



SAN FRANCISCO
PERFORMANCES

BEETHOVEN @ 250



Alexander String Quartet



Robert Greenberg



David Samuel



Yuri Cho



presents...

ALEXANDER STRING QUARTET | Ensemble-in-Residence

Zakarias Grafilo | Violin
Frederick Lifszitz | Violin

Paul Yarbrough | Viola
Sandy Wilson | Cello

ROBERT GREENBERG | Music Historian-in-Residence

YURI CHO | Violin

DAVID SAMUEL | Viola

BEETHOVEN @ 250

LECTURE—*The First Angry Man*

Robert Greenberg
Thursday, December 17

*Robert Greenberg
profile on page 4*

Marathon, Part 1

Alexander String Quartet, Yuri Cho, David Samuel
Thursday, December 24

Program on page 6

Marathon, Part 2

Alexander String Quartet, Yuri Cho, David Samuel
Thursday, December 31

Program on page 9

The **Alexander String Quartet** is represented by BesenArts LLC
7 Delaney Place, Tenafly, NJ 07670-1607 BesenArts.com

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PAGE 3: Alexander String Quartet: Rory Earnshaw

PAGE 4: Robert Greenberg: Terry Lorant; Yuri Cho: Courtesy of the artist

PAGE 5: David Samuel: Terry Lorant



ARTIST PROFILES

The **Alexander String Quartet** celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2016. The Quartet has been Ensemble-in-Residence since 1989 with San Francisco Performances, the result of a unique partnership between SF Performances and The Morrison Chamber Music Center at San Francisco State University. Starting in 1994, the Quartet joined with SF Performances' Music Historian-in-Residence, Robert Greenberg, to present the Saturday Morning Series exploring string quartet literature.

The Quartet has appeared on SF Performances' mainstage Chamber Series many times, collaborating with such artists as soprano Elly Ameling and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato; clarinetists Richard Stoltzman, Joan Enric Lluna and Eli Eban; pianists James Tocco, Menahem Pressler, Jeremy Menuhin, and Joyce Yang; and composer Jake Heggie.

Yuri Cho and **David Samuel** make their San Francisco Performances debut.

The **Alexander String Quartet** has performed in the major music capitals of five continents, securing its standing among the world's premier ensembles, and a major artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving since 1989 as Ensemble-in-Residence of San Francisco Performances and Directors of The Morrison Chamber Music Center Instructional Program at San Francisco State University. Widely ad-

mired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart, and Shostakovich, the quartet's recordings have won international critical acclaim. They have established themselves as important advocates of new music commissioning dozens of new works from composers including Jake Heggie, Cindy Cox, Augusta Read Thomas, Robert Greenberg, Cesar Cano, Tarik O'Regan, Paul Siskind, and Pulitzer Prize-winner Wayne Peterson. Samuel Carl Adams' new *Quintet with Pillars* was premiered and has been widely performed across the U.S. by the Alexander with pianist Joyce Yang, and will be introduced to European audiences in the 2021-2022 season.

The Alexander String Quartet's annual calendar includes engagements at major halls throughout North America and Europe. They have appeared at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, and the Metropolitan Museum; Jordan Hall; the Library of Congress; and chamber music societies and universities across the North American continent including Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Lewis and Clark, Pomona, UCLA, the Krannert Center, Purdue and many more. Recent overseas tours include the U.K., the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina, Panamá, and the Philippines. Their visit to Poland's Beethoven Easter Festival is beautifully captured in the 2017 award-winning documentary, *Con Moto*:

The Alexander String Quartet.

Distinguished musicians with whom the Alexander String Quartet has collaborated include pianists Joyce Yang, Roger Woodward, Menachem Pressler, Marc-André Hamelin, and Jeremy Menuhin; clarinetists Joan Enric Lluna, Richard Stoltzman, and Eli Eban; soprano Elly Ameling; mezzo-sopranos Joyce DiDonato and Kindra Scharich; violinist Midori; violist Toby Appel; cellists Lynn Harrell, Sadao Harada, and David Requiro; and jazz greats Branford Marsalis, David Sanchez, and Andrew Speight. The quartet has worked with many composers including Aaron Copland, George Crumb, and Elliott Carter, and enjoys a close relationship with composer-lecturer Robert Greenberg, performing numerous lecture-concerts with him annually.

Recording for the FoghornClassics label, their 2020 release of the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets (with Eli Eban) has been praised by *Fanfare* as "clearly one of the Alexander Quartet's finest releases." Their release in 2019 of Dvořák's "American" quartet and piano quintet (with Joyce Yang) was selected by *MusicWeb International* as a featured recording of the year, praising it for interpretations performed "with the bright-eyed brilliance of first acquaintance." Also released in 2019 was a recording of the Late Quartets of Mozart, receiving critical acclaim ("Exceptionally beautiful performances of some extraordinarily beautiful music."—*Fanfare*), as did their 2018 release of Mozart's Piano Quartets with Joyce Yang. ("These are by far, hands down and feet up, the most amazing performances of Mozart's two piano quartets that have ever graced these ears"—*Fanfare*.) Other major releases have included the combined string quartet cycles of Bartók and Kodály ("If ever an album had 'Grammy nominee' written on its front cover, this is it."—*Audiophile Audition*); the string quintets and sextets of Brahms with violist Toby Appel and cellist David Requiro ("a uniquely detailed, transparent warmth"—*Strings Magazine*); the Schumann and Brahms piano quintets with Joyce Yang ("passionate, soulful readings of two pinnacles of the chamber repertory"—*The New York Times*); and the Beethoven cycle ("A landmark journey through the greatest of all quartet cycles"—*Strings Magazine*). Their catalog also includes the Shostakovich cycle, Mozart's Ten Famous Quartets, and the Mahler Song Cycles in new transcriptions by Zakarias Grafilo.

The Alexander String Quartet formed in New York City in 1981, capturing international attention as the first American quartet to win the London (now Wigmore) International String Quartet Competition in 1985. The quartet has received honorary degrees from Allegheny College and Saint Lawrence University, and Presidential medals from Baruch College (CUNY). The Alexander plays on a matched set of instruments made in San Francisco by Francis Kuttner, known as the Ellen M. Egger quartet.



Dr. Robert Greenberg was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1954 and has lived in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1978. He received a B.A. in Music, magna cum laude, from Princeton University in 1976 and a Ph.D. in music composition, *With Distinction*, from the University of California, Berkeley in 1984.

Greenberg has composed more than 50 works for a variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Performances of his works have taken place across the United States and Europe.

Dr. Greenberg has received numerous honors, including commissions from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Alexander String Quartet, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, San Francisco Performances, and the XTET ensemble. His music is published by Fallen Leaf Press and CPP/Belwin and is recorded on the Innova label. Greenberg is a Steinway Artist.

Dr. Greenberg is currently the Music Historian-in-Residence with San Francisco Performances, where he has lectured and performed since 1994. He has served on the faculties of the University of California, Berkeley; California State University, East Bay; the Advanced Management Program at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business; and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he chaired the Department of Music History and Literature from 1989 to 2001.

Dr. Greenberg has lectured for some of the most prestigious musical and arts organizations in the United States, including the San Francisco Symphony (where for 10 years he was host and lecturer for the symphony's nationally acclaimed Discovery Series), the Chautauqua Institution (where he was the Everett Scholar-in-Residence during the 2006 season), the Ravinia Festival, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Van Cliburn Foundation, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Villa Montalvo, the Phoenix Orchestra, the University of British Columbia (where he was the Dal Grauer Lecturer in September 2006), and Philadelphia's College of Physicians (where he has been the Behrend Lecturer since 2017).

In addition, Dr. Greenberg is a sought-after lecturer for businesses and business schools and has spoken for such diverse organizations as S. C. Johnson, Deutsche Bank, the University of California/Haas School of Business Executive Seminar and the Goldman School of Public Policy, the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, Harvard Business School Publishing, Kaiser Permanente, the Young Presidents' Organization, the World Presidents' Organization, and the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco. Dr. Greenberg has been profiled in *The Wall Street Journal, Inc. magazine*, the *Times of London*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among other publications.

For 15 years, Dr. Greenberg was the resident composer and music historian for NPR's *Weekend All Things Considered* and *Weekend Edition, Sunday* with Liane Hansen. His show *Scandalous Overtures* can be seen on ora.tv/shows.

In May 1993, Greenberg recorded a 48-lecture course entitled "How to Listen to and Understand Great Music" for The Great Courses/The Teaching Company. (This course was named in the January 1996 edition of *Inc. Magazine* as one of "The Nine Leadership Classics You've Never Read.") Dr. Greenberg has since recorded 30 additional courses. The most recent, "The Great Music of the 20th Century," was released in January 2018.

In February 2003, *Maine's Bangor Daily News* referred to Dr. Greenberg as the Elvis of music history and appreciation, an appraisal that has given him more pleasure than any other.

Edmonton born violinist, **Yuri Cho**, has had the privilege of performing on four continents as a chamber, orchestral and solo



musician. Notable performance venues include Wigmore Hall, Esterházy Palace, the Kennedy Center, and Carnegie Hall. Among others, Yuri has performed with Michael Tree, Marc Johnson, Joel Krosnick, Marc-André Hamelin, Anton Kuerti, NZTrio, and the Juilliard and Alexander String Quartets.

Yuri received her Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, and Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School, as well as an Artist Certificate in Chamber Music from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Her teachers include Dorothy DeLay, Naoko Tanaka, Masao Kawasaki, Ian Swensen, Tom Johnson and John Hong-Youl Kim.

As a founding member of the Afiara String Quartet, Yuri has won second prize and the Székely prize for the best performance of Beethoven at the Banff International String Quartet Competition and 2nd prize at the Munich ARD String Quartet Competition. The quartet has also won Concert Artists Guild, was the first ensemble to win the Young Canadian Musicians Award and has recorded works by Mendelssohn, Schubert, Bartók and Beethoven.

Yuri enjoys teaching and has served as faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory Preparatory and Extension Divisions, and as visiting faculty at the University of Alberta, Stanford University and the Glenn Gould School. She has also taught at Indiana University's Summer String Academy, Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute and has performed at Music Niagara, Ravinia Festival, The Banff Centre, Montreal Chamber Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Festival of the Sound and Ottawa Chamberfest.

From 2013-15, Yuri was based in Scandinavia, spending a season playing with Ensemble MidtVest in Denmark and a season playing with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra in Norway. She is currently based in Auckland, New Zealand, where she plays with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and teaches at the University

of Auckland. She enjoys a variety of non-musical activities that include, but are not limited to, eating, knitting, traveling and exploring the wide variety of New Zealand's craft beer scene.



Violist **David Samuel** is the newest member of the Alexander String Quartet, replacing founding member Paul Yarbrough later this year. He was most recently the Associate Principal Viola of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and also the Convenor

of Classical Performance at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. He was previously the violist of Ensemble MidtVest in Denmark and was the founding violist of the Afiara Quartet. During his eight-year tenure with the Afiara Quartet, Mr. Samuel performed more than 100 works for string quartet in over 400 concerts worldwide. In addition to being the first ensemble ever to receive the Young Canadian Musicians Award, the Afiara Quartet was a top prize winner at the ARD International Music Competition in Munich, the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Concert Artists Guild Competition.

Mr. Samuel has performed at Wigmore Hall, Berlin Konzerthaus, the Esterházy Palace, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, at the headquarters of both LinkedIn and Facebook, and on *The Late Show with David Letterman*. He has performed chamber music with Robert Mann, Pinchas Zukerman, Atar Arad, Michael Tree, Colin Carr, Marc Johnson, Joel Krosnick, Sergio Azzolini, James Campbell, Jörg Widmann, and

members of the Alexander, Cecilia, Danish, Emerson, and Juilliard String Quartets. Mr. Samuel has recorded for CPO, Dacapo, Foghorn Classics, and Naxos, and has worked as a producer most recently for a recording of Mozart chamber music with the Alexander String Quartet and pianist Joyce Yang.

A dedicated teacher, Mr. Samuel enjoys a passion and commitment to education. He has given hundreds of educational concerts and workshops internationally and has been a faculty member at the University of Stavanger, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Preparatory Division, and has held residencies at San Francisco State University, The Juilliard School, The Glenn Gould School, and the University of Alberta.

Mr. Samuel received his Bachelor and Master of Music as well as an Artist Diploma from The Juilliard School. He also received an Artist Certificate in Chamber Music from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. His principal teachers were Paul Hersh, Henry Janzen, Michael Tree, and Karen Tuttle.



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Frederick Lifszitz | Violin

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Sandy Wilson | Cello

YURI CHO | Violin

DAVID SAMUEL | Viola

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Recorded at the Herbst Theatre

BEETHOVEN

Duet in C Major for Violin and Viola, WoO. 27/1

Allegro commodo
Larghetto sostenuto
Rondo: Allegro

Yuri Cho and David Samuel

String Quartet in F minor, Opus 95 "Serioso"

Allegro con brio
Allegretto ma non troppo
Allegro assai vivace ma serioso
Larghetto espressivo; Allegretto agitato

The Alexander String Quartet

String Quartet in G Major, Opus 18, No. 2

Allegro
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro
Allegro molto quasi presto

The Alexander String Quartet

PROGRAM NOTES

Duet in C Major for Violin and Viola, WoO. 27/1

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

A certain amount of mystery continues to surround a set of three little instrumental duos that have been attributed to Beethoven. Some think they date from Beethoven's last years in Bonn, 1790–92, when he was in his early twenties. Others believe them to be spurious, and they may be right: no manuscript survives, Beethoven never mentioned them, and he never published them—they first appeared in Paris around 1815, apparently without his knowledge, and were attributed to him then. Eventually they were listed as No. 27 in Beethoven's catalog of works without opus number, but their authorship remains in doubt.

In Bonn, Beethoven wrote a number of pieces for the wind ensemble that serenaded the Elector during mealtime, and—if these duos are authentic—it may be that he composed them for members of that ensemble: they were originally scored for clarinet and bassoon. No one hearing these pleasing little duets would guess that they are by Beethoven, but they have attracted a number of amateur musicians and have been published in versions for saxophones, for violin and cello, and for many other combinations of instruments.

The *Duet in C Major* is heard at this concert in a version for violin and viola. It is in three concise movements. The first is in sonata form, but its marking *Allegro comodo* (“comfortable”) makes clear that this music is relaxed rather than dramatic. The brief *Larghetto sostenuto* acts as a bridge to the final movement, a rondo that follows without pause. The marking here is *Allegro*, but the score specifies that the performance should be *dolce*, perhaps fitting in music that may have been composed to entertain a nobleman as he ate dinner.

String Quartet in F minor, Opus 95 “Serioso”

Beethoven's manuscript for the *Quartet in F minor* is dated October 1810, but almost certainly he continued to work on this quartet for some years after that, and it was not published until 1816. This quartet has a nickname, *Quartetto Serioso*,

that—unusually for a musical nickname—came from the composer himself. Well aware of the music's extraordinary character, Beethoven described the quartet as having been “written for a small circle of connoisseurs and...never to be performed in public.” Joseph Kerman has described it as “an involved, impassioned, highly idiosyncratic piece, problematic in every one of its movements, advanced in a hundred ways” and “unmatched in Beethoven's output for compression, exaggerated articulation, and a corresponding sense of extreme tension.” Yet this same quartet—virtually the shortest of Beethoven's string quartets—comes from the same period as the easily accessible “*Archduke*” Trio, the *Seventh* and *Eighth Symphonies*, and the incidental music to Goethe's *Egmont*, and this music's extraordinary focus and tension seem sharply at odds with those scores. In fact, this quartet in many ways prefigures Beethoven's late style and the great cycle of quartets written during his final years.

The first movement is extraordinarily compressed (it lasts barely four minutes), and it catapults listeners through an unexpected series of key relationships. The unison opening figure is almost spit out, passing through and ending in a “wrong” key and then followed by complete silence. Octave leaps and furious restatements of the opening figure lead to the swaying second subject announced in flowing triplets by the viola. The development section of this sonata-form movement is quite short, treating only the opening theme, before the movement exhausts itself on fragments of that theme.

The marking of the second movement, *Allegretto ma non troppo*, might seem to suggest some relief, but this movement is even more closely argued than the first. The cello's strange descending line introduces a lovely opening melody, but this quickly gives way to a long and complex fugue, its sinuous subject announced by the viola and then taken up and developed by the other voices. A quiet close (derived from the cello's introduction) links this movement to the third, a violent fast movement marked *Allegro assai vivace ma serioso*. The movement is in ABABA form, the explosive opening section alternating with a chorale-like subject for the lower three voices which the first violin decorates. Once again, Beethoven takes each section into unexpected keys. The last movement has a slow introduction—*Larghetto espressivo*—full of the darkness that has marked the first three movements, and this leads

to a blistering finale that does much to dispel the tension. In an oft-quoted remark about the arrival of this theme, American composer Randall Thompson is reported to have said: “No bottle of champagne was ever uncorked at a better moment.” In contrast, for example, to the near-contemporary *Seventh Symphony*, which ends in wild celebration, this quartet has an almost consciously anti-heroic close, concluding with a very fast coda that Beethoven marks simply *Allegro*.

Some have felt that the *Quartet in F minor* is composed with the same technique as the late quartets but without their sense of spiritual elevation, and in this sense they see the present quartet as looking ahead toward Beethoven's late style. But it is unfair to this music to regard it simply as a forerunner of another style. This quartet may well be dark, explosive, and extremely concentrated. But it should be valued for just those qualities.

String Quartet in G Major, Opus 18, No. 2

It has been easy for some to overlook the six quartets of Beethoven's Opus 18, composed during the years 1798–1800, especially in light of his astonishing expansion of string quartet form over the course of his career. Some have been quick to point out the influence of Haydn and Mozart (influences the young Beethoven would readily have acknowledged), while others have found these works wanting because they do not approach—or even point the way toward—Beethoven's later quartets. For many listeners, these early quartets remain—in Joseph Kerman's elegant phrase—“a merely mortal, not a celestial, nourishment.”

Nevertheless, this first set of quartets offers many pleasures, including the stormy *Fourth*, the experimental *Sixth*, and the motivic concentration of the *First*. Among the Opus 18 quartets, the *Second*—in G Major—is easily the most good-natured: if Beethoven does not set out to be comic in this music, there are moments when he comes very close to that.

The courtly and graceful themes of the opening *Allegro* have drawn particular attention. Their regular phrase lengths and the question-and-answer quality of some of the writing have suggested an extra-musical discourse, and certain observers have gone so far as to hear in this movement an urbane and civilized conversation; every commentator feels obligated to mention that this quality has earned the music

the nickname *Komplimentierungsquartett* (“Compliments Quartet”) in Germany. Listeners should be warned not to search for a literal depiction of a conversation—that nickname refers more to the music’s gracious atmosphere. Given all this geniality, the recapitulation brings a nice bump when Beethoven combines his two themes and has the first try to sing over the suddenly fierce rhythms of the second.

The *Adagio cantabile*, in C Major, seems similarly urbane: its themes are smooth and well-proportioned, and the movement might promise blandness were it not for an unusual episode at the center that changes

everything. The opening music slows and seems to conclude with a quiet cadence, but Beethoven then transforms that cadence-rhythm into a blistering (and completely unexpected) *Allegro*. This section dashes about breathlessly and then vanishes, all within the space of 40 seconds, but now the opening material is greatly embellished when it returns. Evidence from Beethoven’s manuscripts suggests that this fast center section was a late addition to the movement.

The sparkling *Scherzo* is pleasing music: it gracefully tosses rhythmic bits between the four instruments, and its trio

section demands virtuoso playing from the first violin. Beethoven himself referred to the *Allegro molto quasi presto* as “ausgeknopft”: “unbuttoned.” The main theme of this rondo finale is in fact derived from a transition passage in the opening movement, and this movement is full of bright energy, relaxed spirits, and a sense of fun. Beethoven brings back some of the rhythms of the *Scherzo*, and once again there are concertante passages for the first violin in the energetic coda.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger



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Thursday, December 31, 2020

Recorded at the Herbst Theatre

BEETHOVEN

Duet in F Major for Violin and Viola, WoO. 27/2

Allegro affettuoso

Aria: Larghetto

Finale: Allegretto moderato

Yuri Cho and David Samuel

String Quartet in C-sharp minor, Opus 131

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo

Allegro molto vivace

Allegretto moderato

Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Presto

Adagio quasi un poco andante

Allegro

The Alexander String Quartet

PROGRAM NOTES

Duet in F Major for Violin and Viola, WoO. 27/2

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

A certain amount of mystery continues to surround a set of three little instrumental duos that have been attributed to Beethoven. Some think they date from Beethoven's last years in Bonn, 1790–92, when he was in his early twenties. Others believe them to be spurious, and they may be right: no manuscript survives, Beethoven never mentioned them, and he never published them—they first appeared in Paris around 1815, apparently without his knowledge, and were attributed to him then. Eventually they were listed as No. 27 in Beethoven's catalog of works without opus number, but their authorship remains in doubt.

In Bonn Beethoven wrote a number of pieces for the wind ensemble that serenaded the Elector during mealtime, and—if these duos are authentic—it may be that he composed them for members of that ensemble: they were originally scored for clarinet and bassoon. No one hearing these pleasing little duets would guess that they are by Beethoven, but they have attracted a number of amateur musicians and have been published in versions for saxophones, for violin and cello, and for many other combinations of instruments.

Among these arrangements is one for violin and viola. The first movement of the *Duet in F Major* is marked *Allegro affettuoso*, and that “affectionate” atmosphere is evident throughout. Spirited and gentle, this movement is full of rapid runs and accomplished two-part counterpoint. The *Aria* is brief—just two eight-bar phrases—and its concluding trill leads directly into the rondo-finale. Set in 2/4 time, this finale—which has some of the feel of a folk dance—demands nimble playing from both performers.

String Quartet in C-sharp minor, Opus 131

Beethoven had been commissioned in 1822 by Prince Nikolas Galitzin of St. Pe-

tersburg to write three string quartets, though he had to delay them until after he finished the *Missa Solemnis* and the *Ninth Symphony*. He completed the three quartets for Galitzin in 1825, but those quartets had not exhausted his ideas about the form, and he pressed on to work on another. Begun at the end of 1825, the *Quartet in C-sharp minor* was complete in July 1826. This is an astonishing work in every respect. Its form alone is remarkable: seven continuous movements lasting a total of 40 minutes. But its content is just as remarkable, for this quartet is an unbroken arc of music that sustains a level of heartfelt intensity and intellectual power through every instant of its journey. This was Beethoven's favorite among his quartets.

On the manuscript he sent the publisher, the composer scrawled: “zusammenges-tohlen aus Verschiedenem diesem und jenem” (“Stolen and patched together from various bits and pieces”). The alarmed publishers were worried that he might be trying to palm off some old pieces he had lying around, and Beethoven had to explain that his remark was a joke. But it is at once a joke and a profound truth. A joke because this quartet is one of the most carefully unified pieces ever written, and a truth because it is made up of “bits and pieces”: fugue, theme and variations, scherzo, and sonata form among them.

The form of the *Quartet in C-sharp minor* is a long arch. The substantial outer movements are in classical forms, and at the center of the arch is a theme-and-variation movement that lasts a quarter-hour by itself. The second and third and the fifth and sixth form pairs of much shorter movements, often in wholly original forms.

The opening movement is a long, slow fugue, its haunting main subject laid out immediately by the first violin. There is something rapt about the movement (and perhaps the entire quartet), as if the music almost comes from a different world. In a sense, it did. Beethoven had been completely deaf for a decade when he wrote this quartet, and now—less than a year from his death—he was writing from the lonely power of his musical imagination. *Molto espressivo*, he demands in the score, and if ever there has been expressive music, this is it. The fugue reaches a point of repose, then modulates up half a step to D Major for the *Allegro molto vivace*. Rocking along

easily on a 6/8 meter, this flowing movement brings relaxation—and emotional relief—after the intense fugue. The *Allegro moderato* opens with two sharp chords and seems on the verge of developing entirely new ideas when Beethoven suddenly cuts it off with a soaring cadenza for first violin and proceeds to the next movement. The *Allegro moderato* seems to pass as the briefest flash of contrast—the entire movement lasts only 11 measures.

The longest movement in the quartet, the *Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile* is one of its glories. Beethoven presents a simple theme, gracefully shared by the two violins, and then writes six variations on it. At times the variations grow so complex that the original theme almost disappears; Beethoven brings it back, exotically decorated by first violin trills, at the very end of the movement. Out of this quiet close explodes the *Presto*, the quartet's scherzo, which rushes along on a steady pulse of quarter-notes; this powerful music flows easily, almost gaily. Beethoven makes use of sharp pizzicato accents and at the very end asks the performers to play *sul ponticello*, producing an eerie, grating sound by bowing directly on the tops of their bridges.

There follows a heartfelt *Adagio*, its main idea introduced by the viola. Beethoven distills stunning emotional power into the briefest of spans here: this movement lasts only 28 measures before the concluding *Allegro* bursts to life with a unison attack three octaves deep. In sonata form, this furiously energetic movement brings back fragments of the fugue subject (sometimes inverted) from the first movement. It is an exuberant conclusion to so intense a journey, and at the very end the music almost leaps upward to the three massive chords that bring the quartet to its close.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger