

FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

Monday, February 8, 2010 • 7:30 pm • First Baptist Church • Portland, Oregon

Ying Quartet

Frank Huang — *violin*

Phillip Ying — *viola*

KJanet Ying — *violin*

David Ying — *cello*

PROGRAM

Haydn

Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 4

Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegretto

Largo

Finale: Presto

Barber

String Quartet, Op. 11

Molto allegro e appassionato

Molto Adagio

Molto Allegro

Andante mosso, un poco agitato (Original third movement to the String Quartet)

INTERMISSION

Dvořák

Quartet in F Major, Op. 96 “American”

Allegro ma non troppo

Lento

Molto vivace

Finale: Vivace ma non troppo

Program subject to change

The Ying Quartet is represented by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.,

115 College Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401

www.melkap.com

www.ying4.com

Recordings: Quartz, Telarc, Elektra, EMI



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FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

Tuesday, February 9, 2010 • 7:30 pm • Kaul Auditorium, Reed College • Portland, Oregon

Ying Quartet

Frank Huang — *violin*

Phillip Ying — *viola*

KJanet Ying — *violin*

David Ying — *cello*

PROGRAM

Beethoven

Quartet in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3

Allegro

Andante con moto

Allegro

Presto

Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3

Introduzione: Andante con moto; Allegro vivace

Andante con moto quasi Allegretto

Menuetto: Grazioso

Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Beethoven

Quartet in C-sharp minor, Op. 131

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo

Allegro molto vivace

Allegro moderato

Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Presto

Adagio quasi un poco andante

Allegro

Program subject to change

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THE YING QUARTET



The Ying Quartet occupies a position of unique prominence in the classical music world, combining brilliantly communicative performances with a fearlessly imaginative view of chamber music in today's world. Now in its second decade as a quartet, the Quartet has established itself as an ensemble of the highest musical qualifications in its tours across the United States and abroad. Their performances regularly take place in many of the world's most important concert halls, from Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House. At the same time, the Quartet's belief that concert music can also be a meaningful part of everyday life has also drawn the foursome to perform in settings as diverse as the workplace, schools, juvenile prisons, and the White House. In fact, the Ying Quartet's constant quest to explore the creative possibilities of the string quartet has led it to an unusually diverse array of musical projects and interests.

Beginning a new chapter in the Ying's career, violin virtuoso Frank Huang joined the Quartet in April 2009. Since winning the 2003 Naumburg Violin Competition and the 2000 Hannover International Violin Competition, Huang has been in demand as a recital and orchestral soloist and as a chamber musician. He has appeared on national television, performed at prestigious music festivals, and released his first recording to critical acclaim. As the new first violinist in the Ying Quartet, Huang fills the chair of Timothy Ying, the original first violinist of the all-sibling quartet. Timothy and his siblings, cellist David, violist Phillip, and violinist Janet, are the ensemble's founding members.

The Ying Quartet's recordings reflect many of the group's wide-ranging musical interests and have generated consistent, enthusiastic acclaim. Their 2007 Telarc release of the three Tchaikovsky Quartets and the *Souvenir de Florence* (with James Dunham and Paul Katz) was nominated for a Grammy Award in the Best Chamber Music Performance category. In addition, their much-heralded collaboration with the Turtle Island Quartet, "Four + 4," explored the common ground between the classic string quartet tradition and jazz and other American vernacular styles, and won a Grammy Award in 2005. "Dim Sum" (Telarc) is the Ying's most recent recording, featuring music by Chinese-American composers that merges the Western string quartet with the aural world of traditional Chinese music. The Quartet has also documented its noteworthy *LifeMusic* commissioning project in its recorded work. Released by Quartz, "The Ying Quartet play LifeMusic" was named Editor's Choice by *Gramophone* magazine and is the first in a continuing series.

In addition to appearing in conventional concert situations, the Ying Quartet is also known for its diverse and unusual performance projects. For several years the Quartet presented a series called "No Boundaries" at Symphony Space in New York City that sought to re-imagine the concert experience. Collaborations with actors, dancers, electronics, a host of non-classical musicians, a magician and even a Chinese noodle chef gave new and thoughtful context to a wide variety of both traditional and contemporary string quartet music. They have also worked with composer Tod Machover and the MIT Media lab in the use of *Hyperscore*, an innovative musical composition software. Other musical partners range from pianists Menahem Pressler and Gilbert Kalish and cellist Paul Katz to folk musician Mike Seeger, jazz pianist Billy Childs, and the Turtle Island Quartet.

The Ying Quartet's ongoing *LifeMusic* commissioning project, created in response to their commitment to expanding the rich string quartet repertoire, has already achieved an impressive history. Supported by the Institute for American Music, the Yings commission both established and emerging composers to create

music that reflects contemporary American life. Michael Torke, Kevin Puts, Paquito D’Rivera, Paul Moravec, Lowell Liebermann, Bernard Rands, Pierre Jalbert, Sebastian Currier, and Carter Pann are only some of the renowned composers and musicians who have written for *LifeMusic*. Their most recent recording of commissions is titled “The United States” and was released in 2007. It features works by Ned Rorem, Jennifer Higdon, Chen Yi, and Augusta Read Thomas. Commissions for the 2008-2009 season included Lowell Liebermann’s String Quartet No. 3, “To the Victims of War.” The 2009-2010 season features Sebastian Currier’s latest work for string quartet, *Next Atlantis*, as well as Richard Danielpour’s Quartet No. 6, “Addio.”

The Ying Quartet first came to professional prominence in the early 1990s during their years as resident quartet of Jesup, Iowa, a farm town of 2000 people. Playing before audiences of six to six hundred in homes, schools, churches, and banks, the Quartet had its first opportunities to enable music and creative endeavor to become an integral part of community life. The Quartet considers its time in Jesup the foundation of its present musical life and goals. The residency, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, was widely chronicled in the national media. Toward the end of the residency, the quartet and several of the townspeople were invited to Capitol Hill to testify before Congress on behalf of the NEA.

During the summers, the Ying Quartet’s activity is primarily centered at music festivals. They are presently ensemble-in-residence at the Aspen Music Festival and also have performed and taught for several summers at the Bowdoin International Music Festival. Other festival appearances have been at Tanglewood, Ravinia, Caramoor, San Miguel de Allende, Kneisel Hall, Norfolk, Skaneateles, Amelia Island, Interlochen, and many others. The Quartet’s 2008-2009 season featured performances at Carnegie Hall and McGill University’s Haydn Festival, in addition to appearances with the Billy Childs Sextet.

As quartet-in-residence at the Eastman School of Music, the Ying Quartet teaches in the string department and leads a rigorous, sequentially designed chamber music program. One cornerstone of chamber music activity at Eastman is the noted *Music for All*

program, in which all students have the opportunity to perform in community settings beyond the concert hall. From 2001-2008, the Ying Quartet has also been the Blodgett Artists-in-Residence at Harvard University.

MEET THE ARTISTS!

Join The Ying Quartet in the lobby immediately following the concert, where they will be happy to autograph copies of their recordings available for purchase courtesy of Classical Millennium.

Program Notes, February 8 & 9

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Born March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria

Died May 31, 1809, in Vienna

String Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 33, No. 4

Haydn’s Opus 33 probably has more nicknames than any other set of quartets. The most common designation, “Russian,” arose because the composer dedicated the quartets to Grand Duke Paul of Russia, and some, or perhaps all six, received their first performance on Christmas Day, 1781, at the Vienna apartment of the Duke’s wife, the Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna. To some these quartets are known as *Gli Scherzi*, because they were the first chamber works in which Haydn substitutes scherzos (*scherzi* in Italian) for the traditional minuet movement. And the occasional reference to Op. 33 as the “*Jungferquartette*,” or “Maiden,” Quartets stems from the drawing of an attractive young woman that appeared on the title page of an early edition.

The composition of the Op. 33 in 1781 followed a nearly ten-year hiatus after Haydn’s Op. 20 quartets. It may be that after Op. 20 Haydn was searching for a new approach to the form. Or perhaps his duty to compose five original operas and mount some fifty opera productions for Prince Nicholas Esterhazy between 1775 and 1781, in addition to all his other musical administrative tasks as *Kapellmeister*, left no time for quartets.

In any case, after Haydn returned to quartet writing, he regarded his Op. 33 with pleasure and satisfaction. His

several letters to patrons inviting them to subscribe to the quartets say that they are “written in a new and special way.” The most striking characteristics are the themes themselves. Using quite distinctive intervals and complex rhythms, Haydn builds the melodies up out of individual phrases that are organically unified but contain contrasting elements. His treatment – he calls it “thematic elaboration” – of the subject is handled with deftness and imagination as he expands and develops individual fragments and then reassembles the parts at the end. In Op. 33, the only apparent change in calling the minuet movement a *scherzo* (which is Italian for ‘joke’) is that it tends to be faster than the minuet and occasionally has some touches of playfulness and humor.

In Op. 33 Haydn achieved a synthesis of the melodic grace of the *style galant* (“courtly style”), the contrapuntal texture and formal logic of *Der Gelehrte Style* (“the learned style”), and the emotional intensity of *Sturm und Drang* (“storm and stress”). The overall lightness in spirit and happy nature of Op. 33 are attributed, by some biographers, to Haydn’s gratifying affair with singer Luigia Polyelli and his realization that he was well on his way to mastering that most intractable nature of all musical forms, the string quartet.

SAMUEL BARBER

Born March 9, 1910, in West Chester, Pennsylvania
Died January 23, 1981, in New York City
String Quartet, Op. 11

A few popular favorites of the orchestral repertoire originated as individual movements, usually the slow movement, of string quartets. Haydn’s *Serenade* from his *String Quartet, Op. 3, No. 5*, the *Andante Cantabile* of Tchaikovsky’s *String Quartet, Op. 11* and the *Notturmo* of Borodin’s *Second Quartet* come immediately to mind. The string orchestra arrangement, which Barber prepared at the request of Arturo Toscanini, conductor of the NBC Symphony Orchestra, has become one of the most widely performed works of contemporary American music.

The first movement of Barber’s two-movement string quartet bursts forth with a bold unison statement of the main theme, made even more striking by its

slightly awkward rhythmic pattern. In time this gives way to the subsidiary subject, a quiet chorale-like section in flexible tempo that is soon interrupted by a brief, skittish transformation of the opening melody. A wide-ranging, spun-out legato melody follows. After a succinct working-out of the three subjects, they are all returned for a pithy recapitulation.

The *Adagio* is constructed around one long, sinuous theme that moves slowly and deliberately in step-wise motion. Starting with the utmost calmness and tranquility, Barber carried the theme to an intense, exciting climax, with each instrument straining at the upper-most limit of its range. A subdued, sober coda concludes the *Adagio*. After a short pause, Barber then recapitulates the themes of the first movement, creating a kind of brief third movement that brings the entire quartet full circle, back to its original character.

Barber wrote his *Opus 11* in 1936, while on a Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship; the Pro Arte String Quartet gave the premiere in Rome in December of that year.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Born September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves; died May 1, 1904, in Prague
Quartet in F Major, Op. 96, “American”

When Dvořák arrived in New York from Prague on September 17, 1892, he immediately took up his duties as director of the National Conservatory but also continued to compose and fulfill his many obligations as a visiting celebrity. By the end of the taxing season, he was delighted to accept an invitation to spend the summer visiting the tiny (population: 300) farming community of Spillville, Iowa, made up of Czech immigrants who preserved the language, culture, and customs of their native land. Dvořák arrived in Spillville on June 5 with his wife, six children, sister, maid, and secretary. Three days later he was already at work on a new string quartet. Although he usually composed quite slowly, he finished the sketches by June 11, writing at the end, “Thanks be to the Lord God. I am satisfied. It went quickly.” As soon as the final score was ready, on June 23, Dvořák, playing violin, along with three students, read it through. The “official” premiere was given in Boston by the Kneisel Quartet on January 1, 1894.

Written just after the “New World” Symphony, his most famous symphony, this quartet became Dvořák’s best-known chamber music composition and acquired a similar nickname, the “American” Quartet. Many hear in the quartet strains of black spirituals and plantation songs, as well as elements of American Indian music. Others doubt that the quartet grew from the sounds Dvořák heard in America and hold rather that it is based on certain melodic and rhythmic similarities shared by both American ethnic music and the Bohemian-Slavic folk tradition. This difference of opinion really matters little in light of the “American” Quartet’s enormous popularity and universal appeal.

Against a shimmering background that resembles the start of Smetana’s E minor quartet (1876), the viola sings out the first jaunty tune. After the confident swagger of the viola melody, the second theme, played by the first violin, seems tentative and restrained. Both themes are based on the five-tone pentatonic scale (the black keys of a piano), a common feature of folk songs around the world. The following development is devoted to the first theme until a fugato based on the second subject acts as a transition to the restatement of both themes.

The Lento, widely considered the crowning movement of the quartet, is like a lovely emotional aria with the first violin and viola sustaining a busy, flowing accompaniment. The movement’s construction is arch-shaped, starting quietly and building gradually to an impassioned climax before fading to a subdued close, as the cello nostalgically goes through the melody for the last time, accompanied by alternate bowed and plucked notes.

Although cast in A-B-A-B-A form, the third movement is essentially monothematic, since B is little more than a slower version of the A tune. The middle part of the A section is based on the song of the scarlet tanager, which Dvořák heard and notated on his walks around Spillville.

The Finale immediately establishes a rhythmic pattern that may be an adaptation of native Indian drumming. The first violin dances its joyful tune with and around the continuing beat. Other melodies follow, all with the same high-spirited good humor. In the middle of the movement, the tempo slows, and Dvořák introduces a

chorale, probably derived from one of the hymns that he enjoyed playing on the organ for services at Saint Wenceslas church in Spillville. Following the chorale is a shortened restatement of what came before, leading to a resolutely happy ending.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770, in Bonn

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna

Quartet in D, Op. 18 No. 3

Although a Beethoven notebook dated 1798 is filled with fifty-eight pages of sketches for the D major quartet, scholars conjecture that a missing notebook contained even more preliminary studies for this composition, which is believed to be his very first mature string quartet. Overall, it is exceedingly quiet and pensive and is clearly indebted to the Classical masters for its concept and formal organization.

Calmly and tenderly, the first violin floats the main subject, with its striking opening interval of a minor seventh, over the soft sustained chords of the other instruments. The broad cantilena line of this subject is different from the melodies constructed of pithy motifs that characterize so many other pieces by Beethoven. The second subject, also stated by the first violin, is slightly more agitated than the first; the staccato bass line adds to the feeling of unease and disquiet. Following the exposition and development, Beethoven brings back most of the material from the exposition and ends with a short coda.

The warm, simple theme of the Andante cantabile is presented, uncharacteristically, by the second violin. Poetically conceived and richly textured, the movement is in neither rondo nor sonata form, but falls somewhere in between. Its serious nature, great length, and especially careful realization seem to suggest that Beethoven attached a central importance to this movement. Although it has been faulted by some for lacking a depth of feeling, no one denies its obvious sincerity.

In keeping with the generally contemplative mood of the quartet, the third movement has neither the rhythmic verve of a minuet nor the sparkling vivacity of a scherzo, the typical quartet third movements.

Instead, Beethoven supplies what might be called a gentle and graceful intermezzo. Especially attractive is the minor-key trio, a marked contrast to the opening in major and distinguished by flowing passages in the violins over descending scale fragments in the other instruments. The major opening section returns after the trio.

The energetic Presto combines in equal measure the unceasing flow of a perpetual motion, the rhythmic drive of a tarantella, and the melodic turns of a Mexican hat dance. The movement's surging motion is liberally seasoned with sharp and abrupt changes in dynamics until the bombast plays itself out, and the movement ends with a whispered farewell.

Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3, "Hero"

Introduzione: Andante con moto; Allegro vivace
Andante con moto quasi Allegretto ~ Menuetto:
Grazioso ~ Allegro molto

The subtitle "Hero" (or "Eroica") refers to the last movement of the quartet and acknowledges its truly mighty conception. Just as Beethoven's

Eroica Symphony vastly expanded the scope of symphonic writing, so the grandiose finale of the third "Rasumovsky" quartet made all previous string quartets seem modest by comparison.

The eerie introduction that opens the quartet, without any forward motion and seemingly suspended in time, seems to contradict Beethoven's tempo direction, Andante con moto ("moderate speed with motion"). The jaunty first theme is, in effect, 'kicked off' by a short upbeat and long arrival note - a rhythmic figure that remains important throughout the movement. Several other first group themes gradually lead to the start of the exuberant second subject - sustained note, which is imitated in order by the viola, cello and second violin. The development section provides flashy virtuosic passage work for all the instruments with frequent reappearances of the short-upbeat/long-resolution motto. The exposition skips the first theme and deals entirely with the triumphant second melody before the arrival of a brief sparkling coda.

The second movement has variously been described as a "lament" by Vincent D'Indy, the "mystery of the primitive" by Joseph Kerman and "some forgotten

and alien despair,” in the words of J.W.N. Sullivan. These reactions are mostly evoked by the first theme, a heavy, despondent violin line over repeated cello pizzicato notes. The melodic interval of the augmented second, with its Middle Eastern overtones, adds to the poignancy of the effect. The dispirited opening serves as the perfect foil to the warm, frothy second theme that follows. Both themes are developed and returned according to traditional sonata form, but in a surprise move, the composer brings them back in reverse order.

Beethoven probably returned to the traditional eighteenth-century minuet style for the third movement because a brilliant scherzo would have been inappropriate before the monumental finale he had in mind. The first part is gentle and languorous, despite a great deal of inner rhythmic drive. The sharper and more penetrating trio precedes a repeat of the Menuetto and the brief coda that leads, without pause, to the finale.

The last movement starts softly, but at a very fast tempo, with the viola playing the theme alone. The second violin enters with the same melody while the viola continues with a countermelody - a fugal treatment in which one theme is successively imitated by the individual players. The cello and then the first violin join in with the original melody to bring the section to a powerful climax. As the movement proceeds, Beethoven audaciously juxtaposes homophony (accompanied melody), on the richly textured polyphony (independent voices) of the opening fugal section, with absolutely thrilling results. Beethoven endows every note, from first to last, with a force and energy that propels the musical line irresistibly forward. He also calls on the players to stretch their tonal resources to the very limit, to produce the maximum sound possible. The result is a movement of stunning impact – a triumphant conclusion to this most impressive work.

Quartet in c-sharp minor, Op. 131

Beethoven once confided to friend Karl Holz that, while each of his sixteen quartets was unique, “each in its way,” his favorite was the C sharp minor, Op. 131. When Schubert heard the piece, Holz reported that “He fell into such a state of excitement and enthusiasm that

we were all frightened for him.” Down to our own day many people, musicians as well as listeners, consider it the greatest quartet ever written.

Lasting close to forty minutes, the quartet is divided into seven sections that are played without pause, creating a completely organic, well-integrated whole. The burden for projecting this underlying unity rests with the performers, who must maintain the proper relationships of tempo and mood for the work to flow smoothly from beginning to end.

Beethoven began to work on Op. 131 late in 1825, after he had completed the three-quartet commissions (Op. 127, 130, 132) for Prince Galitzin, and presented it to the publisher on July 12 of the next year. Beethoven’s flippant note on the score - “Put together from pilferings this and that”-caused the publisher great concern, and the composer had to assure the publisher that the music was completely original, and his remark was only a joke. In retrospect it now seems that his comment may have referred to the seven separate movements making up a unified work. The quartet was dedicated to Baron Joseph von Stutterheim, Field Marshal, in gratitude for accepting Beethoven’s nephew Karl into the baron’s regiment. Scholars believe that the first hearing was at a private concert in Vienna in December 1826, but that the initial public performance did not take place until 1835, long after Beethoven’s death.

The very slow introductory Adagio, which Richard Wagner said “reveals the most melancholy sentiment in music,” is basically a fugue, followed by four episodes and a coda, all based on the sober melody originally stated by the first violin. More than sorrowful or pitying, the music is contemplative and serene, surmounting personal despair and sadness. The section ends with a quiet rising C sharp octave leap, which finds an echo in the ascending D octave leap that opens the second section.

The fast second movement sails forth, cherry and open-faced, with none of the profundity or expressivity of the first movement. Even the thematic material contributes no striking contrasts to create dramatic tension; the same kind of warm, good spirits prevail throughout. Performers traditionally use the two soft isolated chords at the end of the movement to set the

tempo for the two loud answering chords that start the Allegro moderato.

The short movement that follows, only eleven measures long, is in effect a recitative, a rhythmically free introduction to the Andante that follows without pause.

The fourth movement is an expansive theme and variations that provides the pivotal central focus of the entire quartet. The syncopated theme, which Wagner called the "incarnation of innocence," is shared by the two violins. Beethoven then puts the melody through a series of six variations in which it is completely shaped and fashioned to reveal fully all of its expressive potential. The two notes heard at the very end determine the speed of the next movement; they are usually made equal to a full measure of the Presto.

The Presto corresponds to the Classical scherzo movement, playful and humorous in spirit. The lightness of character, though, disguises a score that is treacherously difficult for the musicians. It requires great delicacy of touch and split-second reaction times to interweave the four parts and achieve the smooth flow that is necessary. After the abrupt four-note growl by the cello that opens the movement, the first violin picks up the dance-like tune. Passages of smooth legato articulation interrupt statements of the bright, bouncy main theme. Beethoven directs that the final return of the opening tune be played *ponticello* (bowed near the bridge), producing a glassy, whistle-like sound. The whirlwind motion continues until two sets of chords effectively end the movement.

The short, introspective Adagio, only twenty-eight measures long, provides a transition between the gay flight of the preceding Presto and the rhythmic excitement of the finale. Based on a mournful, meditative melody, which is first played by the viola, the Adagio moves directly to the last section.

Two bold, angry unison phrases precede the martial main theme with its dotted (long-short) rhythm, which recalls the last movement of Beethoven's E minor quartet, Op. 59, No.2. Forcefully, and with great thrust, the melody builds up momentum until a quiet contrasting melody, obviously derived from the melody of the opening fugue, intercedes. The second theme, a long descending line that slows down as it jumps to three high notes at the end, is heard before a shortened

development, recapitulation, and full-length coda. In summarizing this movement, Richard Wagner wrote:

This is the fury of the world's dance - fierce pleasure, agony, ecstasy of love, joy anger, passion and suffering; lightening flashes and thunder rolls; and above the tumult the indomitable fiddler whirls us on to the abyss. Amid the clamour he smiles, for to him it is nothing but a mocking fantasy; at the end, the darkness beckons him away, and his task is done.

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