

# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

## **Cavani String Quartet**

Annie Fullard, violin

Mari Sato, violin

Kirsten Docter, viola

Merry Peckham, cello

2:30 PM, November 14, 2004

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

In cooperation with the Conservatory of Music

University of Pacific

Stockton, California



## **Program**

### **String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 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)

### **String Quartet No. 2 in F Major, Op. 92**

Allegro sostenuto

Adagio

Allegro—Andante molto—Quasi Allegro I, ma un poco piu tranquillo—Allegro

### **Sergei Prokofiev**

(1891-1953)

*—Intermission—*

### **String Quartet in f Minor, Op. 95 (*Serioso*)**

Allegro con brio

Allegretto ma non troppo

Allegro assai vivace ma serioso

Larghetto; Allegretto agitato

### **Ludwig van Beethoven**



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## Cavani String Quartet

The Cavani String Quartet, winner of the prestigious Naumburg Chamber Music Award, has been described by the Washington Post as "completely engrossing, powerful and elegant." In addition to receiving the Naumburg Award, the Cavani Quartet has been a top prize winner in numerous competitions including the Coleman, Fischhoff, the Banff International, and the Cleveland Quartet Competition. Since their New York debut in 1987, they have won the hearts of audiences across the country with their soulful and riveting performances. The quartet concertizes regularly on major series and festivals throughout North America and Europe. Appearances include the Carnegie Hall Centennial Series and Alice Tully Hall in New York, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, the Ambassador Series in Los Angeles, Muziekcentrum De Ijsbreker in Amsterdam, and Festival de L'Epau in France.

Formed in 1984, the Cavani Quartet is named after the 19th century violin makers Giovanni and Vincenzo Cavani. They make their home in Cleveland, Ohio, where they have been Quartet-in-Residence at the world-renowned Cleveland Institute of Music since 1988. Nationally recognized as pioneers in arts-in-education, the Cavani Quartet is sought after by universities and communities for their ability to cultivate community partnerships.



## Program Notes

### *Beethoven – Quartet in Bb, Op.18/6*

Beethoven was sent to Vienna by his patrons in Bonn to "capture the spirit of Mozart through Haydn" and he began his studies of counterpoint with the great master in 1785, but continued with Salieri. He received a commission for a quartet in 1795 which he rejected; it is probably that he wished to mature his skills in composing with the polyphonic style, canon, fugue and part writing as essential. However, in 1798, he began a set of six quartets, finished in 1800, dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz, and published in 1801. They were the most ambitious project of his early years. Though experiments occur in the last three quartets, the adherence to the tradition established by Haydn and Mozart is evident and Solomon believes that Beethoven deliberately reigned in his imagination for the purpose of achieving mastery of a major medium of the high Classic tradition with his first set, Op. 18. The fact that Beethoven composed his quartets in a set of six is an indication of both emulation for and competition with Haydn who had set the tradition of sets of six. His chamber music for strings marked a gradual liberation from his reliance on the piano as the anchor for his compositional style.

Beethoven, according to Kerman, threw into doubt the classical framework of string quartets which had made Vienna a world center of this medium. Though Beethoven learned from Haydn, he had a tendency to arouse conflicting reactions (a compound of affection and resentment) in his Viennese teacher. Haydn called him "the great Mogul" from the provinces and decided not to take him as companion to London. Beethoven was searching for a way to create a special brand of the sonata form, always inherently dramatic; he was searching for some dimension of tragedy and melodrama, as is clear in his piano sonatas of 1796-97. Fortune has pointed out that he was creating and expanding long range, tonal drama, using the intensity of the material, and dynamic contrasts

as well as the generation of momentum.

The last two quartets of Op. 18 show his rather innovative treatment of the four movement form. The first movements are less extensive, but swift, bland and symmetrical. This treatment caused the latter movements to seem weightier or more arresting. The composite finale of Op. 18, No. 6, is the most visionary of these later movements.

The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, introduces a bouncy theme in violin, answered by the cello, the viola supporting with pulsations. The second subject is a miniature march presented in homophonic texture until the violin elaborates it. The themes are clearly delineated in the development with intriguing variations and motivic juxtaposition.

*Adagio, ma non troppo* presents a gentle four-note motif repeated on different pitch levels with additional ornamentation. A fugal section features melodies sung by the viola and the cello. The violin repeats the opening four-note motif section which alternates with the smooth melodic portion. The movement dies out with three short chords.

In the *Scherzo*, another four-note motif is repeated rapidly and a running circular motif creates a contrasting texture.

*La Malincolia*, the striking, composite final movement, features a plaintive little four-note turn over sustained, rich harmony, which Tyson described as a slow, strange sounding chromatic labyrinth. The forty-four bar mystic passage prefaces the *Allegretto quasi allegro*, which is a swift limpid little dance evocative of the waltzes in Vienna ballrooms. The *Adagio* portion returns briefly to arrest the climax before the final statement and coda.

### *Prokofiev – Quartet No. 2 in F*

Prokofiev, one of the wealth of "revolution" artists, left Russia as did Stravinsky, but returned in 1934 with international fame for his ballets—*Chout* (sometimes known as *The Buffoon*), *The Age of Steel*, and *The Prodigal Son*; his operas, *Love for*

*Three Oranges* and *The Flaming Angel*, as well as his symphonies and concertos. On his return to Russia, he devoted himself to popular music, film scores, and patriotic works such as *Alexander Nevsky*. It was during the Second World War that he wrote his monumental opera *War and Peace*, after Leo Tolstoy. The Soviet government honored Prokofiev with a number of awards. As Machlis has pointed out, characteristics of Prokofiev's style are the athletic march rhythms, the harmonies pungently dissonant but rooted in the key, the abrupt modulations, the unexpected turns of phrase, and the orchestral color manifesting the brilliance associated with the Russian school.

The year 1941, when *War and Peace* appeared, saw the performance of his Second String Quartet in which he used the local folk dances and songs of the Kabardian region to wonderful effect.

Prokofiev composed a very small amount of chamber music (two quartets, a string sonata, *Overture on Hebrew Themes*, and a quintet), small compared to an extensive output of 130 compositions which had included symphonies, operas, ballets, and film music. According to his own account, the influence that drove him to writing his first quartet, completed in 1931, was a study of Beethoven quartets.

Prokofiev's second quartet was composed nine years after his first. He, with other artists, had evacuated to Nalchik in the region of Kabarda on the other side of the Caucasus from Georgia, and all made use of the rich folk material of the region. The quartet was given its first performance back in Moscow, in December of the next year, by the Beethoven Quartet. The style is simpler than his first quartet, being less chromatic and with fewer harsh effects, though to the Beethoven accustomed ear, there would seem to be quite sufficient of these. The result is a folk-like effect with the folk melody and rhythm supplying piquancy and atmospheric melodiousness.

The first movement is in strict sonata form. The spirit of a folk celebration is immediately struck up

with strident chords introducing a lively motif, an invitation to the dance. The timbre of the instruments manages to imitate the folk instrument. A favorite texture is the use of strident chords in the lower strings with lively violin playing jauntily high above. A predominant theme is a march over a stern ostinato, a technique used throughout by Prokofiev. We hear the folk-instrument drone under a repeated violin motif. A long descending passage resolves into an energetic dance. The variety of melodic material is most affective in modal plaintiveness.

The second movement begins with tense harmonies over which the viola sounds a long melody and the violins begin to ornament it in higher ranges. A pizzicato accompaniment to animated melodies is heard in a second section. The rich textured accompaniment in the main part has been related to Kabardian string playing which Prokofiev was able to hear both live and on recordings.

The main theme of the finale is a popular dance tune, *Getigexhev Ogurbi*, introduced by the cello. Rather strident tremolo playing is used to accompany melodic activity and contrasts that explore styles of exploiting the instruments constantly vary the texture. Prokofiev's sharp humor can be discerned in these contrasts and extremes of pitch.

### ***Beethoven—Quartet in f, Op. 95***

In the year 1810, Beethoven writes of himself as being in a somber mood, having suffered from the Napoleonic bombardments and occupation. He was also sorrowed by the death of Haydn. He composed only the Incidental Music to Goethe's *Faust* and the String Quartet, Opus 95. According to Solomon, Beethoven's music at this time represented his *Heroic Period* when the "questing" side of Beethoven's nature, the sense of discontinuity and disequilibrium, of striving and restlessness, was searching for new modes of expression. The quartets of Opus 74 were open, unproblematic and lucid works of consolidation. In

contrast, Opus 95, written in the summer of 1810 but withheld from publication for six years, was an "involved, impassioned, highly idiosyncratic piece, problematic in every one of its movements, advanced in a hundred ways." This is the first time Beethoven used a designation such as "serioso." It is an experimental work which comprises many complex ideas in a rather small compass. He may have been groping towards his last period style. Since he turned away from the genre for more than a dozen years, he may have been dissatisfied. His last quartets combined its probing rhetoric with lyric and open communication.

In the *Allegro con brio*, Beethoven, after a brusque entry, offers a shift of mood six times, with bright string passages followed by serious polyphony tranquility—a dialogue of two temperaments. The movement dies out quietly so the dialogue was successful.

The *Allegro a non troppo* begins with mystifying descending steps by the cello which are heard periodically throughout the movement between various polyphonic passages, a central one being a short fugue. The movement ends with each voice quietly "stepping" out of the picture.

Beethoven qualified his next *Allegro*—"lively enough but serious!" The movement is dominated by a short rhythmic figure given to all voices. Two interludes have the violin playing flowing figures over a quiet harmonic support.

The short *Larghetto* which Beethoven labeled "espressivo" introduces a dramatic *Allegretto* which features, among other techniques, double stopped tremolos in the central voices with single notes spaced out above. The movement ends with a short "perpetuum mobile."

—Notes by Dr. Catherine Roche

## 49<sup>th</sup> SEASON

2004-2005

*Presented in Cooperation with  
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### Calder Quartet

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### Cello

2:30 PM Sunday, October 24, 2004  
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### Cavani String Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, November 14, 2004  
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### Osiris Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, February 20, 2005  
Faye Spanos Concert Hall  
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### Dorian Wind Quintet

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