

FRIENDS OF
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Fifty-Second Season

THE BIAVA QUARTET

Austin Hartman, *violin*
Hyunsu Ko, *violin*
Mary Persin, *viola*
Jason Calloway, *cello*

2:30 PM, Sunday, October 7, 2007
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
In cooperation with University of the Pacific
Conservatory of Music
Stockton, California

Program

Quartet in C Major, Op. 54, No. 2

Vivace
Adagio—Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Adagio—Presto

Joseph Haydn
(1732–1809)

Quartet in D Major, No. 2, Op. 10

Allegro
Andante quasi recitativo—Andante con moto—Allegro giocoso

Zoltan Kodály
(1882–1967)

—intermission—

Quartet in F Minor, Op. 80

Allegro vivace assai
Allegro assai
Adagio
Finale: Allegro molto

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809–1847)



The Biava Quartet
112 West 72nd Street, Suite 9F, New York, NY 10023
Recordings available on the Naxos and Cedille Record labels
412-418-3316 • www.biavaquartet.com

The Artists

Founded in 1998 at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Biava Quartet is recognized as one of today's most exciting young American quartets.

Winner of the Naumburg Chamber Music Award and top prizes at the Premio Borciani and London International Competitions, the Quartet has established an enthusiastic following in the United States and abroad. The Quartet takes its name from Maestro Luis Biava, who has been a mentor and inspiration to the Quartet since its inception.

The members of the Biava Quartet hold the Lisa Arnhold Quartet Residency at the Juilliard School, serving as graduate quartet in residence and teaching assistants to the Juilliard Quartet. The Quartet previously held the same position with the Tokyo Quartet at Yale University.

The Biava Quartet has performed to acclaim in major concert halls throughout North America, Europe and Asia, including Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Library of Congress, London's Wigmore Hall and the Baroque Art Hall in Seoul.

The Quartet has served as ensemble in residence and faculty members at the Indiana University Summer Strings Academy, the Innsbruck Institute, San Diego Chamber Music Festival and Heifetz International Music Institute. Recipients of a 2006 Chamber Music America grant in collaboration with the Hill and Hollow Chamber Music Series, the members of the Quartet have invested themselves in the growth of arts in communities.

The Biava Quartet has recorded on the Naxos and Cedille labels and has been heard on London's BBC Radio 3 and numerous national radio broadcasts. The Quartet has been featured in *Strings and Strad* Magazines and is the subject of an upcoming PBS documentary film.

The members of the Biava Quartet hold advanced degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music, University of Southern California, Yale University and The Juilliard School.

The Program

Haydn—Op. 54, No. 2

Haydn earned the nickname "Papa" early in life because of the warm and considerate way he treated those in his charge. Later in life, as his musical accomplishments became better known, this sobriquet alluded to his central role in "fathering" the genre of the string quartet. Over the half-century of his creative life, his chamber music output alone consisted of 83 string quartets, 67 string trios, 31 piano trios, and countless miscellaneous pieces. Most consider Haydn's chamber works to be among the greatest in the history of music.

His most famous and important works are the string quartets and the best of these are the so-called Thirty Famous Quartets, one of which is on today's program.

Opus 54 consists of three quartets, but the No. 2 in C Major that we hear today is considered in a number of ways to be the most sophisticated and significant of the three.

The opening of the first movement is strong and sharp, ending in a measure of silence. When we hear this phrase again in the third movement it finally will have developed enough momentum to become a full melody. The first violin and viola then introduce a light and playful second theme in G. The first violin extends the theme to an extremely high note and the development and recapitulation follow with the movement ending in a lengthy coda.

The *Adagio* is one of Haydn's most poignant moments in all of his quartets. All four instruments begin in C minor playing in their low registers and creating a dark, brooding mood. The theme repeats three times confined to the three lower instruments while the first violin solos in an anguished Gypsy lament that freely and passionately ornaments the slow moving melody. The delicate grace of the *Menuetto*, which follows without pause, is a stark contrast to the profound *Adagio*. This melody was such a favorite of the Esterhazy court that the Prince had it built in as the sound of one of his

mechanical clocks. Listen for an interruption by the trio playing a forceful unison followed by audacious, acerbic harmonies before returning to the charm of the *Menuetto*.

Being the master of the form, Haydn is not deterred from breaking with custom and he ends the piece with a slow movement. There is an eight-measure introduction, after which each instrument takes up the part that it will play for the remainder of the piece. There is a poised, noble theme in the first violin; the second violin and viola provide an accompaniment of throbbing, repeated notes; and the cello sings a melodic line of great dignity spanning its entire range. The effect is one of strong spiritual quality. There is a quick, scampering *Presto* just to remind us that he really does know how to end the piece properly, and he finally finishes with a short, brilliant reminder of the opening section.

Kodály—Quartet No. 2

Zoltan Kodály and Béla Bartók are widely regarded as the two most important Hungarian composers of the 20th century. Kodály was born in Kecskemét and learned to play the violin as a child from his father, a keen amateur musician. In 1900, he entered the Franz Liszt Music Academy in Budapest where he studied composition with Hans Koessler.

After graduating, he began a serious study of Hungarian folk melody. In 1905, he started visiting remote villages and collecting folk songs with the result that folk melody plays an important part in his music. Kodály later went to Paris where he studied with Charles Widor and was greatly impressed by the music of Debussy and the French impressionists. He composed in most genres, and while he did not write a great deal of chamber music, what he wrote is invariably engaging.

Kodály's contributions to the musical life of Hungary in the 20th century have been immense, and have gone

far beyond mere nationalism and his orchestral compositions enjoy a place in the standard repertory. His researches into his country's folk music have been models for ethno-musicologists. Kodály and Bartók drafted the program for folk music research in 1913, which resulted in the collection, classification and editing of over 100,000 folk songs. He made many significant contributions in the fields of music history, music criticism, history of literature, linguistics and language education. His teaching methods also went far beyond the borders of his native land with the worldwide use of the "Kodály Method" for teaching music in schools, the idea being general music literacy.

Despite their close personal and professional relationship, Kodály's compositional style contrasts sharply with that of Bartók. Where Bartók used dissonances and propulsive rhythms and worked largely with instrumental music, Kodály was a vocal oriented composer. Melody and lyricism were of prime importance to him. Indeed, the bulk of Kodály's works are for chorus. Despite the differences in their musical styles, the core of their work is folk music.

The second string quartet was written between 1916 and 1918 in Hungary. The work has four sections, but the last three are played without pause, making this a quartet of only two movements. This music is aptly described as a "fusion between Kodály's personal voice and the spirit of folk music."

This afternoon's piece is the second of two string quartets by the composer. By the time he was working on this piece, Kodály had been deeply involved in Hungarian folk music for more than a decade and the essence of this music was permeating his work.

The first movement is monothematic with none of the subjects having a definite profile. By contrast, the second movement employs six subjects, each of a different character, and provides evidence of Kodály's gift for rich, melodic invention. The composer's ability to achieve a remarkable range of orchestral effects with only four instruments is

evident throughout the work but is mainly on display in the final movement.

Mendelssohn—Op. 80

Few composers were born with the talent and brilliance of Felix Mendelssohn and fewer still achieved as much triumph and acknowledgment during their lifetimes. Mendelssohn grew up in a wealthy family whose home was a gathering place for artists, intellectuals, and social leaders. As a child he clearly showed talent exhibiting perfect pitch and a phenomenal musical memory. He gave his first performance at nine and the same year his first composition was performed. At the time he decided to make music his career at the age of 16 (he was composing the Octet and the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) many feel that his creative gifts exceeded those of Mozart at the same age.

Mendelssohn produced only eleven mature pieces of chamber music: six string quartets, two viola quintets, two piano trios, and the Octet. The quartet in f minor, Op. 80, which we hear today, is one of those mature pieces, being his last completed piece of chamber music. It is a powerful, passionate statement expressing the deepest feelings of any of his works. The state of affairs surrounding its composition was tragic: his older sister, Fanny, to whom he was devoted, had died suddenly in May of 1847. Mendelssohn collapsed on hearing the news and was too distressed to attend the funeral. It took him until September to complete this work while recovering at Interlaken, Switzerland.

The change in nature of this piece might have been the portent of the start of a new phase in his work, but Mendelssohn himself died less than two months later. It is a somber work throughout with even the *Scherzo* having a gloomy mood, and spite of some restful moments, it remains dark and subdued. The delicate perfection of earlier works is absent and some have described it as the least satisfactory of all his chamber music compositions.

The first movement opens with a rapid passage that aggressively builds as it races through the quartet. When this troubled phrase appears again, it arrives as a warm, tender presentation of the same motto. A calm, sedate descending line becomes the first part of the subsidiary theme. As this theme continues, all motion seems to stop, apprehended in sustained, long-held notes in highly chromatic harmonies. The motifs of the main theme are developed by rising pitch and growing volume before yielding to the recapitulation. A coda follows beginning quietly like the opening, but quickly reaching a concentrated intensity which is maintained to the end of the movement.

Mendelssohn's typical *Scherzo* is light and effervescent, but this second movement is brutal and mocking. First there is a bizarre dance pounded with syncopations and dissonance. Then the middle features the viola and cello implacably playing an ostinato over which the violins place a macabre waltzing refrain. Finally, the opening section is heard again.

The elegiac *Adagio* grows from the opening phrase, shared by the cello and first violin, to a powerful, personal expression of anguish and despair. The climax of this statement is followed by a quick descent to the quiet of the opening and a short, final statement of the initial part.

The last movement is in sonata form and projects a restless disquiet that offers little in the way of comfort or acceptance. The exposition contains some loud outbursts but they do not disturb the control manifested by the two themes, one an ongoing syncopated line, the second with a falling cadence at the end of every short phrase. The development shows the emergence of Mendelssohn's wrath only to be hushed in the short recapitulation, and rising again in the coda.

—Notes by Dr. Michael Spencer

FIFTY-SECOND SEASON

2007-2008

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The Biava Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, October 7, 2007
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWING

Chatham Baroque

2:30 PM Sunday, November 4, 2007
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RECEPTION FOLLOWING

Trio con Brio Copenhagen

7:30 PM Saturday, February 16, 2008
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWING

La Catrina Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, March 16, 2008
Morris Chapel
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Stanford Woodwind Quintet

2:30 PM Sunday, April 6, 2008
Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
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