



DAEDALUS QUARTET

Min-Young Kim, violin
Ara Gregorian, violin
Jessica Thompson, viola
Raman Ramakrishnan, cello

2:30 PM, March 14, 2010
Morris Chapel
In cooperation with Pacific's
Conservatory of Music

PROGRAM

Quartet No. 22 in B-flat Major, K.589 (1790)

Allegro
Larghetto
Menuetto: Moderato
Allegro assai

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART
(1756–1791)

Night Fields (1994)

Joan TOWER
(b. 1938)

—intermission—

Quartet No. 12 in E-flat Major, Op. 127 (1825)

Maestoso—Allegro
Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile
Scherzando vivace
Finale

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

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Artists

Praised by *The New Yorker* as “a fresh and vital young participant in what is a golden age of American string quartets,” the Daedalus Quartet has established itself as a leader among the new generation of string ensembles. In the nine years of its existence the Daedalus Quartet has received plaudits from critics and listeners alike for the security, technical finish, interpretive unity, and sheer gusto of its performances – and this in cannily selected repertoire ranging from the classicism of Haydn to the complexities of Elliott Carter.

Since its founding, the Daedalus Quartet has performed in many of the world’s leading musical venues; in the United States and Canada these include Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center (Great Performers series), the Library of Congress, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., and Boston’s Gardner Museum, as well as on major series in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. Abroad the ensemble has been heard in such famed locations as the Musikverein in Vienna, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Cité de la Musique in Paris, and in leading venues in Japan.

The Daedalus Quartet has won plaudits for its adventurous exploration of contemporary music, most notably the compositions of Elliott Carter, George Perle, György Kurtág and György Ligeti. Among the works the ensemble has premiered is David Horne’s *Flight from the Labyrinth*, commissioned for the Quartet by the Caramoor Festival. The Quartet has also collaborated with some of the world’s finest instrumentalists: these include pianists Marc-André Hamelin, Simone Dinnerstein, Awadagin Pratt, Joyce Yang and Benjamin Hochman; clarinetists Paquito D’Rivera and Alexander Fiterstein; and violists Roger Tapping and Donald Weilerstein.

To date the Quartet has forged associations with some of America’s leading classical music and educational institutions: Carnegie Hall, through its

European Concert Hall Organization (ECHO) Rising Stars program; and Lincoln Center, which appointed the Daedalus Quartet as the Chamber Music Society Two quartet for 2005-07. The Daedalus Quartet has been Columbia University’s Quartet-in-Residence since 2005, and has served as Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Pennsylvania since 2006. In 2007, the Quartet was awarded Lincoln Center’s Martin E. Segal Award. The Quartet won Chamber Music America’s Guarneri String Quartet Award, which funded a three-year residency in Suffolk County, Long Island, beginning in 2007.

The award-winning members of the Daedalus Quartet hold degrees from the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute, Cleveland Institute, and Harvard University.

Program

Mozart—Quartet No. 22 in B-flat

Mozart composed his B-flat Quartet in spring the year before he died. This quartet and its companion works, K. 575 and K. 590 – he wrote only three of a planned set of six – are often referred to as the “Prussian” Quartets, based on Mozart’s intention to dedicate them to the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II. It was long assumed that the King had actually commissioned these quartets, but recent research hints that this was Mozart indulging in wishful thinking. Deeply in debt, as was so often the case, he most likely was hoping to be rewarded ex post facto by an elated regal addressee. Friedrich Wilhelm was an enthusiastic amateur cellist, and accordingly the cello is regularly the featured soloist in all three quartets, as Mozart no doubt strove to capture the King’s fancy. Although the king may command the largest instrument in this quartet, the first violin gives the orders as Mozart refuses to disturb the equalization of the voices and upset his quartet design.

In the case of the B-flat Quartet, there is no one movement that claims to be the weighty center of the piece and the four-

movement format has a condensed, efficient quality. Listen for the textures to favor melody in one voice with simple accompaniment in the others, although contrapuntal passages still abound. And while Mozart does not entirely avoid the rich, chromatic harmony of many of his mature works, he seems to favor austerity in this harmonic language.

The quartet opens with gentle passages in the upper strings, but the cello moves into the treble register and takes over the showering triplets from the violins. In the *Larghetto*, the “royal instrument” introduces the main theme, takes over the subsidiary theme presented by the violins, and is given long lines of melody. The *Minuetto* is stately to begin with but alternates with spirited parts leading to a tongue-in-cheek conclusion in the viola. Finally in the *Allegro assai*, the polyphonic style, which Mozart had been developing as his work matures, becomes evident.

Tower—Night Fields

Joan Tower’s *Night Fields*, written over 200 years after Mozart’s Quartet No. 22*, concentrates her musical ideas into a volatile, dark-hued piece that speaks ardently to the listener. The single-movement work features lyrical and complex melodies for all of the performers. Listen for a three-part form which begins with an intense, fast-moving opening section, followed by a slower, more emotionally plaintive melodic segment, and then ends with additional fast and complex material of intense vigor and harmonic strength. Musical ideas are tonally-based with swift exchanges between the contrasts of counterpoint-unison, swift-deliberate, and loud-soft motives. This music displays a range of harmonically vibrant expressions.

The integrity of Tower’s works derives from her concerns for individual musical elements that motivate and energize the whole. Like a miniaturist, she works on small articulations and motives; even

* premiered at the 1994 concert series at the University of Iowa featuring all women’s music

when they result in large compositions, small details resound clearly. In creating her sonic "pictures," she finds motivating factors in the details. Vivid effects in her music work well because they contribute to the integrity of the whole piece.

Frequently, a single tone--or a unison played by more than one instrument--will draw the ear into the beginning of a composition. Like a beam of light at the end of a tunnel, the initial sound will pull the listener through the passageway to enter Tower's world. In that tone, whether embellished (as it is in *Snow Dreams* and *Stepping Stones*) or steady and unadorned (*Très lent* and *Night Fields*), Tower reveals the germ from which the whole piece grows.

Imagery of light and movement come easily to mind with Tower's compositions, imagery that she encourages not only through the music, but also through her titles and her own comments (rare as they are) about the music. Her images grow from one into another, sometimes with subtle, seamless transitions, sometimes abruptly, with verve. In some cases--*Black Topaz*, for example--a specific image precedes composition; in other cases--*Night Fields*, *Snow Dreams*--the music itself, once created, suggests visual, physical responses.

The composer makes the following comments: "*Night Fields*, my first string quartet, is dedicated with affection and admiration to the Muir String Quartet. The title came after the work was completed and provides an image or setting for some of the moods of the piece: a cold windy night in a wheat field lit up by a bright full moon where waves of fast-moving colors ripple over the field, occasionally settling on a patch of gold."

Beethoven—Quartet No. 12 in E-flat

Beethoven's sixteen quartets are highly acclaimed. The String Quartets Nos. 1-6, op. 18 are thought to demonstrate his total mastery of the classical string quartet as developed by Haydn and Mozart. The next three, the Razumovskys, are very

popular as they greatly expanded the form and incorporated a new degree of emotional sensitivity and drama. These were followed by String Quartets Nos. 10 - 11, opp. 74 "Harp" and 95 "Serioso." Finally, the Late String Quartets, which group includes his last five quartets and the *Große Fuge*, are the composer's last completed works. Though these creations are widely considered to be among the greatest musical compositions ever written, both their uncompromising intellectual complexity and their apparent rejection of the romantic pathos which pervades his middle period ensure that they remain much less popular.

The quartet in E-flat major, op. 127, opens the series of the last quartets and was composed a few years after op. 95 dating from after the *Missa solemnis* and the Ninth Symphony had been completed. It is fairly difficult to understand its structure because it leans more towards the suite than towards the quartet. Its parts often splinter in contrasting interior movements, and, indeed, greater independence of the four parts is one of the more striking new features brought into the string quartet genre by op. 127. For instance, the first part is constructed with *Maestoso* in 2/4 and *Allegro* in 3/4. Even though Beethoven's style of 1825 would not permit each of the four voices of the quartet to speak entirely singular languages, they are much less prepared to be of the same mind in these late quartets than ever before, much more apt to claim and retain individual positions.

The last quartets are separated into three groups: op. 127 is the prelude of the cycle, the middle part is represented by opp. 130 and 132, and the cycle concludes with op. 135. With regard to structure, the extreme quartets (opp. 127 and 135) have four parts, while the middle quartets have 5, 6 or 7 parts, illustrating the tendency towards the suite form.

Opus 127 places much greater stress on lyrical unity; it is after all a lyrical rather than a dramatic work or an exercise in

tension between two or more interacting forces. You will hear variation techniques to be more prevalent than fugal ones. And it is variation *techniques*, rather than variation *forms* you hear, for while the nucleus of the quartet is a variation-style slow movement, its music is far removed from the neatly periodic sets of variations cultivated by Beethoven himself in earlier works.

It is only the *Scherzando vivace* that provides really strong contrast: you will hear it open with four plucked chords that never return despite the many other repeats; do they remind you of the timpani at the start of the ninth Symphony's second movement? Listen for the contrast in the other movements of an almost trance-like lyricism to develop from these "official" variations and permeate the rest with progressively greater splendor and ingenuity. For example, the second movement communicates an unrivaled religious peace throughout, and you may be reminded of the *Benedictus* from the *Mass in D*.

Other aspects of Opus 127 are equally symptomatic of a new style. The opening† *Allegro* for example is followed by an *Adagio* in E-flat, just as in op. 74, but here the expressive richness is greatly increased, and music is set on a road toward the hymn of thanksgiving (*Heiliger Dankgesang*) of op. 132 and the *Cavatina* of op. 130, making op. 127 truly a prelude.

The fourth movement returns to the pastoral mood of the first, and in the end, we are left with a sense of divine lightness, which, with the lyricism, is achieved not by denying conflicting elements, but by accepting and thus domesticating them. One cannot admire this work too much; it is both approachable and understandable.

Notes© by Dr. Michael Spencer

† Do you recognize the menacing introduction that opens Harry Nilsson's expert pastiche of the Agatha Christianesque "Who Done It"? That intro was not actually written by Nilsson: it is the *Maestoso-Allegro* movement of Opus 127.

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