Huston 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 - cello

Hamman Hall
Monday, March 14, 1983
8:00 P.M.

Rice University
PROGRAM

Quartet in B Flat, K458 (Hunt) ...................... MOZART
  Allegro vivace assai
  Menuetto. Moderato
  Adagio
  Allegro assai

Quartet No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 110 ............. SHOSTAKOVICH
  Largo
  Allegro molto
  Allegretto
  Largo
  Largo

INTERMISSION

QUARTET in C, OP. 59, NO. 3 ................. BEETHOVEN
  Introduzione. Andante con moto. Allegro vivace
  Andante con moto quasi allegretto
  Menuetto. Grazioso
  Allegro molto

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A Love Affair With the Tokyo Quartet

The Tokyo String Quartet and this audience are sharing a musical experience tonight for an unprecedented fourth consecutive season. The cause and effect of these frequent appearances are a feeling of closeness that has developed between these four men and this special audience of chamber music lovers. The differences among string quartets are often subtle, as are the differences among audiences, but good musicians and good chamber music audiences are aware of subtleties. So pleased is the Houston Friends of Music/Shepherd School of Music Series with this flourishing relationship of music-makers and audience that it has engaged the Tokyo String Quartet for a fifth consecutive season for 1983-1984.

Kikuei Ikeda, Kazuhide Isomura, and Sadao Harada were trained at the Toho Music Academy in Tokyo. Inspiration to pursue a career in the string quartet world came from Robert Mann and Raphael Hillyer of the Juilliard Quartet when they visited Japan. Soon after the Quartet's formation, it won First Prize at the Coleman Auditions in Pasadena in April, 1970 and First Prize at the prestigious Munich Competition. The newest member of the Quartet, Peter Oundjian, was born in Toronto, raised in London, and debuted at 15 while he was living in England. Mr. Oundjian first appeared with the ensemble when they performed quintets during the 1981 Van Cliburn International Competition.

Since 1974 the Quartet has performed during the summer and presented master classes for Yale University at Norfolk, Connecticut, and in 1977 was appointed resident quartet of the University. It is also resident quartet at American University in Washington, DC.

The Tokyo String Quartet performs on four great, matched Amatis, which have been graciously loaned them by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. The instruments are in good hands.

**PROGRAM NOTES**

"To my dear friend, Haydn! A father who has concluded to send his children into the world at large thought best to entrust them to the protection and guidance of a famous man who fortunately happened to be his best friend as well. Behold here, famous man and dearest friend, my six children. They are, to be sure, the fruit of long and arduous work, yet some friends have encouraged me to assume that I shall see this work rewarded, to some extent at least, and this flatters me into believing that these children shall one day offer me some comfort. You yourself, dearest friend, have shown me your approval of them during your last sojourn in this capital. Your praise is a most welcome solace to my cares, and the wish I have entertained since their birth that you might see them, if only through the pages of a quarto, is a constant encouragement for me. Your advice, your praise, and your friendship for them altogether make me sure that if I have not entirely unworthy of your good will. May it please you, therefore, to receive them kindly and to be their father, their guide, and their friend. From this moment I surrender to you all rights to them, but beg you to regard with leniency the faults which may have remained hidden to the partial eye of their father, and notwithstanding their shortcomings, to preserve your noble friendship for him who loves them so dearly."

It was with these words that WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791) dedicated his six greatest string quartets to his friend and mentor, Haydn. Just a few months previously, after a soirée which included a performance of the K.458 Quartet, Leopold Mozart had been drawn aside by the most famous musician in Vienna and told, "I assure you solemnly and as an honest man that I consider your son to be the greatest composer I have ever heard." Both statements reveal the admiration of one great musician for the other--admiration that is shared by subsequent generations of music lovers.

The B Flat Quartet (K. 458) begins with a short theme resembling a horn call which has inspired the name "Hunt". Such an eponym has mnemonic use but hardly describes the movement's inexhaustible subtleties, inventions, and pleasures, for which one does not have to hunt at all, but which flow in uninterrupted elegance. Fragments of the first theme are the melodic and rhythmic nidus for subsequent subjects and development, giving the movement a sense of order and unity within its grace and effortlessness. Much of the movement is a tightly woven skein of five notes suggested by the second measure of the movement. The more straightforward Menuetto which follows has the vitality of Haydn and the subtlety of Mozart. The elf-dance mood of the Trio section progressively enchants more and more until its final four measures which are pure tinsel. Like some instant friend, or suddenly revealed truth, the first few measures of the Adagio, grab the listener in a compelling attraction whose vise-like grip holds tightly to the end. This slow rhapsodic movement, marked piano through most of it, is full of dark brooding introspection. The transitions are built from previous melodies, often with the cello as leading voice. Echoes of the initial theme recur unexpectedly, perhaps most effectively as a whisper just before the close of the movement. The Allegro assai is a fast-paced finale, full of unison phrases, jocular echos, and subjects which nudge each other forward. The movement ends with a series of eighth notes reminiscent of the first notes of the quartet.

In 1960, DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975) was in Dresden, East Germany, composing music for the film, "May 5," which dealt with the suffering and final victory of the Russian people over Fascism. He was deeply affected and composed his Eighth String Quartet in a period of
three days out of the emotional experiences that were recalled by it. The dedication read, "To the Memory of the Victims of Fascism and War." Under these circumstances, one might expect a deeply personal composition to emerge. It is not only personal, but as autobiographical as a musical composition can be. His signature appears as the first four notes in the first movement in musical notes which, by musical convention, stand for D - S - C - H. Themes from many of his earlier compositions form the matrix for organizing his thematic material.

With the first few notes of the first movement, Largo, one is immediately comfortable, using familiar tonalities as a criterion. However, the entire work is set firmly in the twentieth century. The sonorous first theme (taken from the First Symphony) is followed by a more chromatic, somewhat eerie melody on the violin and later on the cello. These soft, pleasing sounds are ended abruptly by the jarring, heavily accented Allegro molto, which follows without a break, as do all the movements. These sounds of war build to a climax which is taken from the Hebrew theme of the Piano Trio. The Allegretto provides contrast with a sad, ironic little waltz. The movement ends with a low note on the G string, without vibrato, stark and menacing. The fourth movement explodes in sounds suggesting aircraft and gunfire which, with themes borrowed from a number of earlier Shostakovich compositions, including the Eleventh Symphony, create a mood of confusion and the shock of war. A brief sentimental song temporarily relieves the tension. The final Largo recapitulates the mood and some of the themes of the earlier movements and provides a muted elegy, which slowly dies away.

When Shostakovich first heard this string quartet he was completely overwhelmed with emotion, and weeping, he buried his head in his hands. When the four musicians who had performed it, and who were waiting for comments and criticisms, saw this, they packed up their instruments and stole quietly out of the room.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) was a genius and an innovator who saw unnecessary struggle, ironic impediments, and undeserved failure as his bitter fate. He personalized this struggle and rebelled in his personal habits, his life style, his relations with other people, and in his music. The music of Beethoven seems more to be a mirror of his life than the music of his predecessors or contemporaries was a reflection of theirs.

The Opus 59 Quartets, commissioned by one of his longer-lived musical benefactors, Count Andreas Razumovsky, were begun in 1806. Of these three gems of his middle period, revealing power and beauty sensed anew at every hearing, the Opus 59, No. 3 is perhaps the most personal and the greatest. From the initial chord, followed by twenty-nine measures of distant tonalities, we know that we are in for something new. The first violin breaks the tension with the first theme which undergoes many changes, some abrupt and some subtle. Transitions sometimes lead to a development and at other times to a new theme. There are many exposed runs and arpeggios for all instruments, especially the cello. Chromantic rising eighth notes build the suspense on which the movement ends. The Andante con moto quasi Allegretto opens with a beckoning thump from the cello, the others following in a flowing stream, leading to a luscious melody introduced by the first violin and echoed by all. The movement ends with the cello repeating the same pizzicato figure, quietly followed by the other instruments as well. This movement has prompted more introspective interpretation than perhaps any other in all of Beethoven's quartets. For example, J. W. N. Sullivan has said that it gives the impression "of something abnormal, a remote and frozen anguish, wailing over some implacable destiny. This is hardly human suffering; it is more like a memory of some ancient starless night of the soul." The contrasting Menuetto is more in the classical style until the Coda which again is full of contrasts leading directly to the Allegro molto. This colossal fugue is a magnificent invention that takes us on a prolonged perpetuum mobile to the breath-taking end.

Program Notes by JACK B. MAZOW

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