

FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

The Magellan String Quartet

Michael Shih, violin
Patricia Sunwoo, violin
Daniel Panner, viola
Kristina Reiko Cooper, violoncello

Sunday, March 21, 1999, 5:00 p.m.
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific
Stockton, California



This performance is underwritten by Kathe Underwood

Program

String Quartet in C Minor, D. 703
“Quartettsatz”

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Lyric Suite for String Quartet (1925-26)
Allegretto gioviale
Andante amoroso
Allegro misterioso—Trio estatico
Adagio appassionato
Presto delirando—Tenebroso
Largo desolato

Alban Berg
(1885-1935)

—*Intermission*—

**String Quartet in B-flat Major,
Opus 18, No. 6, “La Malinconia”**
Allegro con brio
Adagio, ma non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro
La Malinconia: Adagio; Allegretto quasi allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)



The Magellan String Quartet is a 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award winner
The Magellan String Quartet appears by arrangement with
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The Magellan String Quartet

Winner of the prestigious 1998 Walter W. Naumburg Chamber Music Award, the Magellan String Quartet has performed in cities throughout the United States and Japan, including appearances at Alice Tully Hall, the Aspen Music Festival, and the Frick Collection in Pittsburgh. The quartet was seen on "60 Minutes" and featured in live performance on New York's classical radio station WNYC. The ensemble served for two years as the Graduate String Quartet in Residence at Juilliard School, working closely with the Juilliard Quartet and coaching students. They also participate in the Midori Foundation's educational outreach program.

Michael Shih is a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts and has won prizes at the Artists International Auditions and the Naumburg International violin competition that resulted in a recital at Carnegie Hall. Mr. Shih has soloed throughout the world, including his native Taiwan, and is currently a Doctor of Musical Arts candidate at Juilliard.

Patricia Sunwoo received her diploma from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto at the age of 15, earning several medals of distinction. Ms. Sunwoo made her New York orchestral debut in 1995 at Alice Tully Hall, performing Berg's Violin Concerto with the Juilliard Orchestra. Currently Ms. Sunwoo is a doctoral candidate at the Juilliard School.

Daniel Panner has participated in chamber music festivals in Marlboro, Tanglewood, Aspen, Norfolk, and Taos and has collaborated with members of the Cleveland, Emerson, Guarneri, and Juilliard Quartets. He has been heard on NPR's "Performance Today" both as soloist and chamber musician. Mr. Panner plays on a Gasparo da Salo viola on loan from the Samsung Foundation for Culture.

Kristina Reiko Cooper was hailed by the New York Times as "sensational" in concert. She has performed as a soloist extensively throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. Ms. Cooper began studies at age 10 and a year later became a student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. She has received her BM and MM degrees from the Juilliard School and is currently in a doctoral program there. Among her important prizes is the prestigious Sony ES Fellowship. Ms. Cooper plays on a William Forster cello of 1786.

Program Notes

Franz Schubert – Quartettsatz, Op. Post.

Schubert left a wealth of unpublished works. That we have these works is thanks to the efforts of Franz's brother Ferdinand and Robert Schumann. The *Quartettsatz* was not performed until forty years after Schubert's death.

This work, begun in 1820 and laid aside, marks the beginning of Schubert's mature chamber music which took on new meaning, greater individuality, and a much deeper expression of the composer's innermost feelings. Chamber music was an early love; from his childhood days he was the viola player in the family quartet and, after songs, this genre was a main stimulant to his creative genius. The family, partaking of their main source of recreation and pleasure, would regularly perform Franz's early works.

The *Quartettsatz* was less finished than the *Unfinished Symphony* begun at the same period. All that we have is a magnificent *Allegro assai* in c minor, and 49 bars of an *Andante* in A flat major. In addition to the facility of workmanship found in all his early works, there is a new romantic spirit, and a profundity of feeling that places the work amongst the very finest music of his maturity. The following eight years produced a series of masterpieces that added intense lyricism to the youthful spontaneity and an imagination that created its own forms.

His use of a quartet medium in which cello and first violin have predominant interest is first seen here. The principal theme of the movement in minor key and in fluent 6/8 time opens the work but immediately the contrasting smooth major theme in A flat Major enters. The first theme provides the melodic and rhythmical ideas for melodies that follow. Even in the short movement are found a singing quality with passionate contrasts. The choice of key for the second subject is an instance of Schubert's favorite key shift, a major third downward.

Alban Berg – Lyric Suite

Berg was born in Vienna into a well-to-do family that fostered artistic activity. When he was 19, Schoenberg was sufficiently impressed with him that he took him as a pupil, and the relationship developed into a deep friendship. Berg's development followed that of Schoenberg: from tonal music into atonal music. Finally Berg developed a

style that used atonality and extended tonality.

It was the unique achievement of Berg, as Joseph Machlis explains, "to humanize the abstract procedures of the Schoenbergian technique and to reconcile them with expressive feeling. Upon a new and difficult idiom he imprinted the stamp of a lyric imagination of the first order."

Berg was influenced by the Romantic music of Schumann, Wagner, Richard Strauss, and his beloved Mahler. The romantic character of his music developed into an "expressionistic" idiom, a term taken from the visual arts and applied to painters like Kandinsky. Distortion, exaggeration, symbolism, and abstraction were used to emphasize subjective states or interpretations of subject matter. It was in some part a reaction to "impressionism," which viewed subject matter objectively. Expressionism emphasized aspects of the psychological and emotional.

Berg's subjective reaction to World War I is indicative of his character. Though suffering from chronic asthma, he longed to participate, telling Schoenberg that the wish "to be in it" and serve his country made concentration on composition impossible. He was called up and his experience included guard duty, but army life was harsh. After a breakdown, he was assigned to the war office until the war's end. His attitude had completely changed and he became an ardent pacifist. The experience fed into his opera *Wozzeck*. This opera and the *Lyric Suite* were the masterpieces of his second period.

The *Lyric Suite* was a personal, passionate, and psychological work. Though Berg in 1911 had married Helene Nabowski, who had an influence on his work, the *Lyric Suite* characterized a secret love affair that lasted until his death ten years later. It was a tribute to Hanna Fuchs-Robellin, Franz Werfel's sister and Berg's "loved one far away." A miniature score, only discovered in the U.S. in 1977, was annotated with personal comments describing Hanna and his love for her, the focal point of the work.

Berg follows Schoenberg by using tone rows in the first, third, and sixth movements while the second and fourth are free and the fifth is a mixture. Berg stated that the progressive changes in his twelve-note series symbolized "submission to fate." The overall architecture of

the work is a tribute to Mahler, whose genius in this vein Berg always admired. The intensification of mood through the six movements is realized in the macrostructure through tempo; an increasing divergence occurs. The *Andante amoroso* is not markedly slower than the *Allegretto gioviale*. The central *Allegros* are in contrast to the *Presto* after which the work sinks into the *Largo desolato*. Adorno called the corresponding successive psychological states "a latent opera."

The basic cell of Berg's twelve-tone row as presented in the first movement are the notes B-F-A-B flat, which in German notation is H-F-A-B, the initials of his love and himself. In the second movement, *Andante amoroso*, a rising melodic line increases in intensity and pathos with sighs in the lower strings and recurring descending patterns. In the *Allegro misterioso*, the mood is suggested by scraping the strings over pizzicato. After the ferocity of the *Trio estatico*, the music of the *Allegro* returns. The *Allegro appassionato* uses polyphonic texture that changes to an adagio of long sustained pitches in the bass strings; sudden strident strokes are followed by a plaintive melody. In Berg's annotations are the words "it reaches the most spiritual level, the most expressive, most celestial point." In marked contrast is the *Presto delirando*, beginning with rapidly rising and descending arpeggios. Berg said, "It can only be understood by those who know the horrors and torments to follow." Two *tenebroso* trios follow, using sustained dissonant chords, suggestive of the loneliness and despair of sleepless nights. Some violent treatment with a sudden stop lead to the *Largo desolato*, introduced by a mysterious sounding pizzicato row of notes. A rich melody on the cello is accompanied by tremolo and counter melodies. The atmosphere of desolation grows with sustained widely separated pitches, which simply die out into a silence. Berg quoted Baudelaire's *De Profundis*: "I implore Thy pity, oh Thou, the only one I love, from the depths of the dark abyss where my heart has fallen." The last words read, "Dying of love, desire and sorrow..."

The Kolisch Quartet, which first played the suite, achieved an outstanding success in frequent performances and Grove comments that the composition "for all its subjective and tragic

character is one of the most brilliant and effective virtuoso display pieces in its genre."

Ludwig van Beethoven – String Quartet in B Flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6

Vienna was destined to be the world of string quartets and they were the favorite media of the Viennese salon. Haydn had created and become supreme master of the form, both emulated and stimulated by Mozart.

It was not until 1798 that Beethoven turned to the form and his chamber music for strings at this time is indicative of a gradual freeing from the reliance upon the piano in his compositional style development. He dedicated the six quartets of Op. 18 to Prince Lobkowitz, and since Haydn composed his quartets in groups of six, that Beethoven did so may be both a tribute and a sign of competition.

In the last three of the set, Beethoven began experiments in texture and type and arrangement of movement. This is shown in the B flat quartet by the insertion of *La Malinconia* ("Melancholy") as an introduction to the last movement. The quartet is unorthodox as an amalgam of varying emotions and stylistic effects. The opening *Allegro con brio* is shimmering, a bit Haydnesque in a *buffo* mood. The distribution of interesting material in all the voices is evident in the placement in the various instrumental parts, of the motivic turn, part of the vivacious short initial theme. Beethoven's sketches of the movement show that this theme experienced many transformations.

In the *Adagio* Beethoven embroiders the theme and the movement becomes a set of variations. Comments on the *Scherzo* stress the metrical ambiguity that can give the effect of swimming over the thematic material. The *trio* is cheerful, using the rhythmic motive of an eighth and two sixteenths on which he built the final movement of *Piano Concerto No. 4*.

La Malinconia introduces a movement with remarkable fluctuations of mood, something that is perhaps characteristic of melancholy itself. The introduction has elusive harmony and melodic ornamentation. The *Allegro* section that follows breaks off three times, as the *Adagio* theme returns; however, the movement whirls to a *prestissimo* close.

—Notes by Catherine Roche

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