

FRIENDS OF
CHAMBER MUSIC

Fifty-First Season

THE YING QUARTET

Timothy Ying, *violin*

Janet Ying, *violin*

Phillip Ying, *viola*

David Ying, *cello*

7:30 PM, Saturday, March 24, 2007

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

In cooperation with University of the Pacific
Conservatory of Music, Stockton, California

Program

Quartet in B-flat Major, K. 458 "Hunt"

Allegro vivace assai

Menuetto: Moderato

Adagio

Allegro assai

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART

(1756–1791)

A Musical Dim Sum: A selection of Chinese-American Works

Song of the Ch'in (1982)

Pizzicato for String Quartet (2001)

Shuo (2000)

Zhou LONG (b. 1953)

Vivian FUNG (b. 1975)

Chen YI (b. 1953)

—intermission—

Quartet No. 3 in F Major, Op. 73 (1946)

Allegretto

Moderato con moto

Allegro non troppo

Adagio—Moderato

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH

(1906–1975)



The YING QUARTET is represented by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.,
115 College Street, Burlington, VT 05401 www.melkap.com www.ying4.com
Recordings: Quartz, Telarc, Elektra, EMI

The Artists

The Ying Quartet, longtime friends of FOCM, continues to develop ways of making artistic and creative expression an essential part of everyday life. Current projects include an innovative visiting residency at Symphony Space in New York City connecting music with other art forms; an exploration with the Turtle Island String Quartet of jazz, improvisation, and the classical string tradition; a program with folk musician Mike Seeger showing the influence of traditional folk music on contemporary classical composition; and Hyperscore, a revolutionary online graphic compositional application that allows amateurs to create music on the computer.

Natives of Chicago, the Ying siblings began their career as an ensemble in 1992 as one of the first ensembles involved in the Chamber Music American (then NEA) Rural Residency Program. The Quartet participated fully in the community, performing on countless occasions for audiences of six to six hundred people in a residency so successful that it was widely chronicled in the national and international media, including features in *The New York Times* and *STRAD* magazine and on CBS Sunday Morning.

The Ying Quartet won recognition of its exceptional musical qualities when it was given the 1993 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. Now in its second decade, the Yings have established an international reputation for excellence in performance with appearances in virtually every major American city; at numerous festivals including Aspen, Tanglewood, and San Miguel; and in Europe, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Japan and Taiwan. Their enthusiasm for performing in diverse settings has led to concerts in Carnegie Hall, the White House, hospitals and juvenile prisons. Frequent musical collaborations have included such artists as Menahem Pressler, Paul Katz, Gilbert Kalish, Jon Nakamatsu, and the St. Lawrence and Turtle Island String Quartets. The EMI Classics recording of works by Osvaldo Golijov on which the Ying Quartet appears with the St. Lawrence Quartet was nominated for a 2003 Grammy Award.

The Program

Mozart-K. 458 "Hunt"

Nicknamed "Hunt" because of the fanfare-like motif that opens the work, the B flat quartet is the fourth, and probably most popular, of the six string quartets composed by Mozart between 1782 and 1785. The subtitle is decidedly not Mozart's and is not a particularly good choice: two violins do not a brace of hunting horns make! In fact, there is no evidence that Mozart had any familiarity with the sport of hunt, and the notion of him galumphing off into wild forests strains credibility.

In 1782, string quartets were a relatively new form and still in the course of development. Haydn was probably the direct force for Mozart's work in this form, and the inspiration provided by Haydn is clearly evident in the quartets Mozart composed. Mozart almost certainly first met Haydn shortly after settling in Vienna in 1781, and, despite a difference of 24 years in their ages, the two men soon established their friendship based on mutual admiration. So it is not surprising that when Mozart completed six quartets of his own, his publication would bear that famous dedicatory preface to Haydn that has led to them being called Mozart's "Haydn" quartets. Mozart refers to the "long and laborious effort" that he had put into them, an exceptional admission from an extraordinary composer, and a reminder of the tremendous challenge posed by this purest of musical forms.

Mozart entered the B flat quartet in his catalog on November 9, 1784. Like its cohorts, it is constructed in four movements. The opening phrase and the successive episodes establish the playful, good-humored mood. Listen for the second theme, a slow, measured shake (or trill) bandied about from instrument to instrument. Mozart begins the development with a new cantabile melody. After a repetition, there is a brief argument based on the shake and then almost immediately the recapitulation. The short development is brought to a joyful climax with a long, 48-bar coda that reflects back to the original theme functioning almost as a second development.

The broad, deliberate *Menuetto* is placed second, unlike Haydn's practice of placing a boisterous dance in this position. It is brief, only 62 bars...not much longer than the coda of the first movement. It offers a conventional, decorous, almost antique minuet, full of enjoyable melodies. You can imagine powdered wigs carefully moving through intricate steps of a dignified dance. Although the trio section adds some darkness to its delicate and airy nature, the movement is not without its moments of gentle humor. The *Menuetto* repeats to end the movement.

The masterly *Adagio* that follows is dominated by a long, decorated theme in the first violin and a quietly expressive dialogue between violin and cello. It is the slowest movement in all the six "Haydn" quartets. The first violin bears the melodic burden, playing an ornate, decorated line. The other instruments mostly play an accompanying role, in which they establish a pulsing, recurring figure as backdrop for the second theme. But occasionally they offer independent contrapuntal melodies. There is no development, but Mozart reprises the two themes and adds a brief, hushed coda to end the movement. Compare the restful mood of this *Menuetto* with the *Andante cantabile* of K.387 and listen at bar 2 for the arpeggio that reflects the second movement of K.421.

The final *Allegro assai* returns to the first movement's mood of joy and wit, paying homage to Haydn. Structured in sonata form, there are three vivacious themes: a principal motif based on an Austrian folk song; a similar-sounding secondary theme played by the second violin, with florid runs in the first violin after each statement; and the final theme of the exposition, a quiet, sustained melody with significant parts for all four instruments. A compact development, in which the three tunes are changed and blended, is followed by an equally concentrated recapitulation. A vigorous conclusion ends the successful "Hunt" in an untroubled mood.

A Musical Dim Sum

Here the Yings extend their range of inventive programming concepts and celebrate their own cultural heritage. The selection of works by Chinese American composers in the structure of a traditional concert gives us a treat of assorted tastes of this music.

Long—Song of the Ch'in

Zhou Long is internationally recognized for creating a distinctive body of music that brings together artistic concepts and musical elements of East and West. Deeply grounded in the totality of his Chinese heritage, he is a pioneer in transferring natural sounds and techniques of the earliest Chinese musical traditions to modern Occidental performance. He is currently visiting Professor of Composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music. In 2003, he received the Academy Award in Music, a lifetime achievement award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Composed in 1982, *Song of the Ch'in* won the first prize in the Chinese National composition. This work is from Long's early period and was inspired and influenced by the work of his mentor, Professor Chou Wen-Chung, the first to introduce the sounds of the ancient ch'in into Western compositions.

Fung—Pizzicato for String Quartet

Pizzicato is a short work for string quartet, during which the players never use their bows. The fundamental sound created is that of plucked strings, but listen for a few surprises in the middle and towards the conclusion of the work.

Fung was inspired by listening to Asian folk music: the piece is influenced partly by the sounds of the Chinese plucked instruments, *pipa* and *qin*, as well as by the vigorous rhythms of Indonesian gamelan. *Pizzicato* was first performed by the American String Quartet in 2001. The entire string quartet is a four-movement composition of which *Pizzicato* is the third.

Yi—Shuo

Shuo is written for either string orchestra or string quartet. The word "shuo" in Chinese means "begin." It represents the first day of every month in the lunar calendar. In this piece, Yi

applies early tunes and mountain song-singing gestures taken from Chinese folk music and develops them for string quartet. The pentatonic lines interlace vibrantly in layers, bringing to mind a delicate oriental countryside. The work is based on the first movement of her 1982 string quartet, commissioned by the San Jose Orchestra.

Shostakovich—Op. 73

"What are you complaining about? Only in our country is poetry truly respected: people are even killed because of it. This happens nowhere else."†

Like many Soviet composers of his generation, Dmitri Shostakovich had to write under pressures of government-imposed standards of art. Following early international attention for his Symphony No. 1, his work received mixed reactions from the public and the government. Condemned in 1948, he wrote little except patriotic cantatas, preludes, fugues, and (fifteen!) quartets.

"It's hard to keep an eye on poetry. And you can't keep watch on composers either... You can write a quartet and play it at home with friends."‡

Shostakovich's entry to the string quartet world was rather late: his first symphony was written at 19, but he did not write his first string quartet until 31.

The quartets by Shostakovich are actually symphonies for four instruments with a deep affecting content, expansive phrases, and passionate climaxes. The full resources of a string quartet are exploited: the highest registers of the instruments, new timbres, cross-reference between movements, and crossing of parts.

Like his 8th and 9th symphonies, Shostakovich cast his third quartet in five movements. The first movement, which he wrote after the second, is in sonata form and begins with a spry melody that bounces along like a cheerful polka. However, it quickly is whipped into an enraged frenzy so that by the end it is transformed into a driving, angry *danse macabre*. This movement was entitled "*Calm Unawareness of the Future Cataclysm.*"

Viewed against the anxiety and uncertainty of the times, the second movement begins as a downtrodden

march. Shostakovich gave it the heading "*Rumblings of Unrest and Anticipation.*" It is a rondo built from three themes. The first and second themes are resolute and astringent, with ostinato accompaniment. The third theme is ghostly and shimmering. The coda is a sluggish version of the first theme. Note the synchronous staccato 'tiptoeing' of the instruments in the middle section.

The confrontation continues in the scherzo, headed "*The Forces of War Unleashed.*" It is also a rondo with three ominous themes. Listen for how the first two intensify the drive by mixing duple and triple times and the third theme sarcastically depicts goose-stepping soldiers. The puzzling reappearance of the second theme signifies the end of this movement.

The fourth movement, "*Homage to the Dead,*" centers on a sorrowful and dramatic theme. It is a somber meditative elegy on a recurring three-note motif. The music, a *passacaglia*, evolves into the finale.

The final movement begins without pause. Headed "*The Eternal Question: Why? And For What?*", you can visualize this as a dance of the dead. It is a barcarolle with brooding overtones, restive and somewhat morbid, with a melody closely interwoven among all the instruments in an increasingly forceful progression. The climax is built up from the first theme and at its height you can hear the melody from the preceding movement here in canon between viola and cello. After the climax, the three themes are heard in reverse order becoming a ghostly echo of their former selves. This quartet dies away in the fading sound of a melancholy reflection on its prior themes yielding a cyclic unity.

Shostakovich withdrew the movement headings after the premiere, either for political reasons or because he felt they were too limiting.

Here in the best practice of Russian art, the gloomy and hideous side of horror, oppression, and torment lead at last to a mysterious transformation into perpetual light and reconciliation.

† Osip Mandelstam, to his wife

‡ Shostakovich, in testimony

2007-08 Season (tentative)

*Presented in Cooperation with
University of the Pacific Conservatory
of Music; Stephen Anderson, Dean*

Biava Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, October 7, 2007
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
(2003 Naumburg Winner)

Chatham Baroque

2:30 PM Sunday, November 4, 2007
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
(Period Baroque Instruments)

Trio con Brio—Copenhagen

7:30 PM Saturday, February 16, 2008
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
(Piano Trio)

La Catrina Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, March 16, 2008
Morris Chapel
(Mexican/Puerto Rican String Quartet)

Stanford Woodwind Quintet

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

TO OUR AUDIENCE

- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
- There is no smoking in the lobby or auditorium.
- Please turn off cellular telephones and disengage audible alarms on pagers and watches.
- UOP & Delta students are admitted free on a space-available basis.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the current season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

FOCM welcomes children to our concerts. However, an adult must accompany children ten years of age and under (no babes in arms please). At the request of our artists, children should not sit in the first four rows.

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