

Emerson String Quartet

Philip Setzer, violin
Eugene Drucker, violin
Lawrence Dutton, viola
David Finckel, cello

Friday Evening, March 25, 1994, at 8:00
Rackham Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

Quartet in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2 (1798-1800) Ludwig van Beethoven
Allegro
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro
Allegro molto quasi presto

Philip Setzer, first violin

Quartet No. 1 (1896) Charles Ives
Chorale: Andante con moto
Prelude: Allegro
Offertory: Adagio cantabile
Postlude: Allegro marziale

Eugene Drucker, first violin

INTERMISSION

Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 130 (1825) Ludwig van Beethoven
Adagio ma non troppo; Allegro
Presto
Andante con moto, ma non troppo
Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai
Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo

Grosse Fuge, Op. 133

Overtura

Fuga: Allegro - Meno mosso e moderato -

Allegro molto e con brio - Meno mosso e moderato -

Allegro molto e con brio

Eugene Drucker, first violin

The Emerson String Quartet appears by arrangement with IMG Artists and records exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon.

Large print programs are available upon request from an usher.

Special thanks to Steven Moore Whiting, U-M Professor of Music History and Musicology,
for this evening's Philips Educational Presentation.

The pre-concert carillon recital was performed by David Wu, a first-year student in Biomedical Sciences
and a student of University Carillonist, Margo Halsted.

PROGRAM NOTES

Quartet in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2 "Compliments"

Ludwig van Beethoven,
Born in Bonn, 1770; died in Vienna, 1827.

The G Major, the briefest and seemingly least ambitious quartet of Op. 18, emerges as a charming and witty work, very close in style and temperament to the best examples of eighteenth-century Rococo chamber music. But despite its apparent light, happy character, many musicians, including Michael Tree of the Guarneri Quartet, consider it the most difficult of all Beethoven quartets to perform. And Beethoven's notebooks reveal that the lightness was achieved only after a lengthy and arduous struggle, covering thirty-two note book pages, to blend many disparate elements into a smooth, artistic creation.

The subtitle, "Compliments," comes from the opening of the quartet in which a series of short, balanced phrases of supple elegance conjure up, as described in Theodor Helm's 1885 book on the Beethoven quartets, an "eighteenth-century salon, with all the ceremonious display and flourish of courtesy typical of the period . . . with bows and gracious words of greeting." A gruff bridge passage, starting with a repeated note, leads to a second subject and a closing theme that are attractive, but not particularly distinctive. The development is devoted exclusively to the melodies of the first subject and the bridge. The original themes are brought back in the recapitulation, but this time they are treated with greater vehemence and more freedom.

The "Adagio cantabile" features the solo violin at first, with the other instruments playing secondary roles. Before long, though, Beethoven takes the closing, cadential figure of this section, quadruples its tempo, and sends the music scurrying off in a parody-like Allegro interruption to the serious business at hand. Ending on a climactic note, the slow, gentle strains of the "Adagio cantabile" return, now in variation and shared by all players.

The two violins gleefully toss back and forth the melodic flourish of the "Scherzo" tune until the other instruments join in to introduce a more sober note. But the cheerful idea is not to be repressed, and in the trio that follows the two contrasting moods, playful versus serious, are expanded. In the transition back to the repeat of the "Scherzo", the cello plays a descending scale line, and the violins, unable to contain their enthusiasm, anticipate the repeat of the first section.

Beethoven referred to the last movement, which continues the high spirits and good humor of the "Scherzo," as "*Aufgeknopt*" (unbuttoned), connoting a free, informal character. Starting with perfectly symmetrical, four-square phrases, it goes on to an impish second theme with a syncopated start and a delightful counter melody. Rollicking along lightheartedly, it builds to a brilliant conclusion.

— Program notes by Melvin Berger from his *Guide to Chamber Music*, published by Anchor/Doubleday.

String Quartet No. 1 "A Revival Service"

Charles Ives
Born in Danbury, Connecticut, 1874; died in New York, 1954.

During his four years at Yale University (1894-1898), Ives' musical activities were channeled in two different directions. At school he studied composition with Horatio Parker, an American-born, German-trained composer who was musical, competent, intelligent, and overwhelmingly conservative. Outside the regular course of study, to help pay for his education, he held the position of organist at New Haven's Centre Church.

of quiet is heard. But the trilling never stops, maintaining the excitement; and the rush to the finish – with the first violin singing the theme in the stratosphere, and the viola chugging away like a steam engine – is at once exhilarating and fulfilling.

No encore is possible here; has anything been left unsaid?

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



The Emerson String Quartet is one of the premier chamber ensembles of our time. Acclaimed for its musicianship, artistry and dynamic performance style, the Quartet has amassed an impressive list of achievements: an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon recording contract, two Grammy Awards for Best Classical Album and Best Chamber Music Performance, *Gramophone Magazine's* Record of the Year Award, regular appearances with virtually every important series and festival world-wide, and an international reputation as a quartet that approaches both the classics and contemporary music with equal mastery and enthusiasm.

The Emerson String Quartet has an extensive 1994 season which includes a series of concerts of the late Beethoven and Shostakovich quartets at New York City's Tisch Center for the Arts of the 92nd Street Y, as well as the continuation of their sold-out series at the Smithsonian Institution and Hartt School of Music. Last June, the Quartet traveled to Copenhagen's Tivoli Festival for a cycle of the complete Beethoven String Quartets in honor of Tivoli's 150th Anniversary Season. North American engagements include concerts in Chicago, Houston, Cleveland, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Baltimore, Toronto, Montreal, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and this Ann Arbor concert, marking the Quartet's fourth UMS appearance. They will also tour Italy, Austria, Germany, Holland and Switzerland. The Quartet will be featured as guest soloists with the Hartford and Richmond Symphony Orchestras. All four members will present solo concerti from the standard repertoire and works for string quartet and orchestra. This summer, they will tour Japan and the Far East.

In 1987, the Emerson signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, which brought the release of their Grammy Award-winning recording of Bartok's complete string quartets. In 1990, the Emerson received the Grammy for Best Classical Album and

His experiences with Parker and the church influenced the creation of the string quartet, the young composer's first major work, which he completed in 1896. He fashioned the first movement from a fugue he prepared for Horatio Parker's composition class; the remaining movements he originally composed for church use. The subtitle is derived from the second and fourth movements, which were written for a revival meeting, and the melodic material of the movements, either comes from Protestant hymns or at least sounds as though it does.

The first movement is based on two hymn melodies: "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" and "All Hail the Pow'r of Jesus' Name." The tunes themselves are extremely simple, essentially made up on notes of equal duration. The writing is academically sound and technically secure, with little to distinguish it from that of any other talented student.

The second, third, and fourth movements, written for church use, show more of the musically adventuresome side of Ives. As church organist, he was growing bored with the elementary harmonies of the hymns and began "gussying up" the music he played or composed for church occasions. The minister, Dr. Griggs, encouraged this experimentation, saying, "Never you mind what the ladies committee says, my opinion is that God gets awfully tired of hearing the same thing over and over again." So the second movement, which Ives originally wrote for a church revival meeting on October 2, 1896, retains its overall hymn-like character while displaying some of the freedom of treatment that was to characterize Ives's future output.

The hymn "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" is the theme of the third movement and was also first intended for church use. Here the writing grows even freer and more daring, with greater use of dissonance and several interruptions of the rhythmic flow.

The "Postlude" (fourth movement), from the October revival meeting as well, is a rousing climax to the quartet. It starts with a quotation from the march-like hymn "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus!" Between the statements of this tune, Ives recalls the melody of the middle part of the "Prelude" (second movement). Just before the end, he pulls out all the stops, combining the three-beat middle-section melody with the ongoing four-beat meter, to soar to a climactic conclusion.

Although Charles Ives is now accepted as one of the truly great pioneers of contemporary American music, the first string quartet was not performed until 1927 and had to wait until 1961 for publication.

– Program notes by Melvin Berger from his *Guide to Chamber Music*, published by Anchor/Doubleday.

Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 130 and Grosse Fuge, Op. 133 Ludwig van Beethoven

Even a cursory analysis of this gigantic quartet shows it to be the most radical of all Beethoven's works in the string quartet form. Consider the fact that the work has six movements, ranging in length from a minute-and-a-half to almost 20 minutes. Consider that the "Cavatina," Beethoven's most moving utterance, is directly followed by the infamous *Grosse Fuge*, a movement so long, violent, emotionally and intellectually rigorous, that it almost wipes out all that preceded it. Consider the key relationship between the "Andante con moto" and the "Danza alla Tedesca;" a surprising jolt of an augmented fourth. Placed beside these daring elements are many curious thematic relationships among the movements, such as the falling half-step – B-flat to A-natural – which not only begins the works, but is heard again at the opening of the "Andante con moto," and the reversion of which constitutes the first two notes of the *Grosse Fuge* theme. That this entire work could have been generated from the fugue is possible, since its theme had really already been born in the opening of the preceding A-minor Quartet, Op. 132. (The actual order of composition of the late quartets is Op. 127, 132, 130, 131, and 135.)

The first movement, "Adagio ma non troppo: Allegro," has all the contrast of its predecessor in the A-minor quartet, but somehow lacks the heart-rending pathos. Beethoven's

incredible versatility with musical language can be seen when comparing these works: they may look the same on paper, but Op. 130 breathes in a different, more objective, almost surrealistic environment. The tiny "Scherzo" is no more than an anxious whisper, except for its bursting *maggiore* trio. The "Andante con moto" is a sublime synthesis of the profundity and dancing elegance that were Mozart's hallmarks. "The Danza alla Tedesca" (German Dance) begins with the aforementioned jolt into G Major, as Beethoven brings us down to earth from the "Andante." The middle section, marked *Beklemmt* (choked) modulates from E-flat to C-flat Major, and the first violin (previously singing masterfully sustained melodies) now plays a fragmented theme almost as if someone were trying to communicate something from the heart despite a severe speech impediment. This is some of the most extraordinary music ever written.

Beethoven did not attend the première of Op. 130, but waited in a nearby tavern for a report. Upon hearing that the "Danza alla Tedesca" and "Cavatina" received such thunderous applause that they were repeated, Beethoven replied, "Yes, these delicacies! But why not the Fugue? Cattle! Asses!" Certainly in Beethoven's time, the jagged contours and harsh dissonances in the *Grosse Fuge* must have sounded more avant-garde than any contemporary music does today. The fugue was Stravinsky's favorite Beethoven piece; and in his words, it is ". . . a truly contemporary piece which will remain contemporary forever."

The publisher Artarai finally convinced Beethoven to compose a more palatable finale to Op. 130, and the resulting radical change in the work has been a controversial subject for decades. Those who argue against the fugue's inclusion in the quartet say that is too long and overshadows the rest of the piece, besides being extremely difficult. Defenders of the original version – including tonight's performers – say that the Alternate Finale "Rondo" trivializes the preceding movements, were as the fugue is the logical conclusion, thematically and emotionally.

The experience of hearing the *Grosse Fuge* immediately after the "Cavatina" is not to be forgotten easily. But, for some reason, Beethoven changed his mind, acquiesced, and published the *Grosse Fuge* separately as Op. 133.

The fugue beings on a unison G (a note central to the entire quartet, and one Beethoven kept at the beginning of the Alternate Finale.) What ensues is like a table of contents: the main elements of the piece are presented individually, separated by phrases – first the theme itself, then its condensed *scherzando* form, the *meno mosso* interlude, and finally the curious double-note version. Once the wares have been laid on the table, one waits in anticipation to see how Beethoven will fit them together. But what is heard next in the first violin is a surprise, a new element, which constitutes the other theme of the double fugue; and with the viola pounding out the theme on the offbeats, the fugue has begun. A number of fugal episodes follow, the first passing the theme around until a cadence is reached, at which point a new element, triplets, enters the picture. The excitement builds relentlessly, constantly fortissimo, until the dominant of B-flat is reached. Suddenly, however, instead of a satisfying cadence in the tonic, G-flat creeps in and we find ourselves listening to a sustained G-flat major chord. The relief is welcome, but the suspense is unbearable!

The next section is mostly pianissimo and entirely legato, in contrast to the extreme volume, dissonance, and jagged contours of the first fugue. Wandering sixteenths are supported by the original fugue theme. After building to a unison climax, the music dies away in preparation for the next variation of the elemental fugal material – a surprisingly light *scherzando* section in 6/8. When the fugue returns in a form recognizably similar to the huge opening section, it sounds less stable; it is no longer rock-solid, but rather like being on a wild horse, gone frighteningly out of control. Out of this life and death struggle, the *meno mosso* returns, full-blooded and victorious, imbued with a feeling of triumph. The *scherzando* also returns, but at the point where the earlier one had broken off into the fugue, this one continues with a joyous interplay between pairs of instruments.

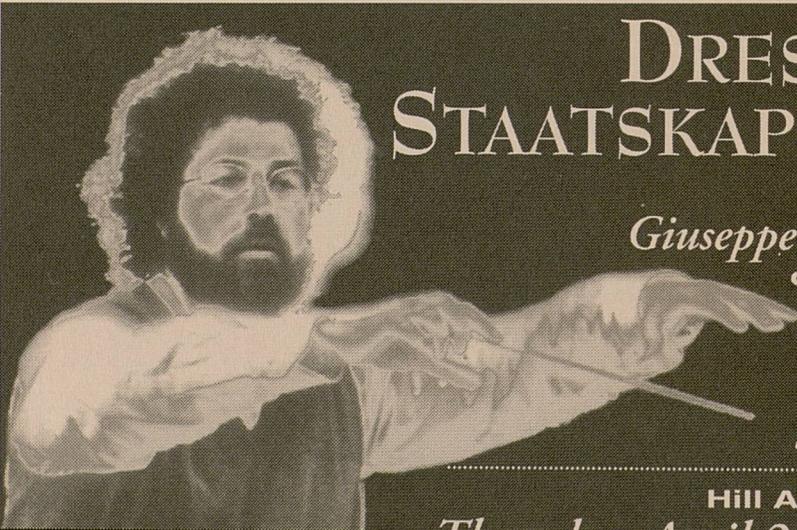
A sudden mysterious section interrupts momentarily, but strength is regained, and then subsides to make room for a little rhetoric: two excerpts from the table of contents. After the ultimate fugue statement, with all four instruments blasting in unison, a last moment

Grammophone Magazine's Record of the Year Award. This was the first time in the history of each award that a chamber music ensemble had ever received the top prize. Forthcoming releases for DG include the Dvořák and Schumann piano quintets and quartets with pianist Menahem Pressler, Samuel Barber's *Dover Beach* with Thomas Hampson, and the complete string works of Anton Webern. During the 1994 calendar year, the Emerson will record the complete string quartets of Ludwig van Beethoven, scheduled for release as a set in late 1995.

Dedicated to the performance of the classical repertoire, the Emerson also has a strong commitment to the commissioning and performance of 20th-century music. Important commissions and premières include compositions by Richard Wernick (1991), John Harbison (1987), and Gunther Schuller (1986). These works are featured on an August 1993 Deutsche Grammophon release. Forthcoming commission projects will be string quartets by Wolfgang Rihm (1993) and Paul Epstein (1994), as well as a bass quintet written by and performed with Edgar Meyer (1995).

The Emerson String Quartet took its name from the great American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson in the U.S. Bicentennial year. Violinists Eugene Drucker and Philip Setzer were founding members and alternate in the first chair position; Lawrence Dutton joined the ensemble as violist in 1977 and David Finckel became cellist of the Quartet in 1979. All four members have performed many benefit concerts for causes ranging from nuclear disarmament to the fight against AIDS, world hunger and children's diseases. The Quartet has been the topic of two award-winning films and is featured on a laser disc released by Teldec. They have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Mirabella*, *Elle*, *Bon Appetit*, *Runner's World*, *Strad*, and *Stings* Magazines.

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