

Pacifica String Quartet

The College of Wooster
Scheide Music Center
525 E. University Street
Wooster, Ohio 44691

Sunday, October 5, 2003
3:00 P.M.

drama, hearkening back to the Sturm und Drang style of great intensity contrasted with inspired lyricism. The second movement (Allegro assai) is an explosion of anger and aggression. Relief is at last found in the Adagio movement, though angst is not entirely absent, particularly in the dramatic middle section. The Finale (Allegro molto) is a furious and very personal expression of pain much in the same vein as the opening movement.

The agony of Mendelssohn's final quartet did not provide the catharsis that he may have been seeking through its creation. The composer never fully recovered from the loss of his sister; in ill health and unable to perform his job as conductor since Fanny's death, Mendelssohn suffered what may have been a stroke in October of the same year and died in early November.

Program Notes by Brian Biddle



Pacifica String Quartet

Simin Ganatra - violin
Sibbi Bernhardsson - violin
Masumi Per Rostad - viola
Brandon Vamos - cello

One of today's most dynamic and exciting string quartets, the Pacifica Quartet continues to win the hearts of audiences around the world with its impassioned interpretations and unique musical voice. The New York Times calls the Quartet "brilliant" and "astounding," and The Los Angeles Times writes, "There's no point in predicting future greatness for the young Pacifica Quartet. That future has arrived." Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly achieved international stature when it captured three of chamber music's most important international awards, winning Grand Prize at the 1996 Coleman Chamber Music Competition, top prize at the 1997 Concert Artists Guild Competition, and the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award.

Awards and accolades for the Pacifica Quartet do not stop there. In September 2002 the Quartet was honored with Chamber Music America's prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award, giving them concerts in eight of America's most important venues. In spring 2002, the ensemble was appointed Resident Quartet of Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society Two. For two years beginning in the fall of 2003, this appointment will involve the quartet in the full range of activities of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, from performances in Alice Tully Hall to community partnerships and leading roles in the Chamber Music Society's educational activities.

The Pacifica Quartet's multi-disc recording contract with Cedille Records has thus far produced acclaimed recordings of Dvorak chamber works (including the viola quintet with Michael Tree), and the complete quartets of Easley Blackwood. Its next scheduled release is the complete string quartets of Felix Mendelssohn.

The Pacifica made its debut at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2003, with a performance of the five string quartets of Elliott Carter. Its active touring career has taken the Quartet as far afield as Australia, Greece, and Panama and on annual American tours coast-to-coast from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall in New York City. The Quartet can be heard frequently on Chicago's WFMT, and has been featured on several of the nation's most prominent radio broadcasts, including National Public Radio's Performance Today and Minnesota Public Radio's St. Paul Sunday. In 1999, the Quartet had the honor of being selected Quartet in Residence by National Public Radio in Washington DC, where it presented a series of live concerts, broadcast over two weeks. The Pacifica's festival appearances include Aspen, Caramoor, Santa Fe, Bellingham, Britt and Cape Islands, and the Vermont Mozart Festival. Collaborations with distinguished artists include concerts with Paul Katz, Ursula Oppens, Anne-Marie McDermott, and Wu Han.

Cited by the Denver Post for their “zest for performance that carries the listener along breathlessly, passionately,” the Pacifica is a leading advocate of contemporary music, commissioning and performing as many as eight new works a year.

As resident string quartet for the Contemporary Chamber Players, one of the country’s leading contemporary music organizations, the Quartet presents a series of concerts each year devoted exclusively to new music. Recent performances have included premieres of works by Easley Blackwood, Maurice Gardner, and Robert Lombardo, and collaboration with Steve Mackey in a performance of his *Troubador Songs*. In the 2002-2003 season, the Quartet performed Elliott Carter’s complete string quartets at Columbia University’s Miller Theater in New York, the University of Chicago’s Mandel Hall, and the University of California at Los Angeles.

In the fall of 2003, the Pacifica Quartet became Faculty Quartet in Residence at the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana, and concurrently will continue as Quartet in Residence at the University of Chicago, where it is the first resident ensemble in the history of the institution. Reflecting its dedication to musicians and music lovers of the next generation, the Pacifica Quartet was instrumental in creating the Music Integration Project, an innovative program that provides musical performances and teacher training to inner-city elementary schools. In addition, the Quartet regularly teaches at summer festivals, including Interlochen Arts Camp, Madeline Island Music Festival, the Britt Festival in Oregon, and the Weathersfield Music Festival. The ensemble is also frequently invited for visiting residencies at universities and schools nationwide.

The members of the Pacifica Quartet share a unique history of personal and musical friendship. First violinist Simin Ganatra, born and raised in southern California, first played with cellist Brandon Vamos and Icelandic violinist Sibbi Bernhardsson while they were all teenagers. Sibbi later brought his good friend Masumi Rostad to the group. Originating on the West Coast, where it played many of its earliest concerts together, the Quartet takes its name from the awe-inspiring Pacific Ocean. Throughout their journey as a string quartet, its members continually strive to be distinct as the billows/yet one as the sea. (American author James Montgomery)

PROGRAM NOTES

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

QUARTET IN D MAJOR, OP. 64 NO. 5 (“THE LARK”) – Haydn composed this quartet in 1790, the year he was released from his employment by the Esterházy family and was engaged by concert producer Johann Peter Salomon for a series of concerts in London. The highly entertaining nature of this work suggests that it was composed with the intention to be performed while in London. A prime example of Haydn’s quick wit and Classical sensibility, the “Lark” quartet is a well-known and often-performed staple of the string-quartet repertoire.

Following a brief introduction of the accompaniment, the first violin enters with the soaring principal theme of the opening *Allegro moderato*,

which lends the piece its descriptive title. A smattering of other small melodic ideas are introduced and then developed before abruptly returning to the opening melody. The second movement, marked *Adagio Cantabile*, features a lyrical and expressive first section, followed by a development of the material in a minor-mode middle section, followed by an ornamented restatement in the original major mode. The third movement is a stately minuet marked *Allegretto*; it is noteworthy that the middle section of this movement also visits the minor mode before returning home to the beginning major key. To close the quartet, Haydn supplies a breakneck *Vivace finale* featuring a rapid *moto perpetuo* and a fleeting minor-mode fugato middle section leading to a bustling yet good-natured sendoff.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

QUARTET, OP. 22 – Hindemith’s string quartet Op. 22 is known variably as his third or fourth, depending on the inclusion of a 1915 quartet discovered after his death. The Op. 22 quartet was written in 1921 during an extraordinarily prolific period which saw Hindemith truly come into his own as a composer. In 1919 Hindemith, who had previously been renowned as a violinist and violist, received an offer by German publisher Schott to become the exclusive publisher of his compositions. The contract offered Hindemith a much broader exposure, and the early 1920s saw the genesis of several successful new works, particularly in the realm of chamber music.

This five-movement quartet exemplifies Hindemith’s transition from a more expressive late-Romantic approach to a style known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), a term borrowed from the visual arts. For Hindemith, this style meant a simpler musical idiom free of the programmatic tendencies of Romanticism, and generally led to a more polyphonic, linear style which makes itself evident immediately in the Fugato first movement of the Op. 22 quartet, marked *Sehr Langsam* (very slowly). The highly chromatic and contrapuntal opening movement is followed by a lively and rhythmically-driven *Schnell Achtell* (fast) movement. The middle movement, marked *Ruhige Viertel* (calm), may suggest to the listener the folk-inflected musical environment of Bartók. The final two movements, in the spirit of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, seem to harken back to Baroque concertante forms, the brisk fourth movement marked *Massig schnelle Viertel* (very fast) and the closing movement an energetic Rondo.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

QUARTET IN F MINOR, OP. 80 – Mendelssohn’s sixth and last complete string quartet betrays a degree of emotion which is quite uncommon for the composer who was among the most reserved of the Romantic era. This is certainly not without reason; in May 1847 Mendelssohn learned of the death of his beloved sister Fanny, herself a successful composer. The loss devastated Mendelssohn, and in July he composed this piece as an expression of his grief. Mendelssohn’s despair is apparent from the outset; the first movement, marked *Allegro vivace assai – Presto*, displays a Beethovenian sense of

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Program

Quartet in D Major, OP. 64, No. 5, "The Lark" Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Allegro moderato
Adagio cantabile
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Vivace

Quartet, OP. 22 (1895-1963)

Fugato: Sehr langsame Viertel
Schnelle Achtel-Sehr energisch
Ruhige Viertel-Stets fließend
Mässig schnelle Viertel
Rondo: Gemächlich und mit Grazie

INTERMISSION

Quartet in F Minor, OP. 80 Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Allegro vivace assai
Allegro assai
Adagio
Finale: Allegro molto

Simin Ganatra - violin
Sibbi Bernhardsson - violin
Masumi Per Rostad - viola
Brandon Vamos - cello

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