but over the quartet as a whole,” William Kinderman writes in his insightful monograph on Beethoven. In fact, the anguished half-steps of the introduction and the agitated rhythms of the “Allegro” determine much of what follows, along with the lyrical second idea played by the second violin. The first two elements are contrapuntally combined

in the development section and further elaborated in the subsequent sections of the movement. In a significant departure from conventional sonata form, Beethoven wrote not just one recapitulation but two. The first of these resembles the exposition more closely but is set in a key other than a minor, the home key, while the second treats the material with much more freedom but re-establishes a minor in the movement's vibrantly dramatic coda.

To say that the second movement is a minuet with trio is both true and untrue. The 3/4 time and ABA form are certainly present, and the drone effects of the trio have a long ancestry in movements of this type. Yet the movement doesn't *sound* like a minuet. Commentator Michael Steinberg described it as "an always surprising mixture of the gentle and the acid," with harmonies that are "a bit tart." The frequent half-steps are audibly related to those from the slow introduction of the first movement. Of the trio section, Steinberg wrote: "A country dance tune, with bagpipe drone and all, becomes transfigured at a great height into something distant, mysterious, free of the pull of gravity." This ethereal dance is, however, suddenly interrupted by a unison passage where even the meter changes briefly from triple to duple. Thus, even this lyrical intermezzo is not spared from the dramatic contrasts that fill the entire work.

Beethoven took pains to specify that the "Holy Song of Thanksgiving" was in the Lydian mode, which is one of the old church modes upon which Gregorian chant and much early polyphonic music was based.

The name itself is even older, going back to ancient Greece. We know that Beethoven studied some examples of Renaissance music and also theoretical writings from the period, and thus he was well aware that Lydian was associated with healing in some ancient writings. According to theory books, the Lydian scale consists of the white keys of the piano starting with the note 'F'; in other words, it is an F-Major scale with a 'B-natural' instead of a 'B-flat.' This poses a grave problem, however, in that the interval 'F'–'B' is an augmented fourth or "tritone" that was called the "devil's interval" in medieval times and studiously avoided. All chant melodies notated in Lydian were actually sung with a 'B-flat,' an alteration that was routinely applied to the music. In Op. 132, however, Beethoven used 'B-natural,' and it is very likely that his use of the "Lydian mode" is the first in history not to correct the offending interval. Thus, while seemingly reviving an old musical element, Beethoven actually created something quite new. (The Lydian mode with 'B-natural' does exist in eastern European folk music.) The entire song of thanksgiving is harmonized with only "white keys," which — in conjunction with the extremely slow tempo — makes the sound eerily transparent. In addition to ancient sources, Beethoven also drew on the Protestant chorale tradition in this movement — a tradition he was familiar with in spite of his Catholic background. The uniform rhythms and clear-cut cadences (line endings) turn the Holy Song into a chorale of sorts, though this chorale has five lines instead of the usual four.

At the end of the fifth line, the second violin plays the first altered note (a ‘C-sharp’) in the movement, giving the signal for the next section, marked *Neue Kraft fühlend* (feeling new strength). As a total contrast to the preceding Lydian music, this section is in a bright and confident D Major. In Steinberg’s words: “The staccatos, the wide leaps, the exuberant upbeats in scurrying 32nd notes, the jubilant violin trill that rides across the top of the music, the breathless excitement in the accompaniment, all contribute to the joyful atmosphere.”

The hymn returns with some fascinating changes in the texture. The static, almost frozen chords of the first appearance are softened by a more complex rhythmic interplay among the voices, giving the music a more flowing character. Then the second section returns, lavishly ornamented. With the third and final return of the Lydian chorale, we understand the form as A–B–A–B–A (as in the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony), but this final ‘A’ is more intimate and transcendent than any of its previous incarnations. It is also much longer. At first, only one instrument at a time adds ornaments to the melody, the others play the long notes from the beginning. As a result, each player comes forward an individual singing his own personal hymn of thanksgiving. Then, the four instruments join forces again to play the otherworldly harmonies of the movement’s final measures.

The brief march that follows confirms the convalescent’s return to life. Beethoven wanted a more simple and lighthearted movement after the

“Holy Song,” and according to his sketches, he first intended a Ländler-type dance at this point. He later decided otherwise, and the Ländler found its home as the “Alla danza tedesca” movement of Op. 130.

We might think that when we hear the march in Op. 132, the trials and tribulations are finally over. Not so. A dramatic recitative interrupts the happy music, leading into the “Allegro appassionato” finale. Despite the waltz-like lilt of the main theme, there is significant tension under the surface. The rondo theme is quite close to the agitated melody of the first movement. The first episode provides momentary relief; the second even intensifies the “storm and stress.” But eventually, the tonality shifts from a minor to A Major; the tempo increases to *presto* and a new lyrical melody helps to give this monumental work a happy ending.

Program notes by Peter Laki.

Beethoven's Impact

by Sebastian Currier

The Beethoven quartets have always loomed large in my life. When I was a teenager I remember lying on the couch listening to LPs of the quartets for hours on end. Now, some 40 years later, I have them on my iPhone! They never seem to grow old. For all those years, as I've changed, as the world has changed, they've managed to always feel fresh, full of vitality, thoughtfulness, and intensity. Though written almost two centuries ago, I feel I react to them as if they were written yesterday. While some music from as recently as a few decades ago can seem dated and passé, the Beethoven quartets seem to me endlessly new. Being new is one thing. Remaining new is quite another!

Sebastian Currier is an American composer. He was a professor of music at Columbia University from 1999 to 2007, and was the composer-in-residence at the Institute for Advanced Study between 2013 and 2015. He has composed two full-length string quartets.

Ignaz Schuppanzigh, Beethoven, and the Inception of Listening to String Quartets

by John M. Gingerich

The violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776–1830) was Beethoven’s closest collaborator in the composition of all of his string quartets, from Op. 18 right through Op. 135. They first became acquainted shortly after Beethoven’s arrival in Vienna, when both assisted at the Friday morning quartet concerts of one of Beethoven’s principal patrons, Prince Karl Lichnowsky. These concerts introduced Beethoven to Vienna’s leading string players, and included performances of Haydn quartets under the old master’s personal supervision. (At Schuppanzigh’s suggestion, Lichnowsky made a gift to Beethoven of a complete set of old Italian string instruments, long attributed to Guarneri, Ruggieri, and Amati.) Five or six years later, when Beethoven himself started composing quartets, Schuppanzigh and the young virtuosi he led stood at Beethoven’s disposal. When in 1808 Count Andrey Razumovsky asked Schuppanzigh to form a quartet and installed them with salaries and pensions as his “Kapelle,” they also became Beethoven’s personal quartet, available not only should the composer feel the need to hear a draft of a passage, but once he had finished, as his personally-rehearsed representatives before his patrons and their guests. A contemporary observer has left us a vivid description of the quartet’s relationship with Beethoven during the years with Razumovsky (1808 until 1816): “Beethoven was, as it

were, the cock of the walk in the princely establishment; everything that he composed was rehearsed hot from the griddle and performed to the nicety of a hair, according to his ideas, just as he wanted it and not otherwise, with affectionate interest, obedience, and devotion such as could spring only from such ardent admirers of his lofty genius, and with a penetration into the most secret intentions of the composer and the most perfect comprehension of his intellectual tendencies.” For the late Beethoven quartets we have a detailed record of the aid provided by members of the quartet, since Beethoven’s nearly total deafness required his interlocutors to write down their side of the conversation: proofing, editing, the clarification of phrasing, dynamics, articulation, and other performance indications, the writing out of parts and scores in order to enable the task of proofing, as well as in preparation for the work of professional copyists who penned clean copies for Prince Galitzin and several different publishers—the participation of Schuppanzigh and other members of the quartet proved vital to all of these tasks.

Schuppanzigh introduced several innovations that fundamentally changed the string quartet, innovations upon which Beethoven capitalized in his late quartets, and which continue to shape how we experience and think about string quartets. During the winter of 1804–05, Schuppanzigh pioneered

public string quartet concerts; he continued with public subscription concerts during his tenure with Count Razumovsky, and again from the time of his return from Russia in 1823 until his death. Another innovation, for which Schuppanzigh shares the credit with Count Razumovsky, was a stable membership of the ensemble. Together these two innovations initiated a profound transformation of the string quartet from the leading Viennese genre of home entertainment, functioning primarily for the edification of its participant performers, to what it became after 1823, the leading genre of public instrumental music for connoisseurs, a new listener-centered role. At home players tended to read through as many quartets as possible, and included everyone present by rotating roles. The fixed membership of Schuppanzigh's ensembles after 1808 enabled them to perform with a precision and finesse that revealed unsuspected nuances, depths, and powers of works that listeners thought they already knew from playing through them at home.

Yet a third innovation, Schuppanzigh's programming, augmented the effects of the first two in creating an audience of connoisseurs. From the start in the winter of 1804–05 his core repertory had consisted of works by “the greatest masters,” as he put it in one of his advertisements — of quartets by Haydn, and quartets and quintets by Mozart and Beethoven. This core canon was augmented occasionally with quartets by Anton Eberl and Andreas Romberg in the early years, and in later years with works by Louis

Spohr (especially his double quartets), Georges Onslow (especially his cello quintets), and even more occasionally with works by Franz Weiss, the violist of the quartet, and Franz Schubert. Schuppanzigh's programming was designed to let Beethoven shine against the backdrop of his forebears Haydn and Mozart, while everyone else auditioned for inclusion in the canon of great masters.

By the time Schuppanzigh began his last run of subscription concerts in 1823 his programming represented a much greater departure from Viennese norms than had his earlier concerts. In the home, the male string quartet (since string instruments were not considered suitable for women) was beginning to be crowded out by music for the pianoforte, the specialty of young ladies. The decade of Rossini (starting in Vienna in 1816), of the waltz orchestras of Johann Strauss Sr. and Joseph Lanner (starting in 1823), and of the first full flowering of virtuosity, rendered all the old four-movement instrumental genres born of aristocratic patronage deeply unfashionable; the sonata became a rare visitor in the parlor, as did the symphony on the public stage. Public concerts in the 1820s mixed instrumental with vocal numbers, and the vast majority of instrumental offerings comprised virtuoso vehicles (divertissements, potpourris, and variations); even new quartets were predominantly *quatuors brillants*. By default Schuppanzigh's concerts became the preeminent venue for hearing instrumental music in a pedigreed genre, and thus by default his concerts were also the preeminent venue for hearing instrumental music

by Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven. At a time when the old instrumental genres Beethoven had inherited and made his own were fading away as old music had always faded away, when Beethoven himself had become a living legend but had also begun to appear irrelevant to the future course of music, Schuppanzigh did more than anyone else to keep one of those genres audible and fresh and in mind and in memory, and only Schuppanzigh provided polished performances to make the case that the richness of this music had not been exhausted or even plumbed by decades of exposure, that here was music that transcended fashion.

The first reviews of Schuppanzigh's 1823 series repeatedly stressed its function as a "school of artistic taste," and praised it as an "institution for the conservation of the higher sense for music," that is, music that transcends mere "ear-tickling." The reviewers took pains to convince readers that the public string quartet represented the peak experience and most refined challenge available to connoisseurs of music, and as such was drawing Vienna's most select music public. And they celebrated Schuppanzigh's concerts by describing them with the term "classical" — as one reviewer put it, "[Schuppanzigh is] a mighty dam against the flood of modern tinsel music, dedicating his virtuosity solely to the acknowledgment and rise of truly classical creations." But this "classical" also had class connotations; the venerable "classical" works had aristocratic cachet while the modern tinsel music was bourgeois. Unlike any other public venue in 1823, but perhaps not

too dissimilar from the experience Lichnowsky and Razumovsky had once been able to offer their guests, Schuppanzigh's concerts forced listeners to concentrate on purely musical processes through the uninterrupted course of three string quartets, without the aid or distraction of text, and without granting the performer a greater claim on their attentions than the music. Over the course of several seasons his subscribers encountered the historic panorama of the string quartet from its beginnings with Haydn right through the first public hearing of a Schubert quartet. Schuppanzigh was training his audience, preparing them as well as possible for the promised encounter with the new quartets Beethoven was working on.

After finishing the Op. 95 Quartet in 1810, Beethoven had stopped writing string quartets, and some of his reasons can be surmised from a letter he wrote to his agent in England: "N.B. The Quartett [Op. 95] is written for a small circle of connoisseurs and is never to be performed in public. Should you wish for some Quartetts for public performance I would compose them to this purpose occasionally." Schuppanzigh's return to Vienna from Russia hard on the heels of Prince Galitzin's commission for three new string quartets, along with the new series of public quartet concerts Schuppanzigh started evidently persuaded Beethoven that he could now successfully market quartets for connoisseurs. Publishers embraced the implications of the new classicizing tendencies. As one put it, "I won't collect the interest for 20 years; but with Beethoven I

have capital in my hands. —But not everyone can play it yet.” Publishers also issued Beethoven’s late quartets in score simultaneously with their initial publication in parts — a first for chamber music. A quartet score assisted study, but had previously been issued primarily in posthumous complete works editions, as “monuments.” Issuing Beethoven’s late quartets as “monuments” right away was a logical concomitant to treating their purchase as a long-term capital investment.

Schuppanzigh probably premiered all of Beethoven’s string quartets, but while accounts of the early public concerts do not mention precise programs, we know when and where the five late quartets were first performed in public. The long-awaited premiere of Op. 127, the first of the late quartets, was a fiasco. Beethoven did not have the parts ready until less than a month before the performance, the ensemble was ragged, and at a crucial juncture Schuppanzigh broke a string and had no back-up violin available. Unsympathetic observers blamed Schuppanzigh’s corpulence (Beethoven usually called him “Falstaffel”) for the poor performance and “incomprehensibility” of the new quartet. Schuppanzigh’s humiliation was compounded when Beethoven gave the quartet in turn to two rival violinists who did much better, having much more time to prepare. The fiasco of the premiere and the ensuing violin competition heightened public interest in the new quartets, and publishers vied to buy them from Beethoven for unprecedentedly high prices. But while Beethoven realized serendipitous rewards from

the disastrous premiere of Op. 127, Schuppanzigh’s subscription concerts never quite recovered.

Unlike Schubert, Beethoven never dedicated a quartet to Schuppanzigh, and seems to have regarded their enduring friendship and collaboration as sufficient tribute. But we should recognize that it was not Beethoven alone, but Beethoven in concert with Schuppanzigh who transformed the string quartet from music best experienced by the adept performer to the most rewarding music for the diligent listener, and thereby made of it a cornerstone of the building we know as classical music.

Musicologist John M. Gingerich is currently working on a book on Schuppanzigh. Before beginning his musicological work he was a cellist, and played for several years with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Takács Quartet

Concert IV

Edward Dusing / *Violin*

Károly Schranz / *Violin*

Geraldine Walther / *Viola*

András Fejér / *Cello*

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The Takács Quartet is Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Colorado in Boulder and are Associate Artists at Wigmore Hall, London.

The Takács Quartet appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

PROGRAM

Beethoven String Quartets Concert IV

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3

Allegro
Andante con moto
Allegro
Presto

String Quartet in e minor, Op. 59, No. 2

Allegro
Molto adagio: Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento
Allegretto
Finale: Presto

Intermission

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127

Maestoso — Allegro
Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile — Andante con moto — Adagio
molto espressivo — tempo primo
Scherzo: Vivace — Presto
Finale

Beethoven's Impact

by William Bolcom

About age 11, I became enamored of quartet music (and began what turned out to be a group of 12 of them). My first big influences were the Bartók quartets, Berg's *Lyric Suite*, and the Roy Harris quartet, which influences show up in my first two quartets. I was cognizant of Beethoven mostly through the piano literature before that age.

Later, about the age of 14, I landed on the late Beethoven quartets, which absolutely blew me away, and their influence would permeate my third and fourth quartets particularly. On the bus to junior high school I sat with a Beethovenian grimace — I'd read Robert Haven Schauffler's *Beethoven, the Man Who Freed Music* — which I'm sure amused other passengers. (In these last few years I've been going over all 12 of my quartets for publication, and I'm embarrassed to relate that the Beethoven-ish ones seem to me more like age-appropriate juvenilia than the earlier two. It does seem odd that I would go backward, not forward, in musical history in my influences.)

In the following years I expanded my knowledge of quartet literature, concurrently both the classical canon and much newer work, and the divide between the modern and the old began to blur in my mind. I saw the revolutionary in Beethoven, the classicist in Bartók and Schoenberg, and increasingly felt no obligation to eschew any music in my search for vocabulary. That epiphany I owe largely to the Beethoven quartets, particularly the later ones, which

would steer me in the compositional direction I have followed ever since.

William Bolcom is an American composer and Professor Emeritus of Composition at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1988 and has composed 12 string quartets.

STRING QUARTET IN D MAJOR, OP. 18, NO. 3 (1798)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Detroit Philharmonic Club; March 1888 in a University Law Lecture Room.

Snapshots of History...In 1798:

- French forces invade the Papal States and establish the Roman Republic
- Eli Whitney contracts with the US federal government for 10,000 rifles, which he produces with interchangeable parts
- Edward Jenner publishes his work on smallpox vaccination

In spite of the obvious Haydn and Mozart influences, this quartet, the very first that Beethoven ever composed, is a work of surprising originality. Its opening, with its unaccompanied leap of a minor seventh, is like nothing we could find in the older composers' work, and everything that follows is equally unprecedented. Beethoven's ability to develop entire movements from tiny motivic ideas is already in evidence here, as that minor seventh (or its rhythm of even, long-drawn-out whole notes) pervades almost the whole "Allegro." The number of keys visited is also greater than usual: tonalities not closely related to the central D Major are used freely, resulting in an exciting and utterly unpredictable harmonic plan.

Similar observations can be made of the other movements as well. The second movement is based on a gentle theme proceeding in equal eighth notes; yet it can become quite dramatic in the course of its development. The choice of key (B-flat Major, a significant distance

from D Major) foretells more harmonic adventures, which do not fail to occur. The third movement is marked neither "Minuet" nor "Scherzo," but simply "Allegro." It is closer to a scherzo character since it is not particularly dance-like and abounds in offbeat accents that appear in so many of Beethoven's scherzos. Its first phrase oscillates between major and minor in a most unusual fashion. The tonality eventually settles in D Major, only to be displaced by an agitated trio (middle section) in d minor. In an unusual move, Beethoven wrote out the return of the scherzo in full, with large portions placed an octave higher than the first time. The vivacious finale again unfolds from a single rhythmic idea (that of a swift eighth-note motion in 6/8 time) with occasional interruptions and other surprises. The ending is probably the only point where Beethoven clearly follows Haydn's lead. The way he turns the first three notes of the theme into a *pianissimo* ending is an obvious bow to the older master.

STRING QUARTET IN E MINOR, OP. 59, NO. 2 ("RASUMOVSKY") (1806)

Beethoven

UMS premiere: Budapest String Quartet; January 1947 in Rackham Auditorium.

Snapshot of History...In 1806:

- The British occupy the Cape of Good Hope
- The Lewis and Clark expedition reaches St. Louis, Missouri, ending a successful exploration of the Louisiana Territory and Pacific Northwest
- Noah Webster publishes his first American English dictionary

Prince Andrey Razumovsky, the Russian Ambassador in Vienna, and the Princes Lichnowsky and Lobkowitz, two Viennese aristocrats to whom he was related by marriage, together received the dedications of more than a dozen major works by Beethoven. One might almost say that their "clan" underwrote a great part of what later became known as Beethoven's "heroic" or middle period.

The three quartets of Op. 59, known as the "Razumovsky" quartets, were written shortly after the Third Symphony ("Eroica") and the f-minor Piano Sonata ("Appassionata"). In those works, Beethoven made a bold leap into the future: music had never expressed such intense emotions before, nor had the formal conventions of music been changed so radically in such a short time. With Op. 59, Beethoven extended his musical revolution to the quartet medium, producing three masterworks after which the genre was never the same again.

One of the most striking features of Beethoven's "heroic" style is a reduction of the thematic material to a small number of motifs and an

expansion of the techniques that serve to develop those motifs. The most extreme example is probably the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, with its famous four-note theme, but the opening of the e-minor Quartet is equally striking. Beethoven begins suspensefully with a pair of chords, followed by a short phrase, which is punctuated by rests and repeated a half-step higher, immediately calling the e-minor tonality into question. Eventually, continuity is restored, but the form remains rather fragmented, reflecting an agitated state of mind. We hear many insistent syncopated rhythms and rapid passages in unison or parallel motion, in dramatic contrast with the occasional gentler moments. In associating minor mode with emotional turbulence, Beethoven followed the tradition of Haydn and Mozart, though his radically new way of writing gave this "Allegro" a very special edge.

It was not for nothing that Beethoven inscribed the second-movement "Molto adagio" with the words "*Si tratta questo pezzo con molto sentimento*" (This piece must be treated with much feeling). Here

is one of his great hymn-like slow movements, with the quiet majesty of the later “Emperor” Concerto and Ninth Symphony — yet entirely within the intimate world of chamber music. The melody is enriched by chromatic harmonies and surrounded by complex figurations. Then, at the end of the movement, all embellishments are stripped away and the melody is stated by the four instruments in bold *fortissimo* chords, with harsh harmonies and strong accents — before the gentle closing measures end the movement in an idyllic mood.

Beethoven refrained from calling the third movement a “scherzo,” and surely the first section of the movement is too serious to qualify as a “joke.” Yet its syncopated motion and sudden dynamic and harmonic changes are definitely scherzo-like features. The high point of the movement, however, is the second section (which elsewhere would be called “Trio”). In honor of his dedicatee, Beethoven inserted a Russian theme here (marked *thème russe* in the score). The source of the theme was the important folk song collection published by Nikolai Lvov and Ivan Prach in 1790. (This melody, “To the Red Sun, Glory!” was famously used again by Mussorgsky in the coronation scene of *Boris Godunov*.) Beethoven had the four instruments take turns repeating this melody identically over and over again, against a fast-moving counterpoint that also makes its rounds among the four players. As in several other Beethoven works, the usual A–B–A scheme of the scherzo is expanded to A–B–A–B–A, with the *thème russe* section appearing twice and the opening section three times.

The finale is a galloping sonata rondo where Beethoven constantly plays games with our (possibly subconscious) tonal expectations. Seemingly reluctant to establish the home key of e minor, he keeps the first few measures in C Major before making a sudden shift just before the end of the phrase. (The last movement of the Fourth Piano Concerto, Op. 58, written around the same time, uses a similar strategy.) The rhythmic momentum never flags, though the galloping pulse is temporarily replaced by quieter motion in the lyrical second theme. Yet the main theme never stays away for very long; and as if the initial *presto* tempo weren’t fast enough, Beethoven demands *più presto* (faster) for the final measures.

STRING QUARTET IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 127 (1825)

Beethoven

UMS premiere: Paganini Quartet; January 1949 in Rackham Auditorium.

Snapshot of History...In 1825:

- After no presidential candidate receives a majority of electoral votes, the US House of Representatives elects John Quincy Adams President of the United States
- Uruguay secedes from Brazil
- The first horse-drawn omnibuses are established in London

In the fall of 1822, Beethoven received a letter from a Russian aristocrat and amateur cello player, Prince Nikolai Galitzin. The Prince commissioned Beethoven to write three string quartets and urged him to name his own price. Beethoven accepted the proposal and promised to deliver the first quartet within a month. However, more than two years passed before the Quartet in E-flat, the first one in the set, reached the Prince, even though it seems that Beethoven had begun to make sketches for a new string quartet even before receiving Galitzin's letter. (He had not written a quartet since the f-minor work, Op. 95, of 1810.)

Let us for a moment imagine the Prince and his three companions in St. Petersburg as they put the parts of Op. 127 on their music stands. They start playing the opening "Maestoso," thinking it is a slow introduction; yet after only six measures, they see with surprise that the introduction is cut short and an "Allegro" theme begins in a new meter. After a few minutes (during which time two distinct musical ideas appear, more or less like in a classical sonata exposition), the opening "Maestoso" returns in a

startlingly distant key. It is brushed aside once more by the "Allegro" music, now taking on the distinct features of a development section (frequent modulations, fragmentation of motives). Another set of slow measures — shorter than the previous ones — again propels the music in unexpected harmonic directions, with the home key in E-flat Major eventually returning and bringing the music to a soft and somewhat inconclusive conclusion.

After this enigmatic opening, the players encounter a slow theme-and-variation movement of unprecedented complexity (they must have been exceptional players indeed if they could make it to the end!). A lyrical melody of otherworldly beauty is followed by five variations: the first largely ornamental; the second playful; the third, suddenly moving to a distant new key, extremely slow and intense; the fourth seemingly returning to the style of the first yet introducing many fascinating surprises; and the last one developing a "free fantasia" on the theme.

At one point, the harmony seemed so confusing that the Prince had to

ask Beethoven in a letter whether he meant a certain note in the viola part to be a 'C' or a 'D- flat.' Beethoven explained at great length why it had to be a 'D-flat,' and added: "If I had written 'C,' the melody would have been destroyed." There is no record, however, to tell us whether Galitzin and his partners felt, as many modern commentators have, that Beethoven contemplated the starry heavens in the central E-Major variation.

The remaining two movements are no less extraordinary than the first two. The "Scherzando vivace" uses an extremely simple rhythmic pattern to generate uncommon dramatic energy. That pattern is developed and transformed in ways that recall the scherzo of the Ninth Symphony. The trio, or middle section, is a breathless "Presto" in the minor mode, later switching to the major and suddenly interrupted by a general rest and the return of the "Scherzando." At the end of the movement, the trio section is briefly recalled; another general rest separates this reminiscence from the abrupt ending, again similarly to what happens in the Ninth.

In the "Finale," Beethoven let go of all the dramatic tensions that had weighed so heavily on the first three movements. Musicologist Joseph Kerman described this finale (which bears no tempo marking) as a "medley of folk-like phrases...square and ingenuous, jogging along in all-but-continuous quarter-notes." The contrast with the rest of the quartet could not be greater. Yet Beethoven reserved a final surprise to those players and listeners who thought he was simply writing a folk-dance finale in homage to his one-time teacher

Haydn. He added a mysterious coda in a new meter (6/8 replacing cut time) in which the harmonic adventures of earlier movements suddenly reappear. The tempo designation is *allegro comodo* (a comfortably fast motion), not *con moto* (with motion) as some editions suggest. Kerman found the harmonic progressions to be "sheer dream" — a dream that is followed by an awakening, a consolidation of the home key, and a sudden yet resolute ending.

Program notes by Peter Laki.

UMS ARCHIVES

This weekend's concerts, the third and fourth installments in this season's Beethoven String Quartet Cycle, mark the Takács Quartet's 21st and 22nd performances under UMS auspices. The ensemble made its UMS debut in February 1984 at Rackham Auditorium, and most recently appeared under UMS auspices in October 2016 at Rackham Auditorium with the first two concerts of this season's Beethoven cycle. The Quartet completes its Beethoven cycle at UMS in March at Rackham Auditorium.

ARTISTS

The **Takács Quartet**, now entering its 42nd season, is renowned for the vitality of its interpretations. *The New York Times* recently lauded the ensemble for “revealing the familiar as unfamiliar, making the most traditional of works feel radical once more,” and the *Financial Times* described a recent concert at the Wigmore Hall: “Even in the most fiendish repertoire these players show no fear, injecting the music with a heady sense of freedom. At the same time, though, there is an uncompromising attention to detail: neither a note nor a bow-hair is out of place.”

The Takács became the first string quartet to win the Wigmore Hall Medal in May 2014. The Medal, inaugurated in 2007, recognizes major international artists who have a strong association with the Hall. Recipients so far include András Schiff, Thomas Quasthoff, Menachem Pressler, and Dame Felicity Lott. Appointed in 2012 as the first-ever Associate Artists at Wigmore, the Takács present six concerts every season there. Other European engagements in 2016–17 include concerts in Florence, Milan, Geneva, Amsterdam, and Paris. They will present concerts in Singapore, Japan, and Hong Kong and will also tour New Zealand and Australia. A recent tour to South America included concerts in Chile and Brazil.

In 2012, *Gramophone* announced that the Takács was the only string quartet to be inducted into its first Hall of Fame, along with such legendary artists as Jascha Heifetz, Leonard Bernstein, and Dame Janet Baker. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London. Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, the Takács Quartet performs 90 concerts a year worldwide.

During the 2016–17 season, the ensemble will perform complete six-concert Beethoven quartet cycles in London’s Wigmore Hall, at Princeton, the University of Michigan, and at UC Berkeley. In preparation for these cycles Takács first violinist Edward Dusinberre’s book, called *Beethoven for a Later Age: The Journey of a String Quartet*, was published in the UK by Faber and Faber and in North America by the University of Chicago Press. The book takes the reader inside the life of a string quartet, melding music history and memoir as it explores the circumstances surrounding the composition of Beethoven’s quartets.

The Takács Quartet performed Philip Roth’s “Everyman” program with Meryl Streep at Princeton in 2014, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. The program was conceived in close collaboration with Philip Roth. The Quartet is known for such innovative programming. They first performed “Everyman” at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman. They have toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, collaborate regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikás, and in 2010 they collaborated with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and David Lawrence Morse on a drama project that explored the composition of Beethoven’s last quartets.

The Quartet’s award-winning recordings include the complete Beethoven cycle on the Decca label. In 2005 the *Late Beethoven Quartets* won “Disc of the Year” and Chamber Award from *BBC Music Magazine*, a *Gramophone* Award, “Album of the Year” at the Brit Awards, and a Japanese Record Academy Award. Their recordings of the early and middle Beethoven quartets collected a Grammy

Award, another *Gramophone* Award, a Chamber Music of America Award, and two further awards from the Japanese Recording Academy. Of their performances and recordings of the Late Quartets, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote “The Takács might play this repertoire better than any quartet of the past or present.”

The members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Faculty Fellows at the University of Colorado Boulder and play on instruments generously loaned to them by the Shwayder Foundation. The Quartet has helped to develop a string program with a special emphasis on chamber music, where students work in a nurturing environment designed to help them develop their artistry. The Quartet’s commitment to teaching is enhanced by summer residencies at the Aspen Festival and at the Music Academy of the West, Santa Barbara. The Takács is a Visiting Quartet at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London.

The Takács Quartet was formed in 1975 at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest by Gabor Takács-Nagy, Károly Schranz, Gabor Ormai, and András Fejér, while all four were students. It first received international attention in 1977, winning First Prize and the Critics’ Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The Quartet also won the Gold Medal at the 1978 Portsmouth and Bordeaux Competitions and First Prizes at the Budapest International String Quartet Competition in 1978 and the Bratislava Competition in 1981. The Quartet made its North American debut tour in 1982. Violinist Edward Dusing joined the Quartet in 1993 and violist Roger Tapping in 1995. Violist Geraldine Walther replaced Mr. Tapping in 2005. In 2001 the Takács Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit of the Knight’s Cross of the Republic of Hungary, and in March of 2011 each member of the Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit Commander’s Cross by the President of the Republic of Hungary.

MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 2/5 Calidore String Quartet
3/24 Mitsuko Uchida, piano
3/25–26 Takács Quartet: Beethoven Quartet Cycle Concerts 5 & 6

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 1/21 Sensory-Friendly Open Rehearsal: Takács Quartet
(Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington Street, 12:00 noon)
- 1/21 Pre-Concert Lecture Series: Exploring Beethoven's String Quartets
(Rackham Amphitheatre, Fourth Floor, 915 E. Washington St., 7:00 pm)
- 2/16 Penny Stamps Speaker Series: Ping Chong
(Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty Street, 5:10 pm)
- 3/18 You Can Dance: Kidd Pivot
(Ann Arbor Y, 400 W. Washington Street, 2–3:30 pm)
- 3/25 Pre-Concert Lecture Series: Exploring Beethoven's String Quartets
(Michigan League Koessler Room, Third Floor, 911 N. University Ave.,
7:00 pm)

Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.

SATURDAY'S VICTORS FOR UMS:



Helmut F. and Candis J. Stern
Chamber Arts Endowment Fund

SUNDAY'S VICTORS FOR UMS:

Robert and Darragh Weisman

Supporters of this weekend's performances by the Takács Quartet.