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PRESENT

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

*Peter Oundjian, violin
Kikuei Ikeda, violin
Kazuhide Isomura, viola
Sadao Harada, cello*

GUEST ARTIST
Alicia de Larrocha, Piano

Thirty-third Season - Tenth Concert

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Guest Artist: Alicia de Larrocha, piano

Stude Concert Hall Alice Pratt Brown Hall
Rice University
April 20, 1993 8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

QUARTET in C minor, Opus 18, No. 4
Allegro ma non tanto
Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto
Menuetto: Allegretto; Trio
Allegro

MAURICE RAVEL
(1875-1937)

QUARTET in F Major
Allegro moderato - Très doux
Assez vif - Très rythme
Trés lent
Vif et agite

INTERMISSION

ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810-1856)

QUINTET in E-flat Major
for piano and strings, Opus 44
Allegro brillante
In modo d'un marcia: largamente
Scherzo: molto vivace
Allegro ma non troppo

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The Quartet is in residence at Yale University and College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati.

*The Tokyo String Quartet has recorded for Angel-EMI, CBS Masterworks, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA Vanguard, and Vox Cum
Laude. They now record exclusively for RCA Red Seal.
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PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)

Quartet in C minor, Opus 18, No. 4

- I. *Allegro ma non tanto*
- II. *Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto*
- III. *Menuetto: Allegretto; Trio*
- IV. *Allegro*

The only minor-key quartet in Op. 18, the C minor is probably the most popular work in the group, and like all of Beethoven's works in this key, it is a musical statement with an especially heightened dramatic tension throughout.

The first theme traces an irregular path up from the violin's lowest note to the top of its range. Beethoven caps off the climb with a series of powerful chords and a final outcry, before a sudden hush falls and the bridge passage leads to the second subject. This melody, first stated by the second violin, is very obviously derived from the second part of the first theme, but in a different key. After some concluding episodes in the exposition, Beethoven works through the material in the development section. During the transition to the recapitulation, the rapidly repeated notes in the second violin and viola give the effect of a tremolo, creating an almost orchestral sound.

Instead of following the powerful first movement with a conventionally slow and emotional second movement, Beethoven treats us to a moderately paced, witty Scherzo. Although there are three distinct themes, they all include a figure of three repeated notes either in the theme or the accompaniment. The texture is mostly polyphonic, with the tunes being blithely tossed from instrument to instrument in a profusion of canons and fugati.

The somber and serious Menuetto recaptures to some extent the mood of the first movement. Beethoven's recurrent use of third-beat accents distances it from typically dancelike minuets. The middle section or trio, is essentially a dialogue between second violin and viola, to which the cello supplies a bass line and the first violin contributes a running triplet commentary.

The final movement is a clearly defined rondo, very much in the style of Haydn. The sparkling main theme melody has elements of the Turkish style so favored by eighteenth-century composers. The second violin has almost exclusive rights to the richly lyrical episode that follows. A varied return of the main theme leads to another contrast in which the instruments enter one after the other in a gruff, pyramidlike sequence. After a third reprise of the opening melody, there is a lengthy coda, ending with a rapid-fire finish.

Maurice Ravel

(1875-1937)

Quartet in F Major

- I. *Allegro moderato - Très doux*
- II. *Assez vif - Très rythme*
- III. *Très lent*
- IV. *Vif et agite*

Even though Ravel worked on his sole string quartet from late 1902 to April 1903, while still a student at Paris Conservatoire, it is far from a student work. The piece integrates the several styles that he had incorporated into his own musical vocabulary. A major influence was Debussy, and particularly Debussy's Quartet in G minor, with its Impressionist quality and fascinating tone colors. At the same time, the clear and transparent textures, the compelling logic, and tight control of the basic organization bear testimony to Ravel's strong Neoclassical proclivity and admiration for Mozart. Finally, some of the strange and unfamiliar tonal effects reflect an interest in the exotic music of the Far East.

The quartet opens with a thematic group that contains two distinctive ideas; a rich, warmly scored melody involving the entire quartet and a first violin melody of similar character over rapid figures in the second violin and viola. After speeding up to a climax, the music quiets, and the soaring second theme is stated by the first violin and viola playing two octaves apart, producing a most striking tone color.

Ravel conjures up the sound of a Javanese gamelan orchestra in the swift-moving pizzicato opening of the second movement by having the outer instruments playing in 3/4 meter, while the inner parts play in 6/8 meter. The cello alone plays a transition to the slow, moody middle section. A shortened reprise of the opening section concludes the movement.

Ravel achieves an improvisatory rhapsodic feeling in the slow third movement, with its continually shifting tempi and episodic construction. He is also able to weave the opening melody of the quartet in with the new melodic content. As in the previous movements, there is an ever-changing progression of new and imaginative tone colors.

The vigorous finale opens with an angry snarl followed by a long held note, repeated twice before the movement starts moving forward. Its awkward five-beat meter, possibly Russian in inspiration, lends it an unsettling character. The rest of the movements alternates the contrasting expressive and lyrical melodies, including returns of the first movement themes with repeats of the opening outburst.

Robert Schumann

(1810-1856)

Quintet in E-flat Major for Piano and Strings, Opus 44

I. Allegro brillante

II. In modo d'un marcia: largamento

III. Scherzo: molto vivace

IV. Allegro ma non troppo

Schumann's piano quintet is his most frequently performed chamber composition; it is also the pioneering quintet for piano and string quartet and the inspiration for a line of great works for the combination, including those by Brahms, Franck, and Dvořák.

Schumann wrote this seminal work in September 1842, taking five days to prepare the sketches and two weeks to complete the score. He dedicated it to his wife, Clara, and scheduled the premiere for December 6 of the same year at the Leipzig home of Carl and Henriette Voigt. Clara, who was to participate, fell ill on the day of the performance, and Felix Mendelssohn stepped in, playing the difficult piano part at sight.

The bold, assertive first theme, played in a forceful tutti opens the quintet, followed immediately by its miraculous transformation into a wonderfully warm, cantilena melody. The cello and viola present sensitive second theme as a conversational dialogue. A heavily accented third theme, an obvious outgrowth of the first brings the exposition to its conclusion. The recapitulation brings back the exposition slightly modified, and the movement ends without a coda.

The second movement, *In Modo d'unz Marcia*, is structured as a cross between rondo and sonata form. The first theme has the cadence of a solemn march. A tenuous, sustained first violin line over a busy, anxious accompaniment functions as the contrasting second theme and precedes the return of the opening. The faster-moving next section works over both the first and second ideas before the movement concludes with a final statement of the first theme.

The Scherzo is the glorification of the scale. The lyrical, legato first trio with the first violin and viola in canon, offers a welcome respite from the relentlessly scalic Scherzo. The return of the Scherzo is followed by the second trio, a high-powered, heavily accented perpetual motion. Schumann ends the movement with a final review of the Scherzo and a summarizing coda.

The crowning last movement contains all the virility and sturdiness of the first movement. The pianist flings out the muscular principal theme with an accent on every note, backed up by the strings playing a tempestuous repeated-note accompaniment. A contrasting quiet and songlike subsidiary melody acts as a foil to the first theme. The short, subdued development is mostly concerned with the second

theme, building up at the end to an exultant return of the first to start the recapitulation, which proceeds regularly through both themes. In the very spacious and remarkable coda, Schumann introduces two major fugal sections, the first based on the movement's principal theme, the second combining that melody with the main theme from the first movement in an overwhelming three-voice double fugue.

Program notes by Melvin Berger.

BIOGRAPHIES

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Hailed as one of the greatest quartets in chamber music history, the Tokyo String Quartet have received extraordinary acclaim since their founding in 1969. Now in their 22nd season, this remarkable ensemble of Eastern and Western musicians regularly appears in the major music centers of the world. Praised for their superb technical command and the commitment and intensity they bring to performances and recordings of a richly varied repertoire, the Tokyo Quartet have captivated an entire generation through their continuing musical achievements.

Although officially formed in 1969 at The Juilliard School of Music, the Tokyo String Quartet traces its origins to the Toho School of Music in Tokyo, where several of the founding members were profoundly influenced by Professor Hideo Saito. The Tokyo String Quartet has been featured on major television programs, including PBS's "Great Performances," the CBS program "Sunday Morning" and a taped concert from the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, broadcast nationally on public television.

ALICIA DE LARROCHA

A favorite of audiences throughout the world, the Spanish pianist Alicia de Larrocha has toured the United States three times since 1965, building a fanatically devoted public who cheer her in recital, with orchestra and in performance of chamber music. She plays regularly with the world's great orchestras and on the most prestigious recital series, and her catalogue of unique recordings is available internationally.

A native of Barcelona, Alicia de Larrocha made her first public appearance in 1929, at the age of six. The great Artur Schnabel was a close friend of her teacher and predicted a great career for her, encouraging her to continue her studies with Frank Marshall, then the head of the Granados Academy, founded in her native city by Enrique Granados.