TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON
FIRST CONCERT

Houston Friends of Music, Inc.
and
Shepherd School of Music

PRESENT THE

Tokyo String Quartet

Peter Oundjian - violin
Kikuei Ikeda - violin
Kazuhide Isomura - viola
Sadao Harada - violincello

GUEST ARTIST
RUTH LAREDO

Tuesday, October 15, 1985
and
Thursday, October 17, 1985

Hamman Hall 8:00 P.M. Rice University
PROGRAM

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1985

Quartet in F major, Op. 18, No. 1. ...................... Beethoven
   Allegro con brio
   Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato
   Scherzo: Allegro molto
   Allegro

Quartet No. 2, Op. 17. ..................................... Bartók
   Moderato
   Allegro molto capriccioso
   Lento

INTERMISSION

Quintet in A major, for Piano and Strings, Op. 81. .......... Dvořák
   Allegro ma non tanto
   Dumka: Andante con moto
   Scherzo: Furiant - Molto vivace
   Finale: Allegro

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PROGRAM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1985

Quartet No. 19 in C major, K. 465 “Dissonant”...........................................Mozart
  Adagio-Allegro
  Andante cantabile
  Allegretto
  Allegro molto

Quartet, Op. 3.................................................................Berg
  Langsam
  Mässige Viertel

INTERMISSION

Quartet No. 14 in c-sharp minor, Op. 131.................................Beethoven
  Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo
  Allegro, molto vivace
  Allegro moderato
  Andante ma non troppo molto cantabile
  Presto
  Adagio quasi un poco andante
  Allegro

1985-1986 SEASON

Tuesday, October 15, 1985....................................................Tokyo String Quartet with
  Ruth Laredo, Piano
Thursday, October 17, 1985..................................................Tokyo String Quartet
Wednesday, December 4, 1985..............................................Empire Brass Quintet
Tuesday, January 7, 1986....................................................Emerson String Quartet
Wednesday, January 29, 1986..............................................Musical Offering
Wednesday, February 19, 1986..................................Kalichstein, Laredo, Robinson
  Piano Trio
Tuesday, March 18, 1986....................................................Muir String Quartet
Thursday, April 3, 1986.......................................................Fitzwilliam String Quartet
Wednesday, May 7, 1986............................................New World String Quartet with
  David Shifrin, Clarinet
THE TOKYO STRING QUARTET

The Houston Friends of Music is once again delighted to present the Tokyo String Quartet. One of the world’s great ensembles, the Quartet performs over 100 concerts each season in tours that have taken it to four continents. Kikuei Ikeda, Kazuhide Isomura, and Sadao Harada were trained at the Toho Music Academy in Tokyo. The newest member of the Quartet, Peter Oundjian, was born in Toronto, raised in London, and debuted at fifteen. Mr. Oundjian first appeared with the ensemble when it was performing quartets during the 1981 Van Cliburn International Competition. The Tokyo String Quartet performs on four great matched Amatis, graciously loaned to them by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C.

RUTH LAREDO

Born in Detroit, Ruth Laredo studied with Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia and made her New York orchestral debut in Carnegie Hall under Leopold Stokowski. As a successful orchestra soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician, Miss Laredo has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, The White House, and The Library of Congress and has performed with many symphony orchestras. The Board of The Houston Friends of Music remembers with particular affection and gratitude how she joined three members of The Tokyo String Quartet for a piano quartet concert, on short notice, after the resignation of the previous first violinist in 1981.

PROGRAM NOTES

In the play and movie, Amadeus, Salieri considers Mozart’s lightning speed in composing his most insufferable characteristic. But LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) didn’t have it as easy as Mozart; the flowering of Beethoven’s genius followed hard criticism and the tedious re-working of manuscripts. For example, the Op. 18 quartets were submitted for publication in 1801, only after exhaustive study, numerous revisions, and critical advice from friends. The result of this hard work was that Beethoven abandoned much of the 18th century grace and elegance of his predecessors, but introduced shorter themes, freer development, particularly of fragments, and abrupt changes. The opening movement of the Op. 18 no. 1 Quartet, Allegro con brio, almost immediately shows these characteristics. The first theme is little more than a turn around the initial F, but its 100-plus repetitions show few in exactly the same form; nor do they convey the same musical impression. The single theme, or its parts, is used for development, for repetition, for bombast, as the connective tissue for transition, as background for other brief ideas, and, at times it seems, for technical exploration and experimentation without germane relation to the integral parts of the movement.

Generally, the slow movements of Beethoven’s quartets are filled with tenderness and passion, and they are the favorites of many chamber music lovers. But this Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato is among the most cherished. The first violinist of a well-known string quartet carries a single page of this movement in his violin case at all times because of his love for it. The main theme, a quiet contemplative melody, comes in at the second measure after a
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measure of paced scene-setting. Karl Amenda has written that Beethoven's purpose in this movement was to convey the mood of the vault scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. The movement is clearly emotional and dramatic. This drama is brought to a climax by fortissimo thirty-second notes which contrast with the delicate line of the main theme.

In contrast to the two preceding movements, the last two are lighter and more flowing, owing more to the classical tradition. The happy *Scherzo* moves easily but with a definitely rhythmic pulse. The cello drops a hint of the octave theme of the Trio a few measures before the end of the preceding section -- a technique Beethoven used extensively in later works. The *Allegro* begins as a straightforward rondo in running triplets but almost from the start there are offbeat accents which correctly predict surprises. Before it is over, the triplet theme is woven into strange modulations, foot-stamping accents, and a fugue of surpassing charm.

**BÉLA BARTÓK (1881-1945)** composed his six string quartets from 1908-1939 -- a large part of his creative life. Like Beethoven, Bartók considered the string quartet one of the most important means of musical expression and in the quartets of both composers one finds virtually all their musical ideas. Bartók's first quartet shows a considerable debt to Beethoven's late quartets in its structural freedom and the way one movement is linked to the other. In the second quartet, Op. 17, composed in 1917, the movements are more independent; one can plainly see the drift toward a style which represents a break with the past.

The first movement, *Moderato*, is slow (as is the last). In it, one seeks in vain for the themes, developments, and harmonies of 19th century music. Yet, in spite of the dissonance and irregularities, there are rhapsodic passages with overwhelming appeal in this movement -- and in the others as well. In the *Allegro molto capriccioso*, the main feature is the rhythmic force over which most of the melodies are played. The offbeat dancing passages do sound capricious as the heading of the movement implies. The *Lento* is stranger, sadder, and less approachable than the other two movements. The middle part contains more action, but in the last section, the mood of darkness returns as the work ends with quietly plucked strings.

Because **ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)** was born into a very poor family (his father was an innkeeper and butcher), his musical education was catch-as-catch-can until he enrolled at the University of Prague as a violin student at the age of sixteen. He never lost his rustic bent -- personally or musically. If there was ever a nationalistic composer, it was Dvořák. His relation to folk music differed from that of Bartók, who used it directly in his work. Dvořák's way was subtler. He composed music that only sounded like folk music; he let others figure out how much of it (very little) was really folk in origin.

Dvořák composed his great *Piano Quintet* in 1887. So many critics and commentators have said that it is his greatest piece of chamber music that it must be true. Alec Robertson has written: "It is simply one of the most perfect chamber music works in existence; perfect in that it accomplishes what it sets out to do, perfect as a whole and in all its parts:"

The opening notes of the
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piano in the Allegro ma non tanto put us into a mood of relaxed pleasure that is reinforced by the echo of the cello. The movement has not only melodic richness but the rhythmic drive that is in all of Dvořák’s music; it ends at a peak of excitement.

The second movement, Andante con moto, is a Dumka (a sad Slavonic ballad with alternate fast and slow parts.) The contrasting sections are first poignant, then spirited. The effect is a pleasant ebb and flow of music and rhythm. The Scherzo is a fast-moving dance full of grace, humor, and shifting accents. The Finale is a frolicking rondo, which continues the light-hearted mood of the previous movement. After a mock-formal introductory few notes, the merrymaking proceeds without pause to the end. There is no limit to the freshness and variety which Dvořák instills into this movement and the entire quartet.

The String Quartet in C-major, K. 465, the last of the six dedicated to Haydn, is one of the most popular as well as one of the most controversial that WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791) ever composed. The controversy revolves around the unusual introduction with its distant tonalities. To our modern ears, the dissonance seems rather tame, but it must have been a shocker in 1785. When Haydn was asked to explain it, he said, “Well, if Mozart wrote it, he must have meant it.” The Allegro that follows is contrastingly straightforward. The first theme is dominant over the second, and both are woven into a beautiful skein in the development. The themes recur in different hues -- now sinister, now dainty, now majestic -- all so tastefully and briefly that there is a hint of teasing. Mozart composed many slow movements with outstanding grace and charm, but this Andante cantabile must be one of the most elegant and satisfying gems in that exclusive club. It is very nervous music in which every note seems perfectly placed. There are three principal themes but each has its own ornaments so there is much opportunity for shading and subtle mood changes, each revealing a different nuance of the composer’s genius. The Menuetto is in strict classical form and seems an appropriate contrast to the preceding movement. The Trio with its rising and falling figure in the minor key picks up the tension and vigor but the over-all impression is unstrained with passion held back. The last movement, Allegro molto, begins like the Allegro of the first movement with the appearance of simplicity of design, but, as in the first movement, nothing could be farther from the truth. It is a rondo with each return of the theme a separate revelation. Major-minor juxtapositions, some striking modulation, and delayed returns to the familiar motif give the movement a theatrical aspect. At the coda the tension resolves and the movement speeds to a happy ending.

ALBAN BERG (1885-1935) composed the Op. 3 Quartet in 1910 when he was twenty-five years old and near the end of his seven years’ study with Schoenberg. He was at a period in his life analogous to Bartók’s when he composed his Quartet No. 2 heard on Tuesday night’s concert. Both composers were committed to the modern idiom they were forging, but unwilling, just yet, to shed all vestiges of 19th century classicism. The two quartets, therefore, can be considered as bridges between the past and the future.

The opening movement of the Op. 3 Quartet is labeled Langsam (slow); it is also expressive, tranquil for the most part, and, above all, interesting. The person who searches for theme and development is not disappointed, although the “melodies” resemble those of the old order more in manuscript than in sound. There are two basic contrasting groups of musical ideas, each developed freely and extensively. The coda summarizes most of what has gone before, and the movement ends quietly. The second movement, Massige Viertel, is faster than the previous movement with frequent changes of tempo.
It is full of dynamic and melodic contrasts, but even at its most frenzied offers more of the standard sonorities of the instruments than the quartets of Bartók which have more plucking, glissandi, and harmonics. In this movement, one finds both classical elements (it is basically a rondo with frequent re-statements of the theme) and 12-tone elements which Berg developed more extensively in his later works.

Both the key signature (c-sharp minor) and the number of movements in the Beethoven Op. 131 String Quartet are unusual. Although scored in seven movements, they are played without interruption. Two movements are brief; the quartet can be considered to have seven movements, five movements, or one movement, depending on how you look at them. Unusual also is the development of musical ideas. One phrase blends into the next with uncanny skill and logic; it was this aspect of the flow of phrases that Bartók admired and emulated. The first movement, Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo, creates a mood of sadness and reflection. It is a slow, quiet fugue, vaguely reminiscent of Bach's "Little" fugue in G-minor. The initial motif will recur in other movements either directly, inverted, or otherwise altered. Its brevity and beauty have prompted one commentator to write, "If greatness be more in quality than quantity, this, rather than the Op. 131 would seem to be properly "the 'great fugue.'" The Allegro molto vivace relaxes the tension somewhat. Although faster, it is far from whimsical. The Allegro moderato is a brief interlude which leads to the magnificent Andante ma non troppo molto cantabile, a theme and variations of unsurpassed originality and beauty. Variations are not merely technical expansions of a theme, but, on their own, they are fanciful inventions in which the theme often gets temporarily lost. One of the most interesting variations is the fourth, in 9/4 time. Regularly recurrent quarter notes are pushed aside by an intrusive passage of the cello, which continues to insert the five notes into the least expected crevices between the quarter notes, soon played high on the violins in great contrast with the rumbling cello. After cadenza-like passages for each instrument, the theme returns, two remaining variations follow, and a dainty transition is made to the Presto. The cello's first four notes, dramatized by the full measure rest which follows, give the motif on which this rapidly moving, light-hearted movement is based. Contrast is accentuated by artful ritards, the same cello phrase that introduced the movement standing alone, and plucked strings. The brief Adagio ends all this gaiety and leads to the Allegro, perhaps the greatest movement of the quartet. It is sad like the first movement, but not resigned. Its percussive style and abrupt rhythms are built on just a few notes which undergo endless invention and mutation. The tension builds until the last three thunderous chords.

Program Notes by Jack B. Mazow
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